

The Critical Thinking Circular

The official newsletter of the JALT Critical Thinking SIG



Welcome to the new JALT CT SIG Critical Thinking Circular!

June 2023

The same great newsletter you are used to, but with a new name and layout!

Message from the Coordinator, James D. Dunn,

Hello to the members of the JALT CT SIG! Welcome to our newly revamped newsletter, The Critical Thinking Circular (CTC for short). We hope the newly redesigned format is both easier on the eyes and even more informative than the previous iterations of the newsletter, the CT Scan.

We have had one of our three currently planned events for this year, two of them being face-to-face, and one, online. The forum at PanSIG went very well with some attendees asking excellent (and difficult!) questions. But, that is what we want to do, right? Ask good questions. So, thank you to all those who came and thank you to all those that reached out even though you couldn't make it. We appreciate your support and hope to hear your ideas in one of our events in the near future. Our next event is coming in a week. The CTC (Aptly named to match the change in the newsletter's name) online event is looking to be a fantastic one and we hope you can join us. See the registration link in this newsletter to join.

Finally, we are looking for volunteers to be officers and helpers for the SIG. If you would like to be more involved with the SIG, please reach out and talk to me. I would happily tell you how being an officer for the SIG helped my career. Plus, you would be joining a great group of dedicated people who want to make the SIG the very best it can be. So, please take a moment to look at the SIG positions below and see if there is some aspect of organization you would like to help out with.

In this issue

- A call for officers and volunteers for the SIG.
- A report on the PanSIG Forum and info. on our upcoming events.
- A call papers for the upcoming 2023 CTLL peer-reviewed journal.
- A short article on how educators can use JALT and the CT SIG to professionally develop.
- The full schedule and abstracts of the CTC event next week.

SIG Officer Positions

COORDINATOR: The Coordinator is responsible for representing the SIG in the Executive Board Meetings, voting for motions by JALT, and working with the officers to put on events and publish publications like this newsletter and the CTLL Journal.

TREASURER: The Treasurer is responsible for keeping our accounting books in order by processing Officer Expense Forms and other items that the SIG needs to use our stipend for.

PROGRAM: The Program Chair is responsible for working with vendors, venues, and presenters to build events for our membership. This officer is the first contact for submissions.

MEMBERSHIP: The Membership Chair is responsible for tracking our membership numbers and contacting members whose membership is about to end.

PUBLICATIONS: The Publication Chair is responsible organizing the initial acceptance, peer-reviewing, and publication of papers in the Peer-Reviewed journal, the CTLL.

WEBMASTER: The Webmaster is responsible for keeping our website up to date with information for our members and adding informative articles, link, and other items that might be of interest for our membership.

All officer positions are for one year and officers must be re-elected every year. If you feel that you would like to either shadow one of the current officers or throw your name into the hat as a new officer, please do!

Being an officer is a great way to help other and could help you to work toward a promotion or just be a better educator!

Call for Manuscripts

We are always looking for new information and ideas to share with our membership. JALT Critical Thinking's peer-reviewed journal, *Critical Thinking and Language Learning (CTLL)* is looking for well-referenced papers on curriculum design, methodology, and studies done on critical thinking in the language classroom. Since 2014, the CTLL has been publishing rigorous academic articles annually with a double-blind peer review system for both members and non-members of JALT and the CT SIG. The CTLL is one of the few critical thinking focused journals for language teachers in the world. The deadline is the end of July, so if you haven't already started writing, you could start now!

Please contact the CTLL Editor, Curtis Chu, at:
editor@jaltcriticalthinking.org



Upcoming Event + Registration Link

The Critical Thinking SIG is happy to announce that the registration website for *Critical Thinking in the Classroom 2023* is open at this link <https://forms.office.com/r/QDamSgqbFG>.

You must register if you plan to attend as links to the event will only be sent out to those who register.

Critical Thinking in the Classroom 2023 (CTC 2023) is an online event being held from 14:00 to 17:00 on July 1, 2023. The aim of this event is to provide an opportunity for educators to share their materials, activities, methods, and approaches for encouraging critical thinking and higher order thinking skills in the English language classroom. The event is free and open to everyone, so JALT or CT SIG membership is not required to attend. If you plan to attend, be sure to register as the code for the meeting will be sent out by email to those who have registered. Also, be aware that the event is limited to 100 attendees.

The following speakers will be presenting:

DENNIS KOYAMA (SOPHIA UNIVERSITY)

Enhancing Critical Thinking in the English Language Classroom with ChatGPT

JAMES D. DUNN (MEIJI UNIVERSITY)

Critical Thinking in the Textbook vs the Classroom

DAVID GANN (TOKYO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE)

Critical Thinking Instruction through Hypothesis Construction and Counter-Intuitive Outcomes

MICHAEL HERKE (SETSUNAN UNIVERSITY)

A Few Classic Argument Moves for ELLs

MEGUMI UEMI (TOYO UNIVERSITY)

Developing Beginner Japanese EFL Students' Critical Thinking Skills through Learner Logs

TODD HOOPER (SETSUNAN UNIVERSITY)

Encouraging Students to Make Observations of Visual Texts Using T-charts

We hope to see you at *Critical Thinking in the Classroom 2023*!

You can see the abstracts and schedule on the last page of this newsletter.

Thinking Critically about Volunteering and Professional Development in Japan's Language Education Sector

An article by James D. Dunn, Coordinator of the JALT Critical Thinking SIG

VOLUNTEERING IS A GOOD USE OF YOUR TIME?

I'll be honest, the first time I thought about volunteering for the JALT Critical Thinking SIG, I was quite reticent about doing it. Not because I thought it would be a waste of effort or useless, but because I was worried that it would take up too much of my time and eat into the time I needed for work at my job or the time that I spent with my family in my off-hours. This was about ten years ago now and, as you may have guessed from the front page of previous CT SIG newsletters, I decided to help the SIG out as the Webmaster keeping the information on the website up to date and ended up in a leadership position.

A year after becoming the Webmaster for the SIG, I became the Coordinator by being voted in after one of the founding members, David Gann, stepped down from the leadership position. It has been almost exactly a decade since first putting my name into the hat to volunteer for JALT and I am happy to report that neither of the time-based worries came to pass as I was slightly busier, sure, but I was working with a great group of officers who genuinely wanted to help educators in Japan professionally develop and share their research, ideas, and opinions on critical thinking to a broader audience. Has all that time been worth it? Well, keep reading to get a detailed report on how I feel volunteering for the SIG has helped me get to where I am today

DOES A SIG HELP YOUR CAREER?

I would like to first focus in on the "professionally develop" aspect of being in a SIG for a moment. If you are in a position at a university, junior high school, or high school a certain amount of professional development is expected from you each year. Being an active member of a SIG (not just a consumer of information, but someone who presents or publishes with the SIG) can most certainly be a boon to your career. In my situation, a certain number of presentations and publications are required each year in order to work toward the next level of my professorship. In junior highs and high schools, a certain amount of classes, events, and professional development is expected of the teachers. The CT SIG hopes to be an avenue for all educators to further their careers. But, I would argue that getting even more involved can be a better use of your time especially if you are trying to move towards a tenured or full-time position in a school. So, do I feel that being a part of the CT SIG can help your career? 100% yes, I do!

SHOULD I VOLUNTEER MY TIME TO HELP A SIG?

Now, this is personal experience, and as someone who is a

proponent of critical thinking, I would be remiss if I did not state that everything I am about to relay is anecdotal evidence from my life and experiences. But, I would also argue that I do not think I am "special" and I honestly feel that anyone could benefit from being a more active member of a SIG or Chapter, especially volunteering to be an officer. So, to ease that nagging little critical thinker in my mind, please keep this disclaimer in mind as you read on.

Do I think you should volunteer to help a SIG in JALT or any other professional development organization? I mean, I would be a hypocrite of the highest order if I said it wasn't worth it. I have benefited so much from being an officer with this SIG not only through career opportunities, but also through the people I have met and worked with along the way. I firmly believe that my time with the CT SIG has benefited my career over the decade of service to this organization and its membership. From

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opportunities to speak to educators all over Japan and working with organizations from all corners of the globe, I have had the opportunity to meet, help, and work with people I would never have had the chance to if I had only been consuming information from our events, website,

journal, and newsletters. I do not feel that I would have my job today, a job that I am happy to go to everyday, without my involvement in the CT SIG, planning its events, and working with my fellow officers. The SIG has helped make me who I am as an educator in Japan.

SO, I ASK AGAIN, IS IT WORTH IT?

From doing workshops on curriculum design and critical thinking to speaking about the data I have collected in my experiments, I feel that my time with the SIG, both in the past and going forward, has brought me to where I am today. This year I am starting what I hope is my last job in Japan. I am in a position where my family and I are more secure and I can provide a life for them with less worry. I think my volunteering with JALT and the CT SIG has allowed me to see so many new doors of opportunity as well as opening those doors to let me through them. So, yes. I certainly think my time with the SIG has been a worthy investment into my career and life. Does this mean you will benefit the same way I have if you volunteer? I don't know. I cannot see the future, but hey, what do you have to lose? Some time working with people who genuinely hope to help you and other educators in Japan? I'd argue that isn't a loss.

James D. Dunn

Coordinator - JALT Critical Thinking SIG
Senior Assistant Professor - Meiji University



Critical Thinking in the Classroom

An online event by the JALT Critical Thinking SIG

Critical Thinking in the Classroom 2023 (CTC 2023) is an online event being held from 14:00 on July 1, 2023. The aim of this event is to provide an opportunity for educators to share their materials, activities, methods, and approaches for encouraging critical thinking and higher order thinking skills in the English language classroom. The event is free and open to everyone.

If you plan to attend, be sure to register with the provided link as the code for the meeting will be sent out by email to those who have registered. The event will be limited to 100 attendees.

Speakers

(Register for Zoom link [HERE](#))

from 14:05



Dr. Dennis Koyama (Sophia University)

Enhancing Critical Thinking in the English Language Classroom with ChatGPT

from 14:30



Megumi Uemi (Toyo University)

Developing Beginner Japanese EFL Students' Critical Thinking Skills through Learning Logs

from 14:55



Michael Herke (Setsunan University)

A Few Classic Argument Moves for ELLs

from 15:30



David Gann (Tokyo University of Science)

Critical Thinking Instruction through Hypothesis Construction and Counter-Intuitive Outcomes

from 15:55



Todd Hooper (Setsunan University)

Encouraging Students to Make Observations of Visual Texts Using T-charts

from 16:20



James D. Dunn (Meiji University)

Critical Thinking in the Textbook vs the Classroom

Abstracts

Dr. Dennis Koyama

Enhancing Critical Thinking in the English Language Classroom with ChatGPT

The ability to think critically and apply higher order thinking skills is becoming increasingly important in today's rapidly changing world. As English language educators, we play a crucial role in fostering critical thinking (CT) skills and abilities in our students. In this presentation I argue for using ChatGPT to promote critical thinking and higher order thinking skills in the English language classroom. The presentation will begin with a brief overview of CT and its importance in education. Then I will discuss the potential of ChatGPT for promoting CT. Specifically, I will show that ChatGPT is positioned well to help learners practice analyzing information and evaluating its credibility and relevance, in addition to other learning opportunities such as constructing and evaluating arguments and making decisions for a given scenario. ChatGPT will also be discussed in terms of its ability to personalize learning, promote learner autonomy, and provide differentiated instruction to learners of different levels and abilities. I will close the presentation with a framework for prompt engineering that will help users craft prompts that generate relevant and appropriate information for learners to practice and develop their critical thinking skills and abilities.

Megumi Uemi

Developing Beginner Japanese EFL Students' Critical Thinking Skills through Learning Logs

This study examines using a learning log to introduce critical thinking (CT) to beginner-level Japanese EFL university students. It describes a part of a pilot study in which a teacher-guided learning log was implemented to help 13 English learners (CEFR A1 or A2 level) reflect upon lessons and express and share their viewpoints through interactive pair work. The present paper offers an analysis of the students' written responses to questions with a focus on the presentation of their CT skills. What the analysis offers is evidence that basic-level Japanese EFL students struggle with articulating their points of view by failing to elaborate their main ideas with clear and sound reasoning. It also discloses the learners' lack of awareness of the need to identify a subject in an English sentence, thus posing a greater challenge to present themselves as competent critical thinkers. The study includes some pedagogical implications for teachers who wish to use interactive methods to introduce CT to beginner-level Japanese EFL learners.

Michael Herke

A Few Classic Argument Moves for ELLs

There are many challenges facing the Japanese student who wishes to join the English academic community of practice. One reason is the array of new expectations and standards that may have not mattered so much before. One solution to this is to start with the basics, the first principles of academic thought. Since thought is a movement of or in the mind—in any language—then this common ground is a good place to begin. The extensive literature on rhetoric and argumentation describes a few typical moves that have held up over time as profitable archetypes for study and emulation. The primary moves are those of induction and deduction. Other moves like generalization, classification and analogy are species of either induction or deduction. This presentation will briefly explain these and other moves before illustrating them with cases from textbooks, mass media, student work and a few original examples. Like other cultural activities with stable corpora of moves (e.g. medicine or chess), there are stronger and weaker options and these will be discussed as well. These moves can be used in all types of language learning settings including discussion, debate, reading and writing and are of interest to every teacher.

David Gann

Critical Thinking Instruction through Hypothesis Construction and Counter-Intuitive Outcomes

Among the foundations of critical thinking is the perspective provided by theory of mind and the critical disposition of being willing to rethink one's preconceptions of the way the world works when evidence to the contrary is discovered or produced. In this presentation, I outline the rationale, method and the materials used in a several-week long experiential learning project, which involved face-to-face and forum-based discussions; and in-class hands-on collaborative learning using physical objects and observable phenomenon. This activity culminated in a Group Written Report and subsequently, an In-Class Individual Rewrite from Memory quiz. The language points in this activity were (1) skills necessary for writing about situations unknown or unfamiliar to the reader; (2) the ability to construct hypothetical premises in order to predict outcomes; (3) language used to present, analyze and discuss data; and (4) the use of meta-discourse markers to create coherence across the text. I conclude with a brief summary of the outcomes of the project and some observations about plans for further refinement.

Abstracts

Todd Hooper

Encouraging Students to Make Observations of Visual Texts Using T-charts

One of the key concepts of critical thinking is that it is evidence-based. In order to make evidence-based claims, which is an important aspect of academic writing, students need to learn how to make observations in a wide variety of texts. However, students may not have had the opportunity to do this in their EFL courses. In this presentation, the speaker will introduce how T-charts can be used to teach students how to collect observations from a visual text that can be used as evidence for claims. Additionally, the speaker will discuss how T-charts can focus students on the important of research questions in order to make good observations, as students can see how different questions can focus students on different aspects of the text.

James D. Dunn

Developing Beginner Japanese EFL Students' Critical Thinking Skills through Learning Logs

Critical thinking, as an avenue towards English mastery, has been gaining in both popularity and notoriety since MEXT introduced its new goals for English Language Learning in Japan. This presentation will cover examples of university and primary school textbooks that advertise critical thinking as a core component of their features, as well as ongoing critical thinking curriculum development and critical thinking activity design efforts. Finally, considerations for future textbook designs will be presented and possible avenues of integrating critical thinking into curriculum will be discussed. Participants will see examples that have been used to utilize critical thinking skills in courses across Japan in both university and high school EFL settings.

We hope you can join us on July 1st from 2pm on Zoom.

You can register your attendance (for free!) here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/QDamSgqbFG>

We hope you will join us for an event all about sharing what works for us as educators. If you are interested in critical thinking and how to integrate it into your classroom, please stop by and see what new ideas are shared. You never know, you might find something useful or gain some inspiration for your own ideas of integrating critical thinking into your classroom or deeper into your curriculum design.

See you there!