

# Developing Critical Thinking and Language Skills

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# What is critical thinking?

- 批判的思考力？

Participants, please work in groups and discuss:

1. What is critical thinking? Give a short definition.
2. Can you think of a clearer Japanese translation?

# Definition of critical thinking

(probably) The simplest definition:

“Critical thinking...means making **reasoned judgments**” (Beyer, 1995).

よく考えて判断すること

Critical thinking is a disciplined manner of thought that a person uses to **assess the validity** of something (statements, news stories, arguments, research, etc.)

(Beyer, 1995)

ある事柄の妥当性を判断するために用いる  
秩序だった思考

“Critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking focused on **deciding what to believe or do**” (Ennis, 2011).

何を信じるか、何をすべきか決めるために  
賢明にじっくりと考えること

# My idea of critical thinking

- Critical thinking is the ability to think deeply to arrive at a fair judgment.
- 判断のための思考力（判断力）

# Why do students need CT skills?

- Flood of information, all kinds!
- They passively accept the information?
- How can they make fair judgments?

# Characteristics of critical thinking

- Asking questions
- Defining a problem
- Examining evidence
- Analyzing assumptions and biases
- Avoiding emotional reasoning
- Avoiding oversimplification
- Considering other interpretations
- Tolerating ambiguity

Wade (1995)



“In my teaching, I focus on helping my students to:

- differentiate between fact and opinion
- examine assumption, including their own
- be flexible and open minded as they look for explanations, causes, and solutions to problems”  
(Day, 2003).

# Students who have developed critical thinking skills/attitudes:

- show respect for others' opinions and experience.
- appreciate diverse values and viewpoints.
- develop empathy with others.

# Question:

What is the best way to enhance students' language skills, critical thinking skills and cooperative attitudes at the same time?

# Through expressing their opinions in English/ discussing

They

- think about a topic or an issue
- express their opinions
- know their classmates' opinions
- adjust their ideas or change their mind
- learn to be flexible and open-minded
- learn to be cooperative
- *learn the language by doing the above*

# Analyze assumptions.

- Only advanced level students can do discussion.
- Japanese students are too shy to express their opinions.
- Japanese students hate to disagree with others.
- They need to develop basic linguistic skills first, before expressing opinions, discussing or developing critical thinking.

# With the right material and right approach:

- Japanese students *do* enjoy talking and discussing.
- They like to know what others think.
- They don't hesitate disagreeing with others.
- They enjoy communication.
- They get *motivated!*
- They learn the language.

# Under what condition?

- The topic is interesting and relevant to them
- The issue is clear.
- The issue is presented with an impact, using easy English.
- Strategies are used to help students overcome shyness and linguistic insufficiency.

# Let's try a lesson!

**Level: Basic**

**Title: The Guy with Green Hair**

From

*Impact Topics &*

*Impact Issues 1*



# Getting ready

- Ask your partner this question: Which of those people do you think are unusual? Why?



A



B



C



D

# Understanding the topic

- Twenty-five university students were interviewed by a famous company. After the interviews three company directors (Christopher, John, and Min) have a meeting.
- Listen to the conversation and answer the question: Which student do they want to hire?
  1. the guy with green hair
  2. the intelligent student
  3. They don't agree.

# What do you think?

- Listen to the ideas of these three people.
- Do you agree with the person? Circle your opinion. (agree / disagree)



Ken



Susan



Louis

What do you think about \_\_\_'s idea?

I agree. I think~ / I disagree. I don't think~

- Ken: It's OK to wear strange clothes or to have a different hair color.
- Susan: It's a good idea to look like everyone else.
- Louis: People who look different always make trouble.

# Thinking about the topic

	I would do it.	It's OK, but I wouldn't do it	No, I wouldn't do it. It's crazy!
dye my hair a different color			
shave my head			
pierce my tongue			
pierce my nose			
wear torn jeans			
wear color contact lenses			
your idea			

# Personal Opinions

- Work in pairs. Ask each other the question. Would you hire this guy? Why or why not?
- Let's listen to a real interview online.

[http://www.impactseries.com/Issues\\_new/issues\\_personal\\_opi.html](http://www.impactseries.com/Issues_new/issues_personal_opi.html)

# Discuss and evaluate in pairs.

- Was the topic interesting and relevant to students?
- Was the issue clear?
- Was the issue presented with an impact, using easy English?
- Were strategies used to help students overcome shyness and linguistic insufficiency?

# Thoughts about SL/FL education

Changes in language teaching/learning philosophies



# Traditional thinking

Only after you have studied vocabulary, grammar and structure, you will be able to actually use the language.

# Communicative approach

Use and learn the language at the same time. Try to communicate as much as you can, using the linguistic skills you have now, even if you feel they are insufficient.

# Expressing opinions and thinking critically?

Possible for all levels?

## You might think:

You need to be trained in basic vocabulary and structure before you can express your opinions, discuss or think critically.

# How about this way of thinking?

Think critically, discuss and learn the language at the same time. Try to express your opinions as much as you can, using the linguistic skills you have now, even if you feel they are insufficient.

Students can start expressing their opinions from  
Day 1!

# Developing students' critical thinking and discussion skills:

(not only)

Possible for all levels

(but also)

*An important role for English teachers in Japan*



How can you provide the best environment for your students?





**Environment 1:**  
**Students have opportunities to express  
their opinions**

- Include discussion in your curriculum.
- Choose a textbook that is discussion oriented.
- (*Impact Issues, Topic Talk Issues, etc.*)
- Make full use of *discussion questions* in your textbook.
- Find a way to implement it in your courses (writing, reading, speaking, listening).



# Environment 2: Students get turned on

## **Step 1: Choose a right topic.**

- Being different from others
- Same sex marriages
- Hate speech
- Surrogate motherhood
- Capital punishment
- Cosmetic surgery
- International marriages
- Animal rights
- Can a man and a woman be true friends?

**Step 2: take one clear, *unique* stance that can be *controversial*.**

- Example:

Topic: English

Stance : We don't need English.

## **Step 3: Present the issue with *an impact*, using *easy* English.**

- Create a short text (an article, a letter, a dialog, a monolog, etc.) expressing the stance.
- An article or video clip in Japanese is also effective



**Environment 3.**  
**Students don't feel anxiety**

# Use strategies to help students overcome linguistic insufficiency

- Scaffold!
- Fill the gap between their linguistic level and intellectual level.





## For example:

- Make the text as simple and easy as possible.
- Give sample opinions with which students can either agree or disagree.
- Provide a lot of sample reasons to support their opinions. The text itself (dialog, monolog, article, etc. ) could contain a lot of them to begin with.

# Use strategies to help students overcome shyness.

- Non-threatening activities
- Non-threatening formats (pairs or groups)

Students:

- put check marks or fill charts before pair work
- use the sample opinions in pair work
- vote on paper
- just raise their hands
- report to group leader and the leader to class

# Let's try another lesson!

- **Level: Intermediate**
- **Title: A Mother's Story**

From *Impact Issues*

# 80% of Japanese support death penalty

- How many countries practice capital punishment? How many have abolished it?
- How about these countries?

- |             |           |              |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| • Australia | France    | Turkey       |
| • Cambodia  | Argentina | South Africa |
| • Canada    | Mexico    | Ukraine      |
| • Thailand  | USA       | Egypt        |

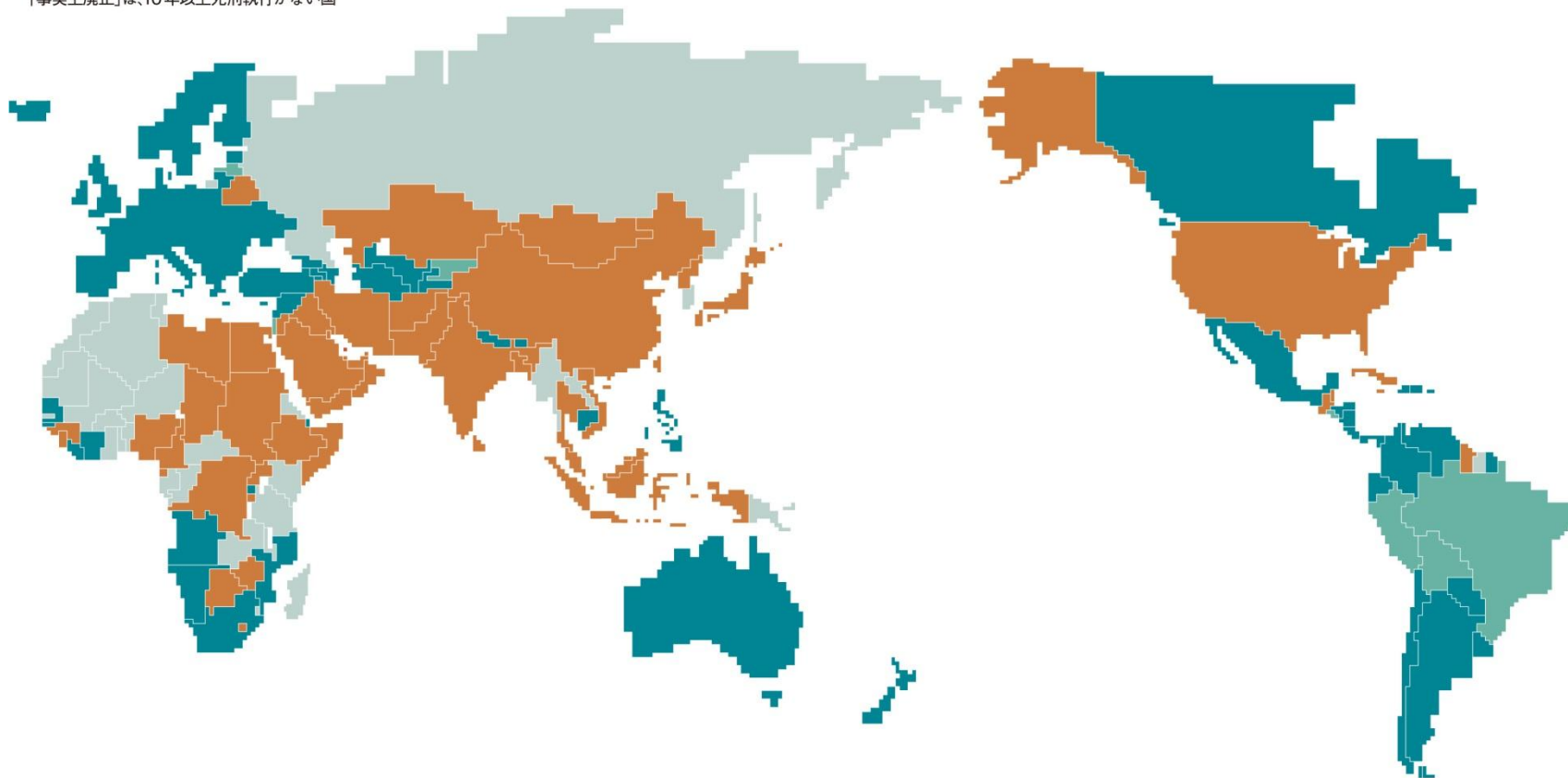
## [死刑全廃国は95、死刑がある国は58]

米死刑情報センターなどによる(国の数には地域を含む)

■ 死刑全廃国(95) ■ 通常犯罪で廃止(9) ■ 事実上廃止(35) ■ 死刑がある国(58)

[通常犯罪で廃止]は、軍法下の犯罪など例外的な犯罪についてのみ死刑が規定されている国

[事実上廃止]は、10年以上死刑執行がない国



- 95 + 44 = 139 (have abolished or stopped)
- 58 (practice)

# EU strongly suggests abolition of death penalty in the world

Think about this too:

- In Japan, since 1983, four death penalty cases were mistakes, which the court admitted.

# Rationale for this approach

- A content-based approach
- A lot of comprehensible input
- Many output chances
- Language learning in meaningful context
- “Opinion gap” is “communication gap” in the true sense
- Critical thinking attitude/skills developed

# I like this approach because:

- Students *use* English.
- Students can handle sophisticated topics using rather easy English.
- There is a lot of language help in the text, so it is not frustrating to express ideas in English.
- The communication is authentic.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- The teacher and the students can feel they are equal as people.



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