

Chapter 3

A Pedagogical Approach to Foster Critical Thinking Skills in Japanese EFL Learners: Focusing on the International Baccalaureate's Pedagogical Framework

Yuya Akatsuka

Waseda University, Japan

ABSTRACT

This chapter suggests a pedagogical approach that promotes students' critical thinking (CT) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses. The Japanese Central Council for Education has stressed its importance, which was reflected in the revised 2021/2022 Japanese National Curriculum. However, although the curriculum describes approaches for fostering CT, concrete approaches are not sufficiently presented. The pedagogical approaches of the IB may contain some suggestions for developing CT in Japanese EFL contexts. First, this chapter introduces the transitions created by Japanese educational reform and their relationship with fostering CT. Second, CT approaches in the EFL context and the IB's theoretical background relating to CT are extracted and examined. Finally, a possible integrated CT approach is suggested based on the IB's framework and alignment with the revised curriculum. The analysis indicates that an integrated CT approach to EFL learning should be balanced between levels of CT attributes and Japanese EFL learners' English proficiency levels.

INTRODUCTION

The distance between countries and their people has significantly decreased in recent years due to rapid globalisation. This situation has increased the urgency of global-scale issues such as environmental degradation and poverty, which are challenging and raise pressing, essential questions about how human happiness can be understood and how the world can be a better place. Within educational contexts, young

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adults are encouraged to become global citizens and are expected to actively engage in creating a better world; for instance, they can do this by promoting sustainable development, collaborating with others, and challenging themselves by discussing issues with people who have different values and beliefs (see Bencze & Carter, 2011; Goren & Yemini, 2017).

In terms of the significance of learning English as a second or foreign language in a globalised society, there is no doubt that English is used as a communication tool in many parts of the world. In today's society, it is necessary to confront the variety of issues using a common language, English, and collaborate with others regardless of their countries of origin, religions, values, or beliefs. To realise this, more creative, progressive approaches to education are required to improve students' English proficiency levels and enhance their thinking skills, with a particular emphasis on critical thinking (CT).

Various studies have suggested that there is a correlation between language learning and thinking skills; namely, if learners acquire language skills, they can also develop their thinking skills and vice versa (see Floyd, 2011; Manalo et al., 2013). Focusing on pedagogical approaches, previous studies have attempted to establish an effective strategy that can enhance both language proficiency and CT (see Alnofaie, 2013; Harizaj & Hajrulla, 2017). In the Japanese context, Stapleton (2001), Takeda (2016), and Mineshima and Imai (2018) adopted CT approaches in English as a foreign language (EFL) courses and suggested that such approaches can foster both English proficiency and CT. However, although such studies have revealed the effects of a CT approach in the EFL context, an integrated approach, namely what kind of unit plan and lesson procedures would be ideal and what type of assessment and rubric could be adopted, has yet to be sufficiently discussed and proposed.

This chapter suggests a possible integrated CT approach to EFL lessons by adopting the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme's CT framework for a Japanese EFL context. The IB Diploma Programme is an international educational programme for upper-secondary school students, designed to foster their CT across national and regional boundaries (Aktas & Guven, 2015; International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). In a previous study, Smith (2001) argued that CT should be fostered in advance of the higher-education level and claimed that it would be preferable to implement CT curriculum at least at the upper-secondary school level. Since the IB's CT framework seems highly suggestive of positive outcomes in this regard, this chapter proceeds as follows:

1. Japanese educational reform and its relationship with fostering CT are discussed;
2. CT approaches in the EFL context and the IB's theoretical background relating to CT are identified and examined;
3. An integrated CT approach to EFL is suggested.

In doing so, the following research questions are explored:

1. Considering today's globalised reality, to what extent have Japanese educational reforms affected the enhancement of CT skills?
2. What theoretical approaches to CT exist, and which of these approaches have been adopted in the IB Diploma Programme?
3. How can an integrated CT approach be defined that both adopts the IB's CT approaches and aligns with the Japanese EFL context?

EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN JAPAN AND THEIR RELATION TO CRITICAL THINKING

The Japanese term '*kokusai-ka*' (internationalisation) is a significant concept when examining the transition of Japan's educational reforms to a more progressive model. In the Japanese educational context, the term has gradually become more widely used since the early 1980s, and the concept was initially employed to enhance teachers' international mindset at the higher-education level. In the late 1980s, the Provisional Council on Education (1987) suggested introducing the idea of internationalisation at the primary and secondary education levels and implementing 'international understanding' education at all levels. Subsequently, from the late 1990s onwards, the significance of fostering cross-cultural understanding and the development of foreign language skills were increasingly emphasised. For instance, the Central Council for Education (1996) highlighted the importance of having a broad perspective on living in an internationalised society and mutual understanding across national borders for children at the elementary and secondary school levels.

From 2000 onwards, education on '*kokusai-ka*' has promoted the concept of globalisation rather than just internationalisation—that is, economic activities on a global scale—and the aim of educational reform has been shifted towards developing abilities and knowledge that students can apply to a real-life social context (Yamanaka & Suzuki, 2020). These abilities and knowledge are the so-called 'competencies' and are one of the central concepts indicated in the revised 2021/2022 Japanese National Curriculum (Mizuhara, 2019). The curriculum emphasises the importance of developing students' competencies, especially 'multi-faceted' and 'multi-dimensional' thinking (i.e., CT) in order to respond to globalisation. The curriculum also requires teachers to transform their pedagogical approaches to enhance students' competencies.

Discussions on how to develop learners' competencies through primary and secondary education have also thrived in recent years (see Fujii, 2019; Matsushita, 2011; Mizuhara, 2019). The term 'competency' has been defined by several organisations. For instance, the OECD-organised project DeSeCo (Definition and Selection of Competencies: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations) defines 'competency' as the ability to respond to complex demands (challenges) in a particular context using a variety of psychological and social resources, including relevant skills and attitudes, rather than just the accumulation of knowledge. The project tentatively summarised key competencies, which are personal characteristics facilitating the achievement of a high level of success in social life and the realisation of a normally-functioning society. These key competencies are (1) the ability to be autonomous, (2) the ability to interact in socially-heterogeneous groups, and (3) the ability to utilise social, cultural, and technological tools interactively. Abiko (2014) noted that DeSeCo's concept had become a global standard when it was adopted by the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for student learning. Mizuhara (2017) also observed that DeSeCo's key competencies have been reflected in the revised Japanese National Curriculum and claimed that Japan's public education is attempting to shift towards PISA-type, competency-based teaching and learning.

According to Mizuhara (2017), the 2021/2022 revised Japanese National Curriculum has been transformed from a content-based curriculum, founded on knowledge acquisition and its regurgitation in tests, to a competency-based curriculum. To bring this about, the curriculum requires teachers to transform and develop their pedagogical approaches and mainly adopts a three-pronged pedagogical framework, implementing 'proactive learning', 'interactive learning', and 'deep learning'. The concept

of ‘deep learning’ was established by Matsushita (2015) and refers to actively encouraging students to deeply engage in learning and promote a deepened understanding of the learning content in order to develop students’ competencies. Although the previous national curricula did not indicate the required pedagogical approaches (specifically, how to learn), the revised curriculum clarifies these approaches. Regarding this change, the Curriculum Planning Special Group (2018) claimed that the revision is the most innovative and significant change—from ‘what to learn’ to ‘how to learn’—since the Japanese national curriculum was first established in 1958. In 1996, the Central Council for Education announced that fostering CT would be one of the central concepts of the revised national curriculum.

In 2015, the Special Committee for Curriculum claimed that the IB’s pedagogical frameworks could be useful for the revision of Japan’s national curriculum in terms of fostering CT skills. Abiko (2014) evaluated this revision process with the aim of overcoming the lack of fostering students’ competency in education. Consequently, the number of IB World Schools in Japan has gradually grown since the deliberation of the Council for the Promotion of Global Human Resource Development in 2012 and the Fourth Proposal of the Education Revitalization Executive Council in 2013.

CRITICAL THINKING THEORIES AND THE EFL CONTEXT

The significance of fostering CT among young adults has been stressed on a global scale in recent years (see UNESCO, 1998; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011; Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills, 2010). Although these skills have come under the spotlight in our increasingly globalised world, the concept of and discussions about CT are not brand new, and the idea has been studied since the early 1900s. For example, as noted by Higuchi (2013), the concept of CT was first found in the book *How We Think*, written by J. Dewey (1933) in 1910 and revised in 1933. The concept has been thoroughly discussed and examined throughout the following century.

Previous studies have attempted to define the term ‘CT’. For instance, Ennis (1987) defined CT as ‘reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do’ (p.10) and claimed that CT is an ability that can be obtained in generic situations. Based on Ennis’s ideas, McPeck (1990) established a different definition of CT, one that involves a suspension of judgment while thinking. Concerning this, McPeck asserted that CT comprises both ‘ability’ and ‘attitudes’ and is fostered through the study of subject areas, not only generic situations. Furthermore, Facion (1990) developed definitions of CT to identify the intended and actual inferential relationships among statements, questions, concepts, descriptions, or other forms of representation intended to express belief, judgment, experiences, reasons, information, or opinions. However, debates and discussions regarding the nature of CT continue today.

The reason why CT is again focused on in education is, as Resnik (2012) pointed out, that a global-scale economic system has been developed around the world. Consequently, PISA attempted to establish workers’ competency, claiming that CT is strongly related to such competency. In the Japanese context, Higuchi (2013) observed that the term ‘CT’ was first found in the 2000-revised Japanese national curriculum, while Mizuhara (2017) noted that the concept has continued and been developed in the revised 2021/2022 curriculum.

However, though the significance of CT has been emphasised in this revised curriculum, EFL lessons conducted in Japanese high schools still mostly focus on remembering and understanding content, namely understanding basic knowledge through drills or translations into Japanese (Koike, 2013). Kawano (2016) analysed two authorised EFL textbooks that were used in high school English courses, conclud-

ing that they contained 6% or fewer higher-order thinking skills activities. Magoku and Erigawa (2019) also analysed authorised EFL textbooks and concluded that 81% of the content was related to learning grammar and sentence structure, while only 15% was given over to the development of CT skills, even though the Japanese curriculum indicates a requirement to teach CT skills in EFL classes.

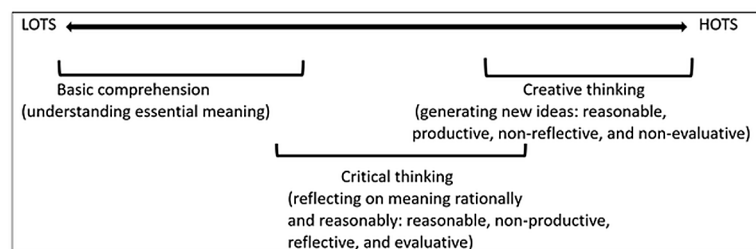
PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO CRITICAL THINKING

To enhance CT skills, a variety of approaches have been examined. For instance, King (1994) clarified that the level of questions posed is strongly related to learners' level of thinking and suggested fostering CT by asking questions. Elder and Paul (2005) also highlighted the significance of asking questions and proposed asking essential questions that can deepen students' CT by encouraging analytic and evaluative mindsets. The claims of King and Elder, and Paul were based on Bloom et al.'s (1956, revised by Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) taxonomy, which categorised thinking skills into two types: lower-order thinking skills (LOTS) and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), remembering, understanding, and applying knowledge required the use of LOTS, while analysing, evaluating, and creating are recognised as requiring HOTS.

Some studies have found that CT is fostered by HOTS learning activities. For instance, Kennedy et al. (1991) claimed that HOTS are equal to CT skills and explained that by answering HOTS questions, students can strengthen their CT. Conversely, Dummett and Hughes (2019) argued that HOTS and CT are not exactly equal, and that HOTS contain both critical and creative thinking elements. Norris and Ennis (1989) also believed that CT and creative thinking are somewhat different, although some of these abilities overlap (as shown in Figure 1). Further, Norris and Ennis (1989) claimed that pure creative thinking tasks do not enhance CT in learners because this attribute does not include the reflective and evaluative processes that are required for CT.

Figure 1. Relationship between Comprehension, CT, and Creative Thinking

Note. Adapted from Dummett and Hughes (2019) and Norris and Ennis (1989).



Further examinations of CT approaches have been conducted, but these have not investigated the relationship between HOTS and CT. For instance, Wales et al. (1987) developed an approach in which students actively engage in solving problems and involve themselves in the decision-making process. Facion (1990) claimed that self-monitoring, including reflection and self-regulation, is significant for fostering CT and suggested that awareness of meta-cognition can play a central role in enhancing CT. In addition to these propositions, Kusumi and Michita (2015) suggested that having discussions,

brainstorming, giving persuasive speeches and presentations, and receiving comments or constructive criticism about these activities from teachers and peers can foster students' CT. At the subject level, Ennis (1987) categorised CT approaches into three types: 1) the general approach, in which CT is taught independently from other subject areas; 2) the infusion approach, in which CT is taught explicitly within subject content; and the 3) immersion approach, in which CT is treated implicitly within subject content.

THE IB PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND CRITICAL THINKING APPROACHES

The IB Diploma Programme is designed to develop learners' CT, and the acquisition of these skills is placed at the centre of the programme (Aktas & Guven, 2015). As evidence, the central values of the IB programme indicate that the key goal is fostering thinking skills (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). In addition, the IB programme's approaches to learning, the second-most important feature of the IB programme, describes teaching CT through the posing of essential questions and encouraging students to engage in reflection and collaborative learning (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). One of the core courses of the IB programme, the Theory of Knowledge (TOK), also plays a central role in fostering CT. According to the International Baccalaureate Organization (2017), the purpose of TOK is to foster CT, and TOK approaches should be introduced in every subject area in the Diploma Programme. Exploring questions is the very essence of TOK.

Considering the effects of fostering CT in the IB Diploma Programme, Yamamoto et al. (2016) measured the CT of IB and non-IB students using the Critical Thinking Scale developed by Hirayama and Kusumi (2004) and concluded that IB students had more CT-focused attitudes than non-IB students. In a further study, Aktas and Guven (2015) concluded that the IB programme had an impact on enhancing Turkish students' CT.

The IB programme integrates several theoretical frameworks of education, and its curricula are developed based on these frameworks (Narita, 2020). The programme also includes frameworks aimed at enhancing CT, which are listed in Table 1 which shows the list of critical thinking (CT) approaches introduced in the IB programmes. Documents released by the International Baccalaureate Organization (2017, 2018, 2020a) were examined to identify the researchers and their theoretical frameworks, or claims related to Higuchi's (2013) study. Higuchi summarised who created and developed the different CT approaches. As the listed IB documents are central to authorisation as an IB World School, all IB teachers are required to fully understand the content of the documents that are to be implemented in practice. Therefore, the documents are referenced, as shown below.

THE DIPLOMA PROGRAMME ESL/EFL COURSE AND CRITICAL THINKING

The Diploma Programme Language B (English) aims to improve ESL/EFL students' receptive, productive, interactive, and CT skills (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018). The Language B (English) guide released by the International Baccalaureate Organization (2018) states that the importance of CT in its subject aims is to 'Provide students, through language learning and the process of inquiry, with opportunities for intellectual engagement and the development of critical and creative thinking skills' (p.13). In addition, the Language B (English) guide explains that the transfer of the CT process explored in TOK is important when conducting Language B (English) lessons. Furthermore, the guide outlines

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pedagogical approaches to promote CT: 1) engaging with issues and ideas of global significance using CT and critically appreciating the values and traditions of others, 2) encouraging students to analyse and reflect on a range of written, audio, visual, and audio-visual texts, 3) asking essential questions during the course, 4) promoting collaborative learning and fostering interdisciplinary viewpoints, and 5) encouraging students to evaluate and reflect on their writing in terms of whether they provide details and relevant examples (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018).

Table 1. Pedagogical Approaches Relating to Fostering CT Integrated into the IB Programme

Author	Year	IB Publication	Theoretical Framework/Claims
Binet and Simon	1905	Diploma Programme assessment principles and practice	Intelligence Quotient (IQ) Test: Binet and Simon (1905) organised questions to measure attention, memory, and problem-solving skills for students with special educational needs.
Dewey	1933	What is an IB education?	Dewey (1933) clarified the relationship between thinking skills and reflective thinking.
Bloom et al.	1956	Diploma Programme assessment principles and practice	Taxonomy: Bloom et al. (1956). categorised thinking skills into main two types: LOTS and HOTS.
Bruner	1961	What is an IB education?	Discovery Learning: 'Practice in discovering for oneself teaches one to acquire information in a way that makes that information more readily viable in problem solving.' (Bruner, 1961, p.26)
Glaser	1963	Diploma Programme assessment principles and practice	Glaser (1963) analysed thinking approaches and their psychological background in terms of the cognitive skills of intelligence, inference, acquiring knowledge, and problem-solving.
Piaget	1970	What is an IB education?	Structuralism: Piaget (1970) advocated that knowledge can be obtained if learners understand and autonomously practise.
Vygotsky	1986	What is an IB education? / Diploma Programme assessment principles and practice	Thought and Language: People can deepen their thinking through linguistic processes (Vygotsky, 1986).
Resnick and Resnick	1992	Diploma Programme assessment principles and practice	Resnick and Resnick (1992) suggested a thinking approach that teaches problem-solving in both subject areas and real-life situations, which requires the reading of a text, a self-monitoring process, is knowledge-based, and involves informal logic (analysing and evaluating arguments).
Boyer	1995	What is an IB education?	The most important educational goal is to acquire language and critical thinking skills; language and thinking are strongly related to each other (Boyer, 1995).
Kincheloe	2004	What is an IB education?	Complex CT: Kincheloe (2004) suggested the concept of 'complex critical thinking', which recommends that CT should be taught in a variety of social settings and disciplines.
Wiggins and McTighe	2005	What is an IB education? / Theory of Knowledge guide / Diploma Programme assessment principles and practice	Backwards Design: Designing curricula starts with goals or standards; thereafter, performance is set in terms of authenticity and understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).
Erickson	2008	What is an IB education?	Concept-based Learning: Erickson (2008) advocates that asking three types of questions involving knowledge-based, concept-based, and debate-based can enhance students' critical thinking skills
Costa and Kallick	2009	What is an IB education? / Theory of Knowledge guide	Habits of Mind: Costa and Kallick (2009) identified a set of 16 mindsets necessary for living well in real-life situations.
Gardner	2011	What is an IB education? / Theory of Knowledge guide / Diploma Programme assessment principles and practice	Multiple Intelligences: Gardner (2011) clarified the relationship between multiple intelligences and CT.

Note. Adapted from the International Baccalaureate Organization (2017, 2018, 2020a).

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While the International Baccalaureate Organization (2018) emphasises that ‘at both levels, many skills are developed, especially critical thinking and analysis skills’ (p.3), the description and depth of CT are different between the standard level (SL) and higher levels (HL). Table 2 shows the comparison of the aims of both the SL and the HL. Underlined sentences are used to highlight CT attributes in receptive and productive skills.

Table 2. Descriptions of CT in the Language B SL and HL courses

	Standard Level	Higher Level
Receptive skills	Students understand a range of written and spoken authentic personal, professional, and mass media texts on topics of interest. They understand descriptions of events, feelings, and wishes; <u>they understand comparisons and recognise a straightforward, linear argument.</u> They use context to deduce the meaning of sentences and unknown words and phrases.	Students understand and evaluate a wide variety of written and spoken authentic personal, professional, and mass media texts; they understand fundamental elements of literary texts such as theme, plot, and character. <u>They analyse arguments, distinguishing main points from relevant supporting details, and explanations.</u> They use a variety of strategies to deduce meaning.
Productive skills	Students write texts for a variety of purposes and make oral presentations on topics of interest. They write descriptive texts and personal correspondence; <u>they make comparisons,</u> narrate stories, provide detailed accounts, and express their thoughts and opinions on abstract or cultural topics.	Students present and develop their ideas and opinions on a variety of topics, both orally and in writing. <u>They construct and support arguments with explanations and examples.</u> They speak and write at length, and with purpose, in order to meet a wide range of communicative needs: <u>describing, narrating, comparing, explaining, persuading, justifying, and evaluating.</u>

Note. Adapted from the International Baccalaureate Organization (2018) [emphasis added by the author].

Regarding the emphasised sentences in Table 2, Boyer (1995), Vygotsky (1986), and Bloom et al. (1956) claimed that organising an argument with comparison, analysis, evaluation, and the provision of examples is strongly related to enhancing the CT of language learners. Therefore, these sentences are suggested as descriptions of CT. As described in Table 2, to enhance CT at the SL, students are required to compare something and express their opinions and thoughts about it; at the HL, they are required to challenge, analyse, compare, justify, and evaluate texts. In other words, it is suggested that the learning depth of CT is different at the SL and HL, and the HL necessitates deeper competencies. Thus, students with low English proficiency are encouraged to tackle tasks requiring lower CT skills than those with higher English proficiency.

Regarding the English proficiency of students enrolled in the English B course, the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (2016) clarified the relationship between the final grades that students obtain in this course and the CEFR levels, as shown in Table 3.

This data indicates that the highest level of attainment of SL students is at the CEFR B2+ level, while HL students are at the CEFR C1 level. Meanwhile, the lowest level of SL is CEFR A1, and the lowest level of HL is equivalent to CEFR A2.

The International Baccalaureate Organization (2020b) announced that the number of candidates for SL English B in the 2019 financial year was 2,767, and the mean grade was 5.78; the number of candidates for HL English B was 17,255, and the mean grade was 5.76. Thus, the average global scores of SL and HL students were as follows: SL students achieved a lower CEFR B2 level, and HL students reached an upper CEFR B2 level. These averages are higher than that required of Japanese EFL students to pass in the research university admission processes. According to the Benesse Corporation (2020), the average CEFR level of Japanese students who have met the admission requirements for research universities

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Table 3. Correspondence Between CEFR Levels and Final Results of English B Course

CEFR Level	English B SL Result	English B HL Result
C2	N/A	N/A
C1	N/A	7
B2+	7	6
B2	6 5	5 4
B1	4	4 3
A2	3	2
A1	2	N/A

Note. Maximum score is 7 and minimum score is 1 in SL and HL, respectively.

is B1. Therefore, when an integrated CT approach is adopted, it should consider the balance between students' depth of CT and their English proficiency levels.

SUGGESTED CT APPROACH IN THE JAPANESE EFL CONTEXT

When implementing CT approaches in the Japanese EFL context by adopting the IB's CT frameworks, the following points should be addressed, based on the ideas discussed in previous sections.

1. A unit plan using the theoretical foundations of CT found in the IB programme should be constructed. An EFL unit plan should use backwards design, as suggested by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), and ask essential questions, as advocated by Erickson (2008). A focus on CT, rather than creative thinking, should be the central pillar of each unit, as proposed by Bloom et al. (1956), encouraging students to engage in interdisciplinary, inquiry-based learning, as advocated by Gardner (2011). Moreover, students should be encouraged to express their opinions and ideas in the process of constructing their thinking skills, as proposed by Piaget (1970), Kincheloe (2004), Boyer (1995), and Vygotsky (1986). Finally, such a unit plan should be dominated by problem-solving, as advocated by Glaser (1963) and Resnick and Resnick (1992).
2. Aiming for alignment with the Japanese national curriculum, all Japanese senior high schools (schools defined by Article 1 of the School Education Law) should follow the revised national curriculum. Therefore, teaching content and evaluations should also be aligned with the requirements of this curriculum.
3. Considering Japanese EFL learners' English proficiency levels, as shown in the previous section, the average Japanese EFL student admitted to research universities was at the CEFR B1 level. Therefore, lessons should be taught at an easier level than the SL of English B, and it can be suggested that a 'soft' CT approach is required.

Japanese EFL Pedagogical Approach Transformation

Recent attempts to transform EFL pedagogy can be observed in the current Japanese national curriculum, which was revised in 2010. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2009) required all EFL teachers at senior high schools to conduct instruction in English rather than in Japanese in the 2010 curriculum. In addition, MEXT required EFL lessons to be organised to foster students' integrated English proficiency skills, including both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (reading and writing) skills.

The background of this transformation in the 2010 curriculum was described by Koike (2013), who explained that before the 2010 curriculum was released, the instruction language in most senior high school EFL courses was Japanese. Koike asserts that this was because most EFL lessons aimed to help students understand text content displayed in an authorised textbook by translating English into Japanese and understanding and memorising grammatical knowledge through listening to teachers' explanations and doing drill-based activities such as answering knowledge-based grammar questions through fill-in-the-brackets exercises or re-ordering words to make a correct sentence. This kind of pedagogical approach was believed to be suitable for enabling students to meet the university entrance examinations, and students and parents were both satisfied with these types of lessons (Koike, 2013). To overcome this situation, the 2010 curriculum has attempted to transform Japanese EFL education.

While the 2010 revised Japanese national curriculum has advocated the transformation of the EFL pedagogical approach, the texts displayed in currently authorised textbooks are mostly explanatory notes, and contents are explored through asking comprehension questions and giving grammar-focused lectures (Magoku & Erigawa, 2019), although the official course name is 'Communication' and the aim is to foster students' communicative skills. In other words, EFL lessons are still knowledge-based and grammar-based and seem to lack the means to achieve the aims described in the 2010 curriculum. While the 2010 curriculum has aimed to transform the EFL pedagogical approach, the lack of transformation at the school level is due to the importance of university entrance admissions.

The Central Council for Education (2017) attempted to address this situation by suggesting the transformation of university entrance admissions. It was asserted that universities should evaluate students' competency rather than knowledge. For instance, the council attempted to conduct a new type of English proficiency test to measure students' receptive and productive skills.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2018) introduced the current issues in Japanese EFL contexts in the 2021/2022 revised Japanese national curriculum. It notes that: 1) learning activities aiming to foster productive skills are not appropriately conducted at the school level, 2) interactive skills are not well-fostered in EFL courses, and 3) students are not encouraged to exchange their opinions and thoughts with their peers in EFL courses. To overcome these issues, the revised curriculum asserts that EFL courses should be drastically transformed and the curriculum should include the following requirements for EFL teachers:

- a) EFL lessons should be transformed to foster students' 'skills and knowledge' and 'thinking, judgement, and expression', and evaluate these competencies with assessment frameworks;
- b) A variety of text types such as speech scripts, emails, and brochures should be displayed to encourage students to understand these text types;

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- c) Teachers should encourage students to engage in spontaneous interactive activities, such as sharing their ideas and thoughts orally on authentic topics;
- d) Students should be encouraged to express their ideas and thoughts in their writing with logical sequences.

To realise the description above, it is suggested that EFL courses should be designed by:

- i) including a rubric that aims to evaluate students' 'skills and knowledge' – focusing on English skills and knowledge itself and 'thinking, judgment, and expression' – in terms of fostering students' CT;
- ii) displaying a number of text types in each EFL course and encouraging students to understand their structures;
- iii) asking essential questions involving students' spontaneous interactions for milestones and holding discussions and debate-based activities indicating real-life and social contexts;
- iv) encouraging students to engage in argumentative writing and assessing their writing with their peers using a writing rubric. Table 4 in the following section reflects the suggestions presented above and CT approaches listed in the IB programme.

Suggested Unit Plan and Rubric

This section aims to propose a possible unit plan that considers the Japanese EFL context, which was described in the previous section by adopting the IB's CT frameworks. The unit plan shown in Table 4 integrates the items listed in the previous section. Therefore, the unit plan begins by:

- a) displaying knowledge-based, concept-based, and debate-based questions;
- b) interacting with students to teach them basic knowledge, information, and concepts about a unit topic;
- c) encouraging students to define a topic concept by relating it to their prior learning and experiences;
- d) text reading, then answering comprehensive questions to understand the text's content, and critical thinking questions;
- e) encouraging students to engage in collaborative learning; and finally;
- f) asking students to write their arguments and conduct self-evaluation or peer evaluation using the rubric. Table 4 details the lesson procedure and examples of the teacher's directions.

Table 4 contains several CT approaches indicated in the IB programme and requirements of the revised Japanese national curriculum, and the English proficiency level is set at CEFR B1. The text material shown in the Appendix was originally created by the author in accordance with this CEFR level. The unit plan is constructed in a backward design, as suggested by Wiggins and McTighe (2005), and starts with displaying three types of questions, as advocated by Erickson (2008). In addition, during the fifth procedure in Table 4, students are encouraged to answer HOTS-level questions, as advocated by Bloom et al. (1956). Through procedures 1, 2, 3, and 5 in the unit plan, students are encouraged to be involved in inquiry-based, problem-based, collaborative learning and promote interactive skills. These procedures meet the first and second framework requirement 1, 2 and iii, listed in the previous section. In addition, procedure 4 meets the framework requirements 1 and ii, and procedure 6 covers requirements 2, 3, i and iv.

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Table 4. Unit Plan and Teachers' Direction for Enhancing CT

Topic: Subculture Aims of this Unit: 1) Understand the basic concept of subculture through listening and reading. 2) Explore the relationship between identity and subculture and identify, analyse, and evaluate the concept through speaking and writing.			
	Procedures	Purpose	Example Directions
1	Present guiding questions	This section aims to clarify the learning goals that students will be exploring.	1. What is subculture? [knowledge-based] 2. To what extent is subculture related to our identities? [concept-based] 3. How can we distinguish between 'dominant culture' and 'subculture'? [debate-based]
2	Interact with students, providing them with basic knowledge, information, and concepts related to the topic	This section aims to inform students that they will be required to explore the topic from a variety of viewpoints in an interdisciplinary process.	<p>"Have you ever thought about what subculture is? In Japan, <i>kabuki</i>, <i>judo</i>, and <i>origami</i> are thought of as part of traditional culture. Some experts say that these types of culture can be called the 'dominant culture' since the majority of people recognise them. On the other hand, <i>anime</i>, cosplay, and <i>B-kyu Gourmet</i> are categorised as 'subcultures' since they are new forms and are yet to be shared by the majority.</p> <p>The concept of subculture first emerged in the late 1970s in Anglophone countries such as the UK and US. For example, hip-hop, rap music, goth, and skateboarding are categorised as subcultures. In modern society, the concept of subculture is accepted and recognised by a variety of ages and genders worldwide, and it is said that subcultures strongly relate to identity.</p> <p>'In this section, the concept of subculture will be explored in the context of Anglophone and Japanese identities, sociological viewpoints, and cultural environments'.</p>
3	Encourage students to define the topic concept		'Go back to the Guiding Question 1. What is subculture? What images and ideas come to mind when you hear the word 'subculture'? "Some of you may be unfamiliar with this word, and this could be the first time you have thought about it. Before starting a more in-depth exploration of subculture, look at the words listed below, which are related to the concept.'
4	Read a text and answer comprehension questions	This section encourages students to understand the text content and improve their vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills.	An example of a text and associated comprehension questions are shown in the Appendix.
5	Answer HOTS-level questions	This section focuses on a critical reading of the text through the answering of HOTS-level questions.	1) In her speech, she concluded that 'foreign visitors expect to enjoy the diverse culture and subcultures of Japan', but to what extent is her claim appropriate? Indicate some evidence from the text. Hints for thinking: numbers of targeted interviewees 2) She believes that communicating in English would be helpful for foreign visitors. How much do you believe that to be so?
6	Create an argument in writing	This section aims to enhance students' critical thinking skills through writing.	<p>The concept of subculture is sometimes associated with a negative image. For example, skateboarding may be considered a sport for 'bad boys or girls' because it is loud, a nuisance to pedestrians, etc. However, skateboarding became an official Olympic sport in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, and its status may improve. How can we encourage people to form a positive image of a subculture?</p> <p>Hints for writing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Why do some people associate themselves with a negative image? 2) How can we minimise the negative image of a subculture? 3) How can we promote the positive image of a subculture? 4) To what extent do government agencies act to promote a positive image of a subculture?

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Regarding the enhancement of EFL learners' CT through the asking of HOTS-level questions, Akatsuka (2019) implemented an infusion approach (in which CT is taught explicitly within subject content) advocated by Ennis (1987) in an EFL course against a Japanese private senior high school context. Akatsuka concluded that students could gain CT during mid-term practice by answering HOTS-level questions. However, while the effects of asking HOTS-level questions are suggested, some studies explain that Japanese students tend to express negative feelings towards answering such questions. For instance, Motoyoshi (2011) points out that teaching CT by asking HOTS-level questions can be difficult because of one unique aspect of the Japanese cultural background. Motoyoshi explains that in Japanese culture, most students would consider being critical and having opinions and thoughts that differ from others as detrimental to building good relationships with others. On the contrary, Torigoe et al. (2017) claim that this cultural conditioning can be overcome by conducting CT lessons along with the asking of easy HOTS-level questions (e.g. questions that are very close to students' real-life situations and matters). Torigoe et al. (2017) also indicated that answering orally, through face-to-face interactions, tends to have a negative impact and leads to a resistance towards answering among Japanese EFL learners. Therefore, when students express negative feelings towards answering HOTS-level questions, in order to decrease their resistance, an EFL teacher can ask them to write their ideas and thoughts down on a memo-pad first and then share them with peers by reading from the memo-pad. It is also suggested that promoting a learning community in which students can learn to accept all ideas and thoughts among their peers and teachers is important for conducting CT lessons in a Japanese EFL context (as suggested by Rovai, 2002).

Table 5. Suggested Assessment Rubric for Argumentative Writing

Descriptions	Knowledge and skills How well the required text type (*1) is written with use appropriate sentences		Thinking, judgement, expression How well the arguments are supported with reasons, and coherency maintained
	Criterion	Format	Language
5-6	The required text type has been used.	Vocabulary and expressions: appropriate to the task are used. The sentences are understandable (*2).	Arguments are supported with reasons. The writing is coherent with few mistakes.
3-4	The required text type has been somewhat used.	Vocabulary and expressions: appropriate to the task are sometimes used. The sentences are somewhat understandable.	Arguments are stated. The writing is coherent with some mistakes.
1-2	The required text type has not been used.	Vocabulary and expressions: appropriate to the task are not used. The sentences are difficult to understand.	Arguments are not stated, and the writing is incoherent.

*1 Required text type: The writing is aligned with the type and characteristics of the target text type.

*2 Understandable: Misspellings and grammatical errors do not stand out, and significant errors are avoided. It can be judged that English can be used to communicate with others.

The rubric indicated in Table 5 was created to fulfil the minimum requirements proposed by Dannelle and Antonia (2013), including:

1. performance criteria;
2. a rating scale;
3. indicators, in the rubric.

Furthermore, the rubric was organised by adopting both the concepts of the revised Japanese national curriculum and the English B approach. The performance criteria contain ‘Knowledge and skills’ and ‘Thinking, judgement, expression’, and these are adapted from the descriptions in the revised national curriculum published by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (2018). In addition, indicators are created referring to the English B Subject Guide released by International Baccalaureate Organization (2018). The performance criteria indicated in the ‘Knowledge and Skills’ column aim to gauge students’ English writing skills, while the descriptors in the ‘Thinking, judgment, expression’ column aim to evaluate students’ CT. Whether an argument with coherency and reasons is there or not is a significant factor for evaluating CT (Stapleton, 2001). Furthermore, technical terms are avoided because the rubric plays a central role in students’ understanding of the unit’s goal in terms of backwards design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Throughout this chapter, the transition of educational reforms in Japan, the attributes of various CT approaches, and the IB’s CT frameworks have been discussed. One example of a possible unit plan and a rubric for argumentative writing in an EFL learning context have also been presented. However, one limitation of this chapter is that the suggestions are designed for higher-level Japanese EFL students, and they should be further developed to be suitable for students with lower English proficiency. Furthermore, the effect of this chapter’s CT approach should be examined from a broad perspective in future studies. Specifically, effects and whether the level of English in this unit plan is suitable for students should be analysed through both quantitative and qualitative research. Secondly, whether the approach indicated in this chapter can improve students’ English proficiency level needs to be investigated by conducting both qualitative and quantitative research; for instance, implementing the TOEFL iBT Test pre- and post-application and evaluating students’ writing. Finally, the effects of enhancing CT should be measured using critical thinking scales such as the Watson-Glaser™ II Critical Thinking Appraisal Test (Sternod & French, 2016).

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APPENDIX

Example Text and Questions to Enhance Students' Critical Thinking Skills (Created by the Author)

Hello, everyone. Have you ever read any articles on inbound tourism in Japan? Or, have you ever heard about a policy for Japanese inbound tourism? In recent years, the number of foreign visitors to Japan has increased rapidly. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, about 31 million people visited Japan in 2018, which is triple the number of foreign visitors in 2013. Why did the number of visitors triple? What attracts foreign visitors? Why do they choose Japan as their travel destination? What do they want to see and experience in Japan? I would like to attempt to find answers to these four questions and suggest ways to support foreign visitors.

First, I would like to focus on the reasons behind the increase in the number of foreign visitors to Japan. Experts claim that various factors, such as relaxed visa regulations and a decrease in flying costs, have contributed to this increase. I believe the Japanese government's 'Visit Japan Campaign' is one of the major factors behind this increase in foreign visitors. This campaign promotes Japanese subcultures, such as anime and street fashion, as 'Cool Japan'*, and it is believed that many foreigners are attracted to these subcultures. For example, when I visited a junior college in Singapore last year, many students expressed their interest in Japanese subcultures, especially in anime and *B-kyu Gourmet* (a variety of reasonably priced casual food), and were eager to visit Japan.

Second, I want to examine the factors that attract foreign visitors and the reasons they choose Japan as a travel destination. To this end, I conducted a survey in Asakusa, Tokyo and asked 89 foreign visitors about the sources they referred to while deciding upon their travel destination. I found that they used social networking sites such as Twitter and Instagram rather than paper-based booklets. Some of the family groups who came from Taiwan answered that they had read about Asakusa on Instagram and decided to visit to enjoy *sukiyaki*. The survey also showed that foreign visitors are attracted to Japanese culture, which is both traditional and modern, and the rich and colourful cuisines such as sushi, *tempura*, and *okonomiyaki*. I also found that teenagers are interested in *Kawaii* culture—cute fashion icons and products—which is best experienced in Harajuku, Tokyo.

Third, what do foreign visitors want to see and experience in Japan? I know each of them has different answers. Some want to ski or enjoy the hot springs, while others want to wear anime costumes, go shopping, or visit a film location. Data show that about 80% of Japan's foreign visitors are from Asian countries and regions, with about 50% from China and South Korea. Some experts say that most Asian people want to enjoy Japanese food culture and stroll in downtown areas.

To sum up, foreign visitors expect to enjoy the diverse culture and subcultures of Japan when they visit the country. To provide them with a comfortable environment, I believe we need a variety of support systems, such as multilingual helplines, to share information about how to take a public bath, etc. Being a student, I would like to actively support foreign visitors by communicating with them in English; for example, by giving them directions to reach their destination, etc. If you have other ideas, please let me know and let's support them together. Thank you very much for your attention.

* 'Cool Japan' is a concept adopted by the Japanese government, which promotes campaigns for foreigners or foreign visitors to recognize and experience Japan's 'cool' culture, especially Japanese subcultures. 595 words