

Cross-examining the news: building linguistic competence and critical thinking skills in a Japanese EFL context through class debate on controversial issues

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Deskripsi Lengkap: <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=20497265&lokasi=lokal>

Abstrak

ABSTRACT

This educational practice report discusses the content and learning outcomes of a debate course focussing on current affairs for second year undergraduate English majors at Osaka University. A profile of the learners is presented, after which the course structure and regular class procedures are outlined. This is followed by an analysis of how participation in debates and accompanying activities may help learners to improve their linguistic competence in English, drawing upon concepts from interactionist second language acquisition (SLA) theory. The final section of the paper examines the complex concept of critical thinking and then considers the ways in which participation in debate activities may help learners to develop and consolidate the cognitive skills and approaches associated with this notion.