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STRENGTHENING ACADEMIC CURRICULA AND STUDENTS' FUTURE CAREERS BY ENHANCING JAPANESE LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

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Introduction

There has been dramatic concern for content-based curricula to strengthen the integration of the contents of students' academic fields and foreign language learning. Simultaneously, the impact of study abroad has been significant on U.S. college students' future careers. However, much research has been conducted regarding the effect of study abroad focused on language development while studying overseas (e.g., Carson and Longhini 2002; Segalowitz and Freed 2004). Norris and Gillespie's (2009) longitudinal study investigated the career impact of study abroad and continued use of foreign languages based on 17,000 participants in international education programs between 1950 and 1999. This study revealed positive effects from international education experiences by increasing internationally oriented careers with a graduate degree and changing career paths with international aspects.

Also, in the field of Japanese language education, the importance of enhancing Japanese language abilities and global views has been discussed. In 2007, the Association of Teachers of Japanese–Japanese for Specific Purposes Special Interest Group (JSP-SIG) was founded with the purpose of supporting teachers who integrate Japanese language courses with any specific fields such as business and technology. However, as Takami (2010) pointed out, the challenge is developing curricula to expand meaningful Japanese language learning environments by effectively integrating language, culture, and content so as to help students become global professionals.

At the University of Cincinnati (UC), cooperative education (Co-op) was first started. The International Co-op Program (ICP), created as an extension of the original Co-op specifically designed for companies operating in a global market, is one academic option. Therefore, as an example of an integration of students' academic fields and language education, this article discusses the importance of simultaneously

strengthening Japanese language study and students' academic field by describing: (1) background and curriculum of ICP at UC, (2) development for ICP Japanese courses including prior study results with regard to characteristics of engineering students to determine the suitable syllabus types for ICP students, (3) ICP Japanese course curriculum with the description of four phases of preparation for Co-op assignments in Japan, and (4) future directions for improvement.

University of Cincinnati Co-op Program

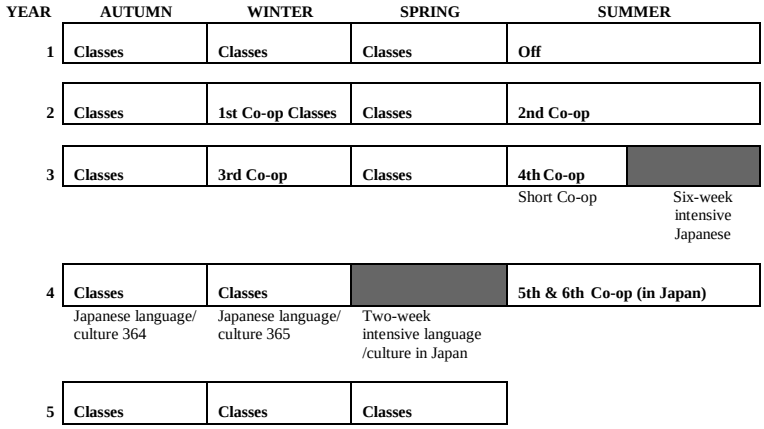
Herman Schneider, Dean of the College of Engineering at UC, developed the concept of Cooperative Education in 1906. Today, UC has the largest cooperative education program at any public university in the U.S., with more than 5,000 student placements annually and approximately 1,500 employers. Currently, the model of Co-op has been adopted by universities in almost 50 countries around the world. The Co-op Program provides students with multiple alternating work experiences that are integrated into the middle three years of a five-year baccalaureate curriculum. Ideally, the experiences provide professional growth experiences through increasing breadth or depth of knowledge in their academic fields. Through multiple progressive work terms, students can transfer learning between the classroom and workplace and prepare for further career paths.

The ICP is an academic option available to students participating in the UC Co-op Program. To participate, students must maintain a 3.0 GPA and be in good standing in the Co-op Program. The acceptance criteria ensure that students who undertake the language training are comfortable with their existing academic program. Following initial acceptance, the rigors of the preparation program increase the likelihood that students will succeed overseas. UC believes that once acceptance criteria are met, the program is self-selecting. Course content and the commitment required to complete the preparation program ensures that students eligible for international placement are highly motivated to succeed and have realistic expectations about living and working abroad.

The program is designed to fit into the student's existing curriculum, with one Co-op quarter shortened for intensive language instruction. The schedule is as follows: (1) In their freshman year, students apply to the ICP, (2) in their sophomore year, they take an ICP orientation course and begin engaging domestic Co-op assignments during winter and summer, (3) in their pre-junior year, they participate in domestic Co-op

assignments during winter and the first-half of the summer, and enroll in an intensive summer course on language and culture from August to Mid-September, (4) in their junior year, they take language enhancement courses during the autumn and winter quarters, participate in an intensive course for two weeks early in the spring and, finally, and work at Co-op sites in Japan for five months.

A model of the program structure is shown below:



Through the ICP, students are provided not only with workplace skills but also with opportunities to develop effective communicative skills, problem solving abilities, life-long learning abilities, and global views through language and culture courses. This combination of academic experience in language and in their field, as well as practical work experience in the U.S. and abroad, enables ICP graduates to contribute to the international community after graduation.

Preparation Begins with Culture in the Co-op Education Context

As students prepare to participate in the UC Co-op Program, they enroll in a course titled "Introduction to Cooperative Education." This course enables students to be successful in job search and workplace environments by preparing them to write a resume, be interviewed, and perform as a professional when they enter the workforce. These are the

skills students need to succeed as they embark on the first steps of their career. Similarly, the first component of the ICP preparation program is a course titled "Orientation to International Co-op." As with the "Introduction to Cooperative Education" course, the ICP course is offered through the Division of Professional Practice and is intended to provide students with skills they need to successfully live and work in a foreign country.

The course is designed with several objectives in mind: first, to ensure that students understand the requirements of the ICP and will be eligible for placement in a Co-op job overseas; and second, to give students an overview of the three cultures represented by the ICP (Japanese, German and Spanish) based on developing a multi-cultural view. All are imperative to a successful international assignment. In addition to developing an understanding of other cultures as they relate to the U.S. culture, the course provides students with information which enables them to develop realistic expectations of their upcoming experience living and working in a foreign country, and provides them with coping mechanisms to adapt to their new culture.

Characteristics of Engineering Students in Language Learning

In order to effectively teach ICP students, it was important to consider characteristics of engineering students and develop specific curricula to meet their needs and learning style. Although ICP students are currently majoring in diverse programs from three departments – Engineering, Business and DAAP (Design, Architecture, and Art, and Planning) – the majority of students are engineering majors. Some studies have dealt with Engineering students' learning styles and their beliefs about acquisition of knowledge.

According to the data Grasha (1996) reported, the Expert style was used more frequently by faculty teaching in the areas of mathematics/computer science and arts/music/theater than humanities and education areas. The Facilitator – which "[e]mphasizes the personal nature of teacher-student interactions, [g]uides and directs students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging them to develop criteria to make informed choices (p. 154)" and Delegator – which is "[c]oncerned with developing students' capacity to function in an autonomous fashion (p. 154)" – teaching styles occurred to a lesser extent in the classrooms of mathematics/computer science teachers than in other academic areas than individuals teaching in education and the arts/music/theater areas. However, there were no significant differences in

the profiles of students majoring in a variety of academic disciplines in Grasha's study. In Fujioka's study (2000), the results of the logistic regression analysis showed that the learners who have the Avoidant and Dependent learning styles were approximately 1.8 and 3.6 times more likely to major in engineering or science, respectively.

Whereas learning styles reveal learners' preferences for interacting with peers and instructors in classroom settings, the epistemological belief questionnaire (Schommer 1998), which elicits learners' preferences, tendencies, and habits, accounts for individual differences in learning. This was used to identify learners' multidimensional beliefs about the acquisition of knowledge. Using the epistemological belief questionnaire, Jehng, Johnson, and Anderson (1993) found that students in the social sciences and humanities had stronger tendencies to believe knowledge was more uncertain in comparison to students in engineering and business. According to Fujioka (2000), certain knowledge means knowledge with certainty and absoluteness. Learners with certain knowledge predict inappropriately absolute conclusions. In Fujioka's study (2000), the logistic regression analysis revealed that subjects who had an epistemological belief of Certain Knowledge were at about 2.1 times more likely of being an "Engineering and Science major." These results indicate that the students majoring in engineering or sciences tend to think that knowledge is certain and absolute, and strongly prefer instructor-led structured classes.

ICP Japanese Language Courses

Unlike other technical and business Japanese Language courses at the graduate level (e.g., at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Washington), ICP Japanese Language courses are designed for undergraduate students who receive language training for only eight months prior to their Co-op assignments in Japan. Thus, the effectiveness of Japanese language teaching that incorporates content areas alongside the development of students' language proficiency and cultural understanding is required.

Judging from the learner characteristics of engineering majors, the sequence of Japanese language courses required for the ICP students was designed using the proportional approach. Yalden (1980) originally developed a proportional syllabus for second-language learners. In this approach, the study of grammar remains in sharper focus throughout the first level more than the study of functions and discourse skills. Linguistic form gradually becomes de-emphasized, and communicative functions and

discourse skills are given more prominence as teachers and students progress toward the end of the advanced level. Adopting the notion of this proportional syllabus, the goals of the four phases of the Japanese program are gradually changing from establishing fundamental abilities of creating language structures, preparing for daily interaction with business people, and practicing communicative language use in real-life situations overseas.

The sequence of the four phases of Japanese language training is as follows:

COURSE	DURATION	MATERIALS
Summer Intensive	6 weeks 30 hrs/week Total: 180 hrs	*Genki 1: Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese* (Banno, E., Ono, Y., Sakane, Y., Shinagawa, K., and Tokashiki, K., 1999). *The Japanese Today* (Reischauer, E. O., and Jansen, M. B., 1995).
Fall Quarter	10 weeks 3 hrs/week Total: 30 hrs	*Genki 1: Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese.* *Getting Down to Business: Japanese for Business People* (Yoneda, R., Fujii, K., Shigeno, M., and Ikeda, H., 2006). Audio–visual materials (e.g., video/DVD, websites, etc.)
Winter Quarter	10 weeks 3 hrs/week Total: 30 hrs	*Getting Down to Business: Japanese for Business People*. Audio–visual materials
Spring Intensive	2 weeks 30 hrs/week Total: 60 hrs	*Getting Down to Business: Japanese for Business People*. Audio–visual materials

First Phase (Summer Intensive Course – Six Weeks from August to September)

The summer intensive course consists of language and culture components. The class meets for six hours a day and for five days a week. The primary objective of this course is to provide the students with a fundamental understanding of the Japanese language and culture. The language component is designed in terms of an analytical approach with considerations of communicative goals. College students (especially students in the engineering field) are usually able to analyze language structures; therefore, new grammatical items are taught first with English explanations. After completing written exercises at home, functional and communicative exercises are conducted in Japanese on the following day in order to better prepare students to live in Japan half a year later.

A curriculum designed for Japanese for professional purposes is needed to embrace the integration of language, culture, and content (Takami 2010). This summer intensive course adopts a content-based curriculum also and involves language acquisition that integrates the contents of the learners' academic fields such as engineering and the target language. To help the students develop specialized vocabularies such as technical terms, the students are assigned to write compositions with the aid of dictionaries. The topics of the compositions are selected based on domestic Co-op environments so that students have opportunities to use their specialized terminology in Japanese. Additionally, in the culture class, which meets for two hours every Friday, students are provided basic cultural information about Japanese society through lectures and discussion on geography, history, and industry using audio–visual aids and by visiting a Japanese company.

Second Phase (Fall Quarter Language Enhancement Course – Ten Weeks from September to December)

The second and third phases of the enhancement course period aim to build oral and literal communicative abilities using the Japanese that would be encountered in a business environment and to expose students to a wide range of Japanese social and cultural aspects. During the first fall quarter, the syllabus shifts from a grammar base to situational and functional emphases. Using a textbook that allows students to be familiar with common conversational expressions in a business environment, the students have opportunities to learn new vocabulary and practice role-plays in order to gain language and cultural competency (including the knowledge of business discourse). Additional materials (such as videos and DVDs) are used to expose students to a wide range of social and cultural aspects by

viewing foreigners' experiences in Japan. The class meets for three hours a week in fall and winter enhancement courses.

Third Phase (Winter Quarter Language Enhancement Course – Ten Weeks from January to March)

The third phase is a continuation of the second phase. However, the proportion of linguistic form exercises is reduced, whereas the proportion of oral practice in a larger discourse is increased. Students develop cultural as well as language competency and the knowledge of business discourse by using integrative activities (such as role-playing) in various business situations. Interview projects are assigned so that the students have opportunities to communicate orally with members of Japanese language communities. In addition, students learn how to write Japanese email messages in business settings.

Fourth Phase (Spring Intensive Course – Two Weeks in Japan from March to April)

The fourth phase is the final preparation and orientation period in Japan before students start their five-month Co-op assignments. This spring intensive course provides a bridge between the ICP students' language and cultural preparation on campus and their international Co-op assignments in Japan. This two-week in-country course takes place all day long and is designed to enable students to quickly assimilate and understand their new culture before they enter the professional or workplace environment.

During these two weeks, the students develop language proficiency and become accustomed to Japanese society and culture by having three hours of classroom instruction in the morning with a variety of field trips in the afternoon. These activities enable them to understand Japan as well as learn about the engineering field (by visiting companies, universities, and museums). This period plays a vital role of assimilating students into Japanese culture in real-life situations by providing the students with opportunities to hone their Japanese language skills in having intensive instruction and to use their linguistic, cultural and technical knowledge by interacting with people in Japan. The field trips supplement the classroom instruction by providing opportunities for students to understand Japan and learn about the engineering and technology fields in Tokyo in the following steps: (1) finding the topic in each student's specialty, (2) listing terminology on the selected topic, (3) conducting research during the field

trips, (4) writing the results of research, and (5) conducting oral presentations.

The preparation of this phase is important for success in international Co-op assignments. As the students adjust to a new geographic location, culture and language, the intensive course helps reinforce vital concepts from the on-campus preparation program while giving students ample opportunity to apply their knowledge of Japanese in context. As described above, this intensive course provides an environment where students adjust to their new culture, while still feeling the security of being with a group of familiar friends.

Limitations and Directions for Future Improvement

ICP students begin the summer intensive course with no background in Japanese language learning. At the end of the six-week course, most students are able to respond to questions on the most common features of daily life and convey meaning to interlocutors. This satisfies the standards of the Novice High level, according the oral proficiency guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages [ACTFL] (1999).

When they return to Cincinnati following the international Co-op experience in Japan, the language proficiencies among students vary. Upon completion of the program, most students can reach the Intermediate level, where they can participate in conversations on general topics and satisfy personal needs and social demands. In our observation, how the students are engaged in learning Japanese and how much they try using Japanese determine different final proficiency levels. Therefore, we have been developing materials designed especially for students who are assigned Co-op jobs in Japan and want to continue to study Japanese.

It is ideal to have one or two courses whose objectives are to help the students develop specialized vocabulary; however, the ICP language training period is only eight months prior to Co-op assignments in Japan. Under this situation, an English–Japanese quick-reference dictionary, compiled to assist the engineering student or intern in learning vocabulary, has been developed by ICP instructors with the assistance of engineers and students majoring in engineering. This dictionary includes words chosen based on English vocabulary used at domestic Co-op sites and input from students who have traveled and worked in Engineering in Japan. Two needs analysis surveys about this dictionary were conducted several years ago with students who had Co-op assignments in Japan. Based on student

feedback, it has been revised. Additionally, online materials using the words included in this dictionary have developed so that students who have already completed the language courses prior to their Co-op assignments in Japan can individually continue to learn new technical words and develop language skills at work and also be able to meaningfully cultivate their overall language proficiency.

It is necessary to further develop materials enabling students to compare concepts of their home and target culture because focusing on vocabulary based learning might lack the incorporation into multiple-level cultural understanding. Using the General Electric (GE) website, we developed materials so that students can learn new terms in engineering and business fields and develop an understanding of Japanese industries. The sequences of activities of two example materials follow.

The first example of material is for enhancing an understanding of Japanese industries by reading a short (four-line) passage containing technical vocabulary (Appendix A). First, students comprehend engineering terms in the short passage. Second, students compare and contrast each enterprise at GE Japan. Third, students develop critical thinking skills by reviewing the manufactures of enterprises. The second example of material aims to develop listening comprehension and gain an insight into views of working women in Japan through listening to interviews of female employees (Appendix B). After listening to three career-oriented women's interviews, students summarize three women's viewpoints of their jobs and actually interview working women at their Co-op sites in Japan. Judging from piloting these activities with ICP students, it would be necessary to create individual projects online to monitor students' learning motivation and the progress of their language learning in Japan. Furthermore, various types of activities should be developed in order to satisfy a variety of students' specialties.

Conclusion

Programs like the ICP provide valuable learning experiences for students, particularly in schools (like UC) where the student population is largely drawn from rural areas (in this case, rural Ohio), and participation in the program allows them to experience their first time away from home. Although students are more "well-traveled" in recent years, many have never been outside the United States. Some, prior to going halfway around the world for their international Co-op assignment, have never been on an airplane. Through their Co-op experience in general and the ICP in

particular, they grow into strong professionals with the knowledge that they can do anything they choose. They develop a tremendous amount of self-confidence from the experience of moving alone to Japan and being required to function as a professional in Japanese, which they began learning only eight months before.

"I know I can succeed no matter what I encounter because at least I know it will be in English!"

This comment puts their experience into a completely different perspective. How many seniors, graduating *without* international experience, would even consider this "advantage"?

"No one event has changed my life as much as the ICP experience. I now fear no map, subway, adventure, entrée, beverage, or [highway]. My tolerance is now my strongest trait."

This two-part statement is the epitome of what occurs when students study abroad. They realize they are flexible, adaptable, willing to take risks, and can succeed in a new environment. They also, while still young enough to have it make a strong impact, develop Japanese language abilities and an understanding of and appreciation for cultural differences between Japan and the United States.

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APPENDIX A
Material A: Reading Material on Understanding Japanese Industries (Excerpt)

1. GE アドバンス・マテリアルズ事業

日本 GE プラスチックス 革新的な高機能エンジニアリングプラスチックを開発製造販売しています。製品ラインナップは、耐熱性、耐候性、耐衝撃性、耐薬品性、高強度、難燃性といった特質を備えて多岐にわたり、お客様にとっての最適な材料を常に提案し続けてきています。

Listening / Writing Exercises (Examples)

読む前に

A ゼネラル・エレクトリックは、どんな企業ですか。日本語で書いてください。

B 日本のゼネラル・エレクトリックには、11 の事業部門があります。

Material A を見て、下のリストに書いてください。

1 GE アドバンス・マテリアルズ事業
2 GE インシュアランス事業
3 GE [ ] 事業
4 GE [ ] 事業

Part 3:「GE エネジー事業」のセクションを読んで答えてください。

i) ガスエンジンで有名なのは、どの事業部ですか。

_____事業部

Part 4:「GE コンシューマー&インダストリアル事業」「GE トランスポーテーション事業」「GE ヘルスケア事業」のセクションを読んで、あなたがどのセクションで仕事がしたいかその理由を書いてください。

APPENDIX B
Material B: Listening Material on Understanding Japanese Industries (Excerpt)

GE コンシューマー・ファイナンスコレクション（管理企画）アシスタントマネージャー黒澤直美

Interviewer (R): 黒澤さんは、今までどのようなお仕事をされてきましたか。

Interviewee (E): 1992 年にミネベア信販に契約社員で入り、千葉にある回収センターでオペレーター業務をしました。その後、ミネベア信販が信販・カード事業を GE の営業に移し、1994 年 12 月に GE グループ企業になりました。1996 年に信販会社で初めての集中オペレーション・センターが府中にでき、その時に正社員になりました。

Listening Exercise・Interview Project（Examples）
聞く前に
A 日本へ来る前、会社にいる女の人は、どのような仕事をしていると思っていましたか。

B 日本に来てから、日本で仕事をしている女の人はアメリカで仕事をしている女の人と何が違うと思いましたか。

Part 1: GE で仕事をしている三人の女の人のインタビューを聞いて、ブランクに書いてください。

Part 2:日本で仕事をしている三人の女の人にインタビューをして、次のことを調べてください。

a) 仕事で問題があったとき、どうしたか。
b) 仕事をしていてよかったことは、何か。
c) これからどのようなことをがんばってしたいか。