

Business Language in Focus

Business Japanese Immersion Seminar: Intensive Learning from and with Colleagues, Students, and the Business Community

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For many instructors, May heralds the end of a school year and temporary reprieve from lesson plans and preparation, but through this year's *GW-CIBER Business Language Immersion Seminar*, instructors of Japanese from around the Northeast have already begun their curricular development for the coming year. "Teaching Business Japanese in the 21st Century: Professional Development Seminar for Japanese Instructors" was organized by GW Professors Shoko Hamano and Mitsuyo Sato and marks the ninth Business Language Immersion program held on the George Washington University campus. The well-attended event—the topic of this issue's Business Language in Focus column—brought together participants from all levels of instruction (K-12 to university faculty and members of professional institutions) and from local Washington, DC, to distant Colorado and Canada for a day of business-language-focused learning, sharing, and networking.

GW-CIBER Business Language Immersion Seminars

Business Language Immersion Seminars are daylong programs that provide current or potential business language instructors with exposure to business content and business language teaching methods accessible to all levels of learners. The program is part of the business language programs of the GW-CIBER, the Center for International Business Education and Research at the George Washington University¹, funded by a U.S. Department of Education grant.



In addition to presentations by expert language teachers and current business professionals, the seminars typically feature a culturally thematic lunch and an excursion to an institution in Washington, DC, directly relevant to business language and culture teacher education. Participants also have the opportunity to network with other experienced or potential business language instructors. After a brief welcome from GW-CIBER staff in English, the entire seminar is conducted in the target language, giving participants the full immersion experience—a particularly valuable opportunity for the non-native participants.

Hands-on Work with Business Language Instruction

The Business Japanese Immersion Seminar began at 9:00 am with a welcome and dove straight into the subject of best practices in Business Japanese classroom teaching with an overview of the Japanese Business Modules developed by GW-CIBER in 2012-13 through the presentation



“Incorporating Business Japanese into Classroom Activities at GW.” According to feedback on the program evaluations, this was one of the most appreciated aspects of the seminar: Teachers enjoyed seeing specific modules actually used in the classroom and learning about how they might fit into the traditional curriculum. One participant called them “very useful/inspiring.”

A presentation and discussion on incorporating business language into middle and high school Japanese curricula followed, which brought K-12 teachers into focus. One of the particular goals of the seminar leaders was to connect to and provide useful material for K-12 Japanese teachers in the Washington, DC, area. This seminar was attended by a record number of K-12 teachers from the local Washington DC area.

After the presentation and panel discussion came a live Skype interview with Mark Keegan, a GW Japanese program alumnus who currently works in California as a manager for Mitsubishi. Mr. Keegan spoke about his personal experience with respect to global Japanese and the challenges of being the only non-native full-time employee in a Japanese company headquartered in Tokyo. He emphasized the importance of being a cultural ambassador and establishing human connections in the workplace. Seminar participants reported appreciating the positive connection to alumni and wished to see more in future seminars.

One of the highlights of the seminar was the student presentation session during lunch. Second-year Japanese learners at GW performed self-created skits, based on short readings and their own research, centered on topics such as 7-Eleven's food disposal. For this topic, students had read the Japanese Business Case “Bento which you can still eat (「まだ食べられる弁当」)” which is the modified version of the Japanese Business Case [Economic and Environmental Impacts of Company Policies on Merchandize Discounting and Disposal: A Case of Seven-Eleven Japan Co.](#) (created for advanced learners by Mitsuyo Sato and Shoko Hamano supported by GW-CIBER funding) available online along with accompanying teaching materials on the GW-CIBER Business Languages website.

Fourth-year students held brief presentations on green business in Japan. One component of these student presentations was to conduct an interview with a Japanese firm about their green business practices. The tradition of including student presentations in the Business Language Immersions began with the Business Chinese Immersion Seminar in 2012 and has consistently been well received.

An Excursion to the Evermay Estate

After a lunch of bento boxes, the seminar participants took a bus up to the [Evermay Estate](#) in historic Georgetown. This was an especially unique opportunity, as other Business Language Immersion seminars usually travel to embassies or embassy-connected institutions. However, in an effort to accommodate the schedule of K-12 teachers, this seminar was held on a Saturday, when embassies are typically closed. A superb alternative, the Evermay Estate was open and provided participants with a beautiful venue for the afternoon events. Evermay is a historic estate owned by two Japanese entrepreneurs who bought and renovated it with the purpose of hosting events through their [S&R Foundation](#) for art, music and science².



In addition to taking a tour of the Evermay Estate and hearing a short presentation about the S&R Foundation project, seminar participants attended talks by representatives of Japan Railway, which featured the proposed project of a magnetic train line from Washington DC to New York, and All Nippon Airlines, where one lucky participant won an upgrade to business class on her next flight. The themes of travel and tourism will be particularly useful content to integrate into future Business Japanese classes as the Tokyo 2020 Summer Olympics approaches.

Particular Benefits

The Business Japanese Immersion Seminar went above and beyond goals of past Business Language Immersion Seminars by placing special focus on both current and former students.



Although previous GW-CIBER Business Language Immersion programs did include presentations from current students, the Japanese immersion demonstrated the benefits of networking with alumni, a memorable example to participants about the applicability of business language skills in the real-world context. One participant commented: “卒業生の方の参加がとても良かったので、他にも、活躍されている例が拝見できれば、うれしいです。” (“Because the participation of alumni was great, I would be happy if we could see more examples of alumni activities.”)

In an interview after the seminar, organizers of this event noted an unexpected benefit in organizing the event: They had worked to provide teaching materials and methods and to create an environment for others to learn and participate, but they quickly found that there was still much that they themselves were able to learn from the seminar participants and from their own

colleagues. Everyone brought their own unique classroom experiences and successes to share. To Prof. Sato, it was useful to learn how high school teachers incorporate business topics into their curriculum. “These are things I aim to try with my first-year class, for example, how to regularly expose students to the latest business news.”

When asked what her key take-away was from the seminar experience, Prof. Hamano summed it up this way: “It was great to know that there are many different ways [to incorporate business content], even in Japanese which is considered quite difficult.” Overwhelmingly positive feedback from the seminar demonstrates that participants felt the same.

¹ For more information on CIBERs across the U.S., visit <http://ciberweb.msu.edu> or previous Business Language in Focus columns, such as “[Going Global: Connecting Foreign Languages with Business](#)” (Jul/Aug 2012). The GW-CIBER Business Language Program offers business language teaching materials for a variety of languages and best practices and business language teacher education for all languages, see <http://business.gwu.edu/CIBER/businesslanguage/bloverview.cfm>.

² For more information about the purchase of the Evermay Estate, see this [Washington Post article](#).