

(5) JSP Class in the Spotlight:

Business Japanese Courses at San Francisco State University Dr. Masahiko Minami

In a world where most economic transactions have been fully globalized, we consistently need to promote internationalism for not only the current but also the future interests of the United States. More specifically, as today's society increasingly involves global interdependency, the need for increased cross-cultural understanding becomes imperative. In particular, there is a need to enhance the international business education and therefore international competitiveness of the northern California region.

Two business-related Japanese courses are currently offered at San Francisco State University. The first one is "Business Japanese" (JAPN 390), which is designed for those who have completed some upper-division Japanese courses, enables those students to master conversational expressions that are useful in business environments. The course specifically provides intensive training in Business Japanese, focusing on the forms of "oral" communication frequently encountered in the business world. The goals of the course include (1) learning expressions and vocabulary that are essential to business, (2) acquiring verbal and nonverbal communication strategies for better interaction with Japanese business associates, (3) learning how to deal with Japanese business people both in formal and informal settings, and (4) reading business-related articles.

As the political and economic relationship increasingly strengthens between the United States and Japan, we also need to develop highly skilled professionals in the field of business writing. Business writing is crucial for formal communications in various business situations. To begin with, writing up such things as requirements on business activities, new plans, and ideas in a document form not only prevents us from overlooking critical issues, but it also helps us organize our thoughts in succinct and straightforward ways. Business letters furthermore help us reduce the risk of miscommunications with others, while word-of-mouth and telephone conversations, in which the pertinent information is not documented, may lead to future problems. In "Advanced Business Japanese: Business Writing" (JAPN 395), therefore, students are introduced to most of the areas associated with business writing. The course also provides intensive training in reading and writing business documents in Japanese.

To summarize, the pedagogical orientations of these two courses are based on the three concepts that have become features of recent developments in language learning and teaching: (I) the notion of "learner-centered" in the context of material development, (II) the concept of "task," and (III) learning independence (i.e., students learn by themselves). Responding to the aforementioned pedagogical orientations, the current two courses are designed to enhance the student's ability to: (a) effectively communicate in different sociolinguistic milieus such as formal business presentations, (b) build cultural and stylistic elements into their business communications, and (c) effectively recognize culture-specific modes of behavior, as well as sociocultural patterns of Japanese-speaking society. Students are offered numerous opportunities for listening and speaking as well as reading and writing in the target language (i.e., Japanese) for use either in the near or distant future. The web

site of these courses shows course materials that have been developed for use in international business.

<http://www.sfsu.edu/~collhum/business-japanese/>
