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## Collaborative Curricular Initiatives: Linking Language and Literature Courses for Critical and Cultural Literacies

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# Collaborative Curricular Initiatives: Linking Language and Literature Courses for Critical and Cultural Literacies

Yuri Kumagai and Kimberly Kono

## ABSTRACT

This article introduces a curricular initiative linking language and literature courses at a liberal arts college in the northeastern United States. In the spring 2013 and fall 2014 semesters, we concurrently taught an advanced-level Japanese language course and a literature seminar, both of which focused on ethnic “minorities” in Japan. This arrangement allowed students to utilize their linguistic and literary analytical skills and integrated their learning in both Japanese and English. By reading the same texts and discussing surrounding issues in both languages, students began to see how the cultural context of language shapes different approaches to a topic.

Based on the analysis of student interviews, we identify three merits of the linked courses: (1) translanguaging as a strategy for deeper engagement in literacy and literary practices, (2) translation as a tool for developing critical literacy, and (3) the significance of the theme, “Ethnic Minorities in Japan,” for understanding Japan and beyond. We also discuss curricular implications of our course arrangement. By bringing together the approaches of literary analysis and language study, our curriculum aims at heightening students’ awareness of disciplinary differences and furthering developing their linguistic proficiency, critical literacy, and cultural fluency.

## 1. Introduction

This article will introduce a curricular initiative that linked a language course and a literature course. In Spring 2013 and again in Fall 2014, we, a language specialist and a literature specialist, concurrently taught an advanced-level Japanese language course and a modern literature seminar, both of which focused on ethnic “minorities” in Japan. By

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bringing together the disciplinary approaches of literary analysis and language study, we created a curriculum that heightens student awareness of disciplinary differences and uses that knowledge to further develop students' linguistic proficiency, critical literacy, and cultural fluency.

We developed this paired course format as a response to the common practice of differentiating language courses from so-called "content" courses, such as literature, history, or sociology. We place the term "content" in quotation marks in order to challenge conventional assumptions about what is often identified as "content" in higher education. Embedded within the conventional usage of this term are beliefs about what kinds of knowledge and skills are valued within a university setting, as well as what fields count as disciplines. Often, language courses are regarded as "skill training" (read: non-academic) places where students learn to use bits and pieces of language, while "content" (read: academic) courses are understood as sites where students' language skills can be meaningfully used for developing "content" knowledge (e. g., MLA Ad Hoc Committee 2007; Byrnes 2002; Byrnes, Maxim, and Norris 2010; Paesani and Allen 2015). Our efforts to bridge this divide were inspired by a desire to promote collaboration between language and literature instructors, redesign our departmental curriculum in a more cohesive fashion, and challenge the established structure that creates a hierarchy valuing literature courses over language courses.

In what follows, we lay out the theoretical and pedagogical framework behind the design of our curriculum initiative and describe the paired courses. We then discuss the project outcomes for students, instructors, and our departmental curriculum as well as the pedagogical implications of the paired course format and the elements that need further consideration.

## **2. Theoretical and Pedagogical Framework**

The great popularity and influence of communicative approaches in language pedagogy across the world since the 1970s has led to the belief that the primacy of language instruction is "communicative competence" (Hymes 1972, Savignon 1997). Within this framework that views language simply as a tool of communication, content, which is conceived of as what is being communicated through the tool, is inevitably separated from language (Donato and Brooks 2004). This conceptual distinction between language and "content" has also

resulted in the bifurcation of the two both at the curricular level and the organizational level, contributing to a hierarchy of content courses and language courses in higher education in the United States (cf. MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages 2007). In this model, introductory-level language courses are viewed more or less as a “skill dispensing” or “skill training” ground, only to support student learning in other “content” courses.<sup>1</sup> In order to challenge such a divide, our curricular design highlights language study as a discipline that develops skills through the cultivation of knowledge or “content.” We take the position that there is no language learning without “content.” The content of language learning is not just memorizing vocabulary or grammar, but rather has to do with the interweaving of critical literacy, cultural and linguistic knowledge—all of which are necessary for linguistic proficiency.

In recent years, content-based instruction (with various types and models) has increased in popularity as one way to bring together language and “content,” and also to redefine the goals and missions of foreign language education. While the term “content-based instruction (CBI)” is often used all-inclusively to refer to “theme-based instruction,” “language for special/specific purpose (LSP),” and “foreign language across the curriculum (FLAC)” models, each model identifies different goals and instructional formats (for a comprehensive review, see Takami, Kumagai, Sato, Hasegawa, and Morioka 2016). Anne Marie Caldwell (2001) uses the term CBI as a synonym for “theme-based” instruction, yet provides useful definitions highlighting the differences between CBI (or what she means as “theme-based” instruction) and the FLAC model. She identifies the former as prioritizing foreign language acquisition and being housed solely in foreign language departments, with all courses conducted in the target language (citing Allen, Anderson, and Narvaez 1992). On the other hand, FLAC represents a collaboration between language faculty and faculty from other disciplines that focuses on “enriching (student) knowledge of the discipline course and enhancing their cross-cultural knowledge” (Stryker and Leaver 1997: 5). FLAC allows for a number of different disciplines to be paired with language sections.

We view our course pairing as taking elements from both CBI and FLAC models. Similar to the CBI model, the language course focused on both language acquisition and learning “content” equally, with students using their language competencies to engage in learning “content” or more specifically, developing their knowledge of a particular set of themes and concepts. While following the CBI model for a language

course by focusing on both language and “content,” our arrangement adds a different format, which aimed to promote reciprocal learning and synergistic effects through the pairing of two courses. Thus, as in the case of the FLAC model, our arrangement is collaborative, and pairs a language course with a different discipline, in this case, literature. However, unlike other FLAC examples where the “content” course is treated as the primary course with full credit while the language course is treated as a supplement for one or two additional credits (cf. Hanabusa 2015), our model has students receiving full credit for each course. Having both classes count for full credit reflects our belief in the importance of prioritizing the study of both language and “content” as well as equally valuing the labor of both instructors.

Further, we situate our curriculum model within the recent proposal made for integrating critical perspectives into content-based instruction: critical content-based instruction (CCBI) (Sato, Hasegawa, Kumagai, and Kamiyoshi 2013, 2017; Sato, Takami, Kamiyoshi, and Kumagai 2016), which emphasizes developing critical literacy as the goal of language/cultural education. Critical literacy makes text analysis a core element of education and aims for learners to come to question how texts work ideologically, to scrutinize tensions among competing perspectives, and to critique sociocultural issues that surround us (Cope and Kalantzis 2000, Janks 2009, Lankshear and McLaren 1993, Freebody and Luke 1990). In the specific case of our curriculum, both courses focused on the analysis of texts (both language-based as well as multimodal) with the aforementioned aims. In addition to developing students’ critical literacy, our arrangement also enhanced students’ linguistic proficiency and cultural fluency. Linguistic proficiency refers to the ability to use language accurately and appropriately to accomplish communicative tasks across a wide range of topics and settings (ACTFL 2012). We define cultural fluency as “the ability to step back and forth between two cultures...[and] [explore] and [become] aware of cultural differences, as well as, ultimately, [understand] what impact those differences have on one’s status and one’s opportunities in the larger context” (Glazier 2003: 144). By providing students with the opportunity to draw upon their plurilinguistic competencies to work on both English and Japanese texts, the course pairing aimed at developing these three elements together (i. e., critical literacy, cultural fluency, and linguistic proficiency).

While both courses teach various aspects of Japanese culture, they do so through different but interlinked methodologies. The Japanese language course focuses on the development of linguistic fluency—

traditionally discussed in terms of such skills as speaking, writing, reading, and listening—and also emphasizes the aspect of construction and representation of identity by the use of language. The Japanese literature course analyzes literary and cultural production produced in the Japanese language, and examines the use of language, literary, and artistic techniques of a text within its specific historic and cultural contexts.

To reiterate, three central benefits of our approach are as follows: (1) this arrangement puts equal weight on language and literary study; (2) this pairing also equally values the different disciplinary approaches of language and literature and the unique learning goals of these disciplines; and (3) through the different disciplinary foci (i. e., literary and literacy) (Kern and Schultz 2005), these courses work together to further develop students' critical literacy and cultural fluency.

Both of our courses also focused on the centrality of language choices to create meaning. The language course developed metalinguistic knowledge by focusing on the analysis of linguistic devices such as the use of passive or causative forms, indirect or direct quotations, and choice of different orthographies, and their effects on readers. The literature course examined such literary techniques as metaphor or allegory and discussed the relationship between word choice and such elements as genre, character development, and historical context. Additionally, our course pairing guided our students to attend to several layers of language choice: the original Japanese, the translated English, and the unspoken assumptions (or the untranslatable) that exist in what Claire Kramsch has called the “third place.”<sup>22</sup>

The course pairing also requires students to shuttle between multiple languages—in this case, between English and Japanese—a process referred to by Garcia (2009) as “translanguaging” (i. e., reading, thinking, discussing, and writing in both languages). The term “translanguaging” was originally coined by Cen Williams in Welsh as a pedagogical approach in bilingual classrooms (i. e., strategic and systematic use of two languages within one classroom). Later, Garcia (2009) extended the term beyond pedagogy to refer to the (natural) process by which people with access to more than one language utilize those semiotic resources to make meaning, shape their experience, and gain understanding and knowledge (also Baker 2011). While the stakes and the goals in bilingual education and foreign language education are not necessarily the same, the resultant meaning-making processes in which plurilingual speakers engage—i. e., taking advantage of available

linguistic resources to create meaning—are strikingly similar. As our students in both courses engaged in translanguaging with Japanese and English, this process allowed them to experience firsthand the possibilities and limitations of the practice of translation. This experience further enhanced their critical engagement with these texts (both the original and the translated versions) by drawing their attention to the choices that authors and translators make on various linguistic, cultural, and political issues.

### 3. The Linked-Courses Description

In Spring 2013 and then again in Fall 2014, we taught the linked courses (an advanced-level language course and a literature course) focusing on the topic of ethnic “minorities” in Japan. Students in both courses discussed a series of readings, literature and other types of texts, written by and about marginalized ethnic communities in Japan—specifically, *Ainu*, *Burakumin*, *Okinawans*, and *Zainichi* Korean. Students were encouraged but not required to enroll in both courses.

The language course, “Contemporary Texts,” was fourth year-level, and met twice a week for eighty minutes each session. “Minority Writing in Japan,” the literature course, was organized as a seminar for third and fourth-year students, and also met twice a week for eighty minutes each session. In Fall 2014, seven students enrolled in the language course and ten students in the literature course. Four of the students, all majors in East Asian Languages and Cultures (EALC) with a Japanese concentration, took both the language and literature courses.

#### 3.1. Goals of the Courses

In designing the paired courses, we set the following goals for our students. In addition to helping develop students’ skills in expressing their thoughts in English and Japanese, we also wanted them to learn a variety of approaches to reading a text and gain awareness of the different disciplinary goals embedded within those approaches. We aimed to foster student awareness of the importance of context—not just the historical or cultural context of the text’s production but also the different contexts in which texts could be read. For example, in our paired courses, we discussed various approaches to a single text as a historical document or an artistic product or as a reflection of Japanese society or culture (i. e., whether a text is assigned for a history class, a literature class or a culture class inevitably affects and requires different approaches for engaging with the text). Additionally, we wanted to heighten student awareness of working between and across languages,



issues related to the politics and practice of translation, and sociocultural issues that are important in understanding Japanese society, exemplified by “minorities” in Japan.

### **3.1.1. Language Course Goals**

The goals of *language learning* in the language course were described on the syllabus as: (1) becoming familiar with and understanding various genres and types of authentic texts in Japanese with the help of dictionaries; (2) becoming comfortable and better at expressing opinions and thoughts both in discussions and in essay writing; (3) developing reading skills for analyzing and critiquing an author’s purpose and intentions in writing a particular work as well as recognizing the sociohistorical significance of the work; and (4) becoming sensitive to and aware of important issues to consider when translating texts. In addition, the instructor set the educational goals as challenging the still deeply held belief (particularly in the field of Japanese as a Foreign Language teaching) of the homogeneity of the Japanese language (i. e., “one, correct” form of the Japanese language) and the Japanese people;<sup>3</sup> developing a keen awareness of the importance of linguistic and other semiotic choices (i. e., “critical language awareness”, Fairclough 1992, Janks 2009); and nurturing students’ agency as “translingual language users”(MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages 2007, Canagarajah 2012), who can “operate” and “shuttle” between languages and cultures, an ability the 2007 MLA report identifies as “translingual and transcultural competence.”

### **3.1.2. Literature Course Goals**

The literature course aimed to (1) develop students’ skills in reading and analyzing literary texts; (2) strengthen their ability to articulate their ideas in both written and oral forms; and (3) have students engage in their own independent research on a related topic of their choice. The course content was organized to give students the opportunity to (1) explore the topic of minorities in Japan through the lens of literature; (2) analyze the aesthetic and political issues related to the category of “minority literature”; and (3) discuss different definitions of “Japanese identity” and “Japanese literature.” More specifically, the course worked to raise student awareness of how and why particular voices or experiences are included or excluded from dominant narratives. By situating texts within their particular historical and cultural contexts, students came to approach their reading with an “ethnorelative rather

than ethnocentric assessment of cultural differences” (Hoecherl-Alden 2006: 251). Furthermore, developing student understanding of the issues facing minoritized communities in Japan also allowed for self-reflexivity with increased awareness of similar or resonating issues within their own and other cultures.

### 3.2. Curricular Design and Content

In Fall 2014, the literature course was held in the morning while the language course was in the afternoon on the same days of the week. The course schedules of readings and assignments were arranged to make sure each unit overlapped and that students read materials in both English and Japanese concurrently (see Appendix I for organization and core materials used in both courses). When certain texts used in the seminar were too difficult to read in Japanese (in the language course), other media (such as cinematic or *manga* adaptations of a literary text) or texts (written) on related topics were substituted. For longer materials, such as novels or memoirs, the language class used excerpts while the literature course read them in their entirety in English translation.

#### 3.2.1. Content of the Language Course

In the language course, the students engaged with a wide variety of materials in Japanese, including literary texts, film, *manga*, essays, interviews, and journalistic pieces. We discussed such topics as the diversity of “minority” experiences in Japan, the connections between “race,” language and identity, and ultimately, the definitions of “Japan,” “Japanese people,” and the “Japanese language.”<sup>4</sup>

In selecting the texts, the following points were carefully considered:

- (1) Offering various perspectives on the topic (e. g., different generations of *Zainichi* Koreans on their personal experiences, different political stances taken by authors)
- (2) Using various textual media (i. e., written texts, *manga*, film) as well as genres (i. e., opinion pieces, personal narrative, fiction, news, interview, reportage, etc.)
- (3) Providing supplementary English texts to provide such information as historical background of a certain group of people without adding further burdens on students besides the main assigned texts.

At the start of the unit, a group of students were assigned to research and present general background on each “minority” community. At the end of each unit, students were asked to write a short essay, which provided a space for them to reflect on the issues discussed in class, and communicate them in writing, by utilizing vocabulary and expressions learned from the unit.

As a course project, students worked individually to translate a Japanese literary text of their choice into English. They were asked to keep a log noting any questions or difficulties they encountered during the process of translation. As a final report, students wrote a reflective essay on challenges and discoveries they experienced during the process of translating the literary text from Japanese to English. At the end of the semester, each student gave a presentation with PowerPoint to discuss a segment of their translation as well as a 6–8 page reflective analysis (in Japanese) of what was entailed in translation practice.

### **3.2.2. Content of the Literature Course**

The entire course was conducted in English, with occasional discussions of excerpts from the original Japanese materials when relevant. The students read and discussed literary texts in English translation along with supplementary materials, such as literary criticism and historical background. The assigned literary texts encompassed different forms including memoir, novels, and short stories. Texts were chosen to represent perspectives from each of the four “minority” groups, as well as to reflect particular themes often found in literary and political discourse on “minorities in Japan.” The availability of particular texts in translation also served as a limiting factor in the choice of texts, but still allowed for the instructor to choose from a variety of writers, styles and themes. In addition to reading literary texts, students also watched a feature film (“Go”) and a documentary (“Haruko”)—both presenting different views on the Zainichi Korean experience. Additional secondary readings paired with literary texts were mainly literary criticism, in order to augment class discussion of relevant topics both social and literary, including different forms of discrimination, modes of resistance, literary techniques, and literary movements.

The first two class meetings introduced the theoretical foundations of the course, with readings and discussions on the notions of “minority,” otherness, and “race” in a Japanese context, as well as the constructed nature of Japanese identity. Thereafter, the course was divided into units focusing on four different groups: *Ainu*, *Burakumin*, *Zainichi* Koreans, and *Okinawans*. At the beginning of each unit, students

were assigned a brief historical overview of each community in order to provide context for the literary readings. While the instructor began each unit with a brief lecture, the majority of the course was devoted to class discussion. The course culminated in a research paper, engaging in analysis of a single literary work and drawing upon secondary sources in English and, when possible, Japanese. For students with advanced Japanese language skills (usually majors), the seminar paper provided an opportunity to use their Japanese language abilities by drawing upon primary and secondary sources that were not available in English translation.

#### 4. The Data and Method of Analysis

In May 2015, we conducted post-semester interviews in English with four students who had taken both courses (three of whom took the courses in Fall 2014, and one who took them in Spring 2013). All of the students were graduating seniors who majored in East Asian Languages and Cultures with a concentration in Japanese. Table 1 shows the profile of the students.

Each interview took about sixty minutes. We prepared a set of questions that we asked each student, but also pursued additional lines of questioning when elaboration was needed. After completing all interviews, we transcribed the interviews in their entirety and independently analyzed and coded student comments inductively and recursively.

Table 1. Student profiles.

Name (pseudonym)	School Year	Major	Ethnicity/Nationality	Languages	Japan Experience
Ana	Senior	Japanese	Polish/American	English	Studied a year
Kay	Senior	Japanese	Singaporean	English/Chinese	Studied a year
Wei	Senior	Japanese	Chinese	English/Chinese	Studied 8 weeks in summer
Alice	Senior	Japanese	Jewish-American	English	None

Our analysis of the interview data highlighted three major themes emerging in all of the interviews:

- (1) Translanguaging as a strategy for deeper engagement in literacy and literary practices
- (2) Translation as a tool for developing critical literacy

- (3) The significance of the shared course theme, "Ethnic Minorities in Japan," for understanding Japan and beyond.

While we use the interviews as a primary data source for our discussions, we also refer to students' reflective essays on the process of translation (the semester assignment for the language course) to exemplify what students discussed in the interviews.

## 5. Findings and Discussions

### 5.1. Translanguaging as a Strategy for Deeper Engagement in Literacy and Literary Practices

As we described previously, the process of translanguaging encourages students to draw upon knowledge of two or more languages to make meaning and facilitates deeper engagement with texts (e. g., Baker 2011). While the notion of translanguaging has been primarily discussed within the context of bilingual education (Garcia 2009, Garcia and Wei 2014), more recently it has also been taken up and applied to the field of foreign language education. Studies of translanguaging identify how this process benefits language learners (e. g., Creese and Blackledge 2010, Stathopoulou 2015). Furthermore, these studies also note that this process is not just about moving between two (or more) languages, but instead blurs the boundaries between languages, and creates new ways of making meaning. The idea of translanguaging captures fluidity and movement between languages, which are seen not as autonomous systems of rules but rather as meaning-making semiotic systems used to meet communication needs (e. g., Canagarajah 2012, Pennycook and Otsuji 2015).

Our paired course arrangement set up a situation where students had access to materials in both English and Japanese and could use their knowledge of each language to enhance their use and understanding of the other language. Different from a monolingual situation, the students had multiple linguistic resources on hand with which to make meaning. Interviews with students revealed several benefits of the process of translanguaging.

In the case of reading, for example, students highlighted several ways that going between Japanese and English language texts improved their understanding of the texts. First, because their English proficiency was stronger than that of Japanese, reading in English helped them better comprehend the reading assignments. As Wei noted:

One thing that's very obvious to me is that...my comprehension is more advanced in English than in Japanese, so taking the seminar, reading part of the work before I started to read the Japanese original work would definitely help me understand the content better....

Wei acknowledges how having previous knowledge through reading an English translation facilitated her reading of the Japanese text. In other words, students used the English to mediate their understanding of the Japanese texts; this process can be referred to as “cross-language (or interlingual) mediation,” a form of translanguaging (Stathopoulou 2015). Cross-language mediation involves the interpretation of meanings in a text in one language and using that knowledge for making deeper understanding in another language. At the same time, reading materials in Japanese enabled students to see particular nuances expressed in the Japanese version not captured in the translation. Again, Wei stated:

Japanese is such a high context language, a lot of times, [there are] a lot of the implicit meanings, like if you translate them into English, they either get lost, or somehow if the translator decides to translate all these implications, then it becomes more direct, and then the character is not the same any more.

Wei observes that there are not one-to-one equivalences between Japanese and English, and in particular, acknowledges the unspoken elements communicated in the Japanese texts. She demonstrates cultural literacy here through sensitivity to implicit meanings in the Japanese, and an awareness of how directly translating these implications transforms the meaning of the text. Translanguaging (of Japanese and English) thus enhanced student comprehension of the texts both in terms of content and form and allowed a deeper sense of meaning in both the Japanese texts and the English translations.

Second, by comparing texts rendered in different languages, the students were able to recognize and analyze different aspects of the Japanese text—from narrative voice and tone to sentence structure and style. For example, another student, Kay, said, “I think for me one of the biggest bonuses of having a paired Japanese course with the [literature] seminar was that we actually got to see how [the various aspects of the text] were structured in Japanese.” In other words, working with and between different languages—i. e., trans-languaging—heightened student awareness of specific aspects of the text in the original Japanese. This consciousness was especially helpful when they noticed the use of

dialect or slang, or even languages other than Japanese (such as Korean, *Okinawan*, *Ainu* or even English) because such particular lexicons were not necessarily apparent in the English translations. For example, in Ōshiro Tatsuhiro's novella "Cocktail Party," which takes place during the U. S. occupation of Okinawa, large numbers of English words used in the original Japanese text are transliterated into *katakana* and used to invoke the influence of American culture; these transliterations are (naturally) completely invisible in the English translation. Literary scholars such as Michael Molasky (1999) have discussed Ōshiro's strategic use of *katakana* transliterations to emphasize the foreignness of these ideas and objects in his story. Through the process of translanguaging, such choices revealed orthographies and lexicons that had previously been rendered invisible in the English translation, thus deepening student awareness of various literary practices.

Furthermore, students noted that reading a text in two languages enabled them to approach the text from different perspectives, allowing them to recognize "more things in the text" that are not evident if reading in one language. Alice said, "[I]t just gave me the ability to look at these writings from more different directions that I wouldn't have been able to if I had only read them in one language or the other." Similarly, Wei stated, "...because you're reading the same material twice, just like, when you're looking at it from a different perspective, from a different language perspective, it actually points out more things in the text that you might not be able to get in, you know, just one language."<sup>5</sup> Here, the students' growing awareness of "different directions" or "different perspectives" coincides with Kramsch's (1993) notion of "third place," wherein students take both an "insider's and outsider's view."

Moreover, the process of translanguaging was not limited to their engagement with course readings. Students noted that speaking and thinking about these issues in English allowed them to solidify their thoughts, which in turn assisted them in expressing these ideas in Japanese class. They thus became aware of the complicated process of articulating and honing their ideas—starting off in English and working through the ideas, and then moving to Japanese to attempt to communicate those same ideas in Japanese. Some students noted that their abilities in Japanese did not always enable them to verbalize their ideas with the same complexity or sophistication, but the process of initially voicing the ideas in English helped them clarify their thinking in preparation for Japanese class. Wei stated:

...because, in English, I am able to communicate better so I can formulate my idea ahead of time in the seminar, and when I come to the Japanese class, I was able to only compare my thoughts in these two languages and to compare how these two would be different when I'm thinking one in Japanese and the other one in English.

Working between two languages gave students an awareness of their limitations in each language—not simply that they required more Japanese vocabulary or complex grammatical structures for articulating their ideas at the same level of sophistication in English, but also that there were blind spots in English of which they had not been previously aware. In addition, this process also forced students to reexamine their perspective on the English language in general—perhaps noticing the gaps they found were not just their individual deficiencies, but rather absences or lack of equivalencies within the language itself.

### **5.2. Translation as a Tool for Developing Critical Literacy**

Translation, one particular facet of translanguaging, played a central role in the course pairing, both as a formal assignment for the language course and as a practice for negotiating between the two courses.<sup>6</sup> By requiring students to read the original and the translation, and with translation as the culminating assignment of the language course, our curriculum defamiliarized the students' approaches to reading by bringing awareness to the limitations and possibilities in the practice of translation. Namely, students realized both the gaps between languages and the multiplicity of language choice. They became acutely aware of the intricacies of the practice of translation—as readers of the translations of others, as well as practitioners attempting to render part of a text into another language.

Students' critical language awareness was further sharpened through the assignment where they translated a literary text. For example, Wei stated:

...I think when you're actually a translator, you're more attentive to these cultural differences, these linguistic differences. And then when you're reading the Japanese text over and over again, you're able to understand the multiple meanings behind the language.

Wei highlights several key lessons learned through the practice of translation. First, she acknowledges heightened awareness of differences in language and culture through the effort to translate from



one language to another. In her noting both linguistic and cultural difference, Wei underscores the important point that accurate translation requires cultural fluency *and* linguistic proficiency in the languages and cultures being translated between. In other words, understanding of the cultural knowledge and contexts reflected within the original text is essential for an accurate translation. Moreover, cultural knowledge of the language into which the text is being translated is also vital for making the text accessible to the target readership of the translation. Without such knowledge on the part of a translator, despite being “accurate,” the translated text may not be comprehensible by readers whose cultural understanding differs from that of the author.

Students who took both courses observed that reading the materials in the original Japanese pushed them to think more critically about the process of translation and the choices that translators made. Kay noted:

You are aware that not everything can be translated and the translator has a part in shaping the view of the novel. But, you didn't understand how much until you started translating. ... And it also made me more aware of when I was reading the translated text, how much of it is the translator's? Can you actually interpret this text in English and [feel like you] got the text?

The statement demonstrates Kay's renewed awareness of the fundamental role the translator plays in rendering the story in another language. This awareness also helped students realize the difficulty of translation as well as the ways in which meaning and other textual elements can be lost through the process of translation. Textual elements that the students highlighted as needing particularly closer attention in order to translate included (but are not limited to), dialect, use of *katakana* (used to transliterate language other than Japanese), and personal pronouns. For example, Kay, who translated a segment of Kaneshiro Kazunari's *Go*, a novel about a young *Zainichi* Korean man, wrote in her reflective essay as follows:

When a text was written in a Japanese dialect, because I translated it into English, and particularly to an American dialect, there were times that the Japanese cultural nuances were lost or that American cultural nuances were brought into the translation. Therefore, when I was translating, I made an effort to pay attention to the original meaning and nuances. (Kay, reflective essay, original in Japanese, translated by the authors)

Another student, Wei, who translated “Yuhee,” a story about a *Zainichi* Korean woman, noted:

Translating *katakana* used in a novel was very difficult. For example, I didn’t know how to translate such things as when it said in Korean “Nuguseyo” (Who is it?) or “Cho” (I). In order to express the different sounds of Korean and Japanese, I transliterated the Korean words written in *katakana* by their sound. Then, I translated the Japanese into English. Japanese and English were both languages that (the character) Yuhee had internalized. Therefore, when she spoke Japanese, she felt closer to Japan. On the other hand, speaking in Korean signified that when she was in Korea, she had a Korean identity. (Wei, reflective essay, original in Japanese, translated by the authors)

Similarly, Ana, who translated an Ainu folk tale, wrote:

In Japanese, personal pronouns are not always used and it is possible to write without identifying a subject’s gender. But, in English, a sentence becomes difficult to read/understand without a personal pronoun. The gender of the young person [in the Ainu folk tale] was never identified. Because I thought that it would be disrespectful to the author for me as a translator to decide on a character’s gender, I translated the term “*wakamono*” as “youth.” When writing in English, one cannot create beautiful prose if personal pronouns are omitted. But, I thought that it was more important to be faithful to the original version rather than making it beautiful. (Ana, reflective essay, original in Japanese, translated by the authors)

All these comments suggest that students became keenly aware of the linguistic gap that exists between Japanese and English and made careful and thoughtful decisions in order to bridge the gap as translators.

Moving back and forth between English and Japanese versions of a text created an awareness that continued throughout their reading. In the literature course, students participating in the paired course arrangement began to ask questions about the original Japanese version and paid close attention to translators’ choices in terms of style and phrasing, even when the original Japanese was not assigned for the Japanese language course. After becoming conscious of the challenges of translation, many of the students began to apply this awareness to readings outside of their classes. Alice stated:

I feel like when I'm reading a translation of something now, I'm looking at it more carefully. And I'm now more likely to notice things... and go like, "Oh, I'll bet I know what that originally said, I probably would have done [the translation] differently," or "I'll bet I know what that originally said, this probably is about the best way that could have been rendered."

In the quotation above, Alice demonstrated her translingual competence by moving between multiple languages through her own awareness of the difficulties of translation. She reads translations critically with attention to what the original text may have said as well as the efforts of a translator to convey particular ideas or styles. By looking at a translated text in relation to an (imagined) original, she occupies the "third place" and attempts to understand the perspectives of both the author of the original text and the translator.

Students became increasingly aware of different intended audiences for each language and how these assumptions shaped the content of the texts. For example, Ana stated that the materials in Japanese did not necessarily have to explain certain aspects of Japanese culture or society as in-depth as materials in English.

...we did read sort of overview texts, and I think that would be difficult to find in Japanese in that same sort of way because it was framed for Western audience. That would say like "This is what Ainu is" and kind of starting from ZERO perspective. I think that really really helped in Japanese class because that probably wouldn't be available in Japanese because it would sort of assume that if you are reading this text in Japanese, then *clearly* you're a Japanese person, and *clearly* you've grown up with all this information. So I think it was really important. (Emphasis added)

Ana's assumption that linguistic proficiency (supposedly possessed by a Japanese person) guarantees cultural fluency ("if you are reading this text in Japanese, then *clearly* you're a Japanese person, and *clearly* you've grown up with all this information") is problematic, and we will address the issue in the Conclusion section. Nonetheless, her response shows that she realizes that an author always has an intended audience (and intended purpose) in mind when creating a text, an awareness critically important for reading any text.

Other students took this critical language awareness further to consider factors outside the text in their reading and analysis.

[H]ow valid is [the translation]? What if the translator...changed endings or [took] out parts they don't think was necessary? And I think the reasons they gave [for translating in a certain way] was to keep the novels interesting, and so you also have to think about the audience, like are you trying to sell the book, are you just doing this as a faithful translation that nobody's gonna buy? Like how [are] you gonna do all these things all at once? (Kay)

In Kay's quote, we see that throughout her reading, she too considers what we might call the "text behind the text"—in this case, the original Japanese text behind the English translation. Instead of blindly consuming the translation, she reads with a critical distance attending to the potential liberties that a translator may have taken in making particular choices. Kay also connected these choices to extra-textual factors, such as intended readership or marketability that influence the production of a text, translated or otherwise.

### 5.3. The Significance of the Shared Course Theme, "Ethnic Minorities in Japan," for Understanding Japan and Beyond

During the interviews, all of the students noted that taking these courses had affected their ideas about Japan—the society, its people, literature, language, and culture. They acknowledged how the focus on texts written by and about marginalized groups expanded their understanding of Japanese society as well as other communities outside of Japan. Wei stated:

... a lot of my friends from different places, and even like Japanese students, they probably have never heard of some of the minority writers...these minority issues are very prevalent, and it's very visible in pretty much any society in the world. So I think, taking these two courses not only cultivate my perceptions about, you know, underrepresented communities around me, but it also presented Japan in a different light. Like it doesn't necessarily cast a negative light on Japan as a country, but it allowed me to, just get this access to different voices in the society.

In the comment above, Wei observes that information about minority literature in Japan is not widely known, even among Japanese people. She notes that studying these writings expanded her awareness of the diverse array of voices and perspectives within Japan, which helped her to look at Japan "in a different light." In other words, learning about "minorities" in Japan challenged the commonly held notion of Japan as an ethnically homogeneous society, and allowed Wei and other

students to reconsider assumptions about who or what constitutes Japanese people and Japanese culture.

Through their reading and discussions, students also came to understand the unique historical and cultural contexts under which communities were marginalized in Japanese society. Discrimination against the *Burakumin* community, for example, manifests in different forms throughout modern Japanese history, while the discrimination against *Zainichi* Korean emerged in the specific context of Japan's colonization of Korea between 1910–1945. In learning about the different contexts in which discrimination occurs, students eventually recognized the connections between the establishment of the Japanese national “self” and the construction and marginalization of different “others.”<sup>7</sup> Specifically, students came to see how the emphasis upon the difference of minority “others” functioned within the assertion of a specific Japanese national identity. Furthermore, examination of this process led to an awareness of the constructed nature of these identities—both the Japanese “self” and the minority “others.” By reading the perspectives of different minority groups, students also came to understand the variety of ways that different communities were marginalized. In other words, although each of these communities experienced discrimination in Japanese society, the discrimination could appear in different forms. At the same time, students also began to see the similarities in emphasizing a community or individual's otherness. For example, at different historical moments, both Okinawans and Ainu were framed as “uncivilized” others in contrast with the “civilized” Japanese self. Ultimately, students grew to understand the ways that these othering processes all functioned to solidify and affirm a Japanese “self.”

Students also came to think more broadly about discrimination and marginalized communities in countries besides Japan—the United States certainly, but also in other countries (and not just the home countries—such as China and Singapore—where some of the students were from, but also elsewhere). This specific topic of “minorities” in Japan was particularly relevant with the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and increased media attention to violence against the African-American community in the United States at the time the courses were held. After discussing the experiences of marginalized communities in Japan, students made connections with contemporary discussions about racial discrimination in the United States. Students identified certain similarities in the ways that racial “others” were represented in both the United States and Japan, as well as spoke to the

ways that different cultural or historical contexts shaped differing representations.

## 6. Conclusions and Future Considerations

The linked courses arrangement provides several educational benefits. First, this arrangement is one way to provide students with increased access to various texts on a given topic. Both the language and literature courses faced different challenges in choosing course readings. In general, for a language course, selection of texts is restricted based on students' linguistic proficiency; for a literature course, the selection of texts is limited by the availability in the United States of an English translation. Such restrictions in the language course pushed the language instructor to select other genres and media of texts in place of the literary texts used in the literature course. Exploring different genres and media, in fact allowed us to question what is valuable for academic inquiry. Especially because literary canons are often shaped by notions of national identity, the assigning of non-literary texts in the language course gave students the opportunity to rethink the notion of Japanese national identity as represented in the literary canon, and instead consider other silenced voices and perspectives. The availability of translations opened up an excellent opportunity to discuss the politics of translation with students. The choice of writers or texts for translation depends on what is believed to be appealing and thus sellable to an English-speaking audience as well as what is lauded by critics and scholars in the original language. The minority voices in other texts, such as an interview piece or reportage that the students read in the Japanese course, might not necessarily get translated into other languages.

Students also benefitted greatly from reading texts that were solely available in Japanese. While we could not with certainty identify why particular materials were not translated into English, the assigned texts provided perspectives that were not as widely available in English or in English translation. Consequently, the materials seemed even more "special" to some students—as if the students were now privy to exclusive information. Kramersch argues that using such materials is particularly valuable for language learners as it provides them with the pleasure "to poach, so to speak, on some [*sic*] else's linguistic and cultural territory" as if they are "eavesdropping on someone else's dialogue, understanding a message that was not intended for them" (Kramersch 1993: 239). The fact that these materials were accessible

because of students' abilities in Japanese also gave them motivation to continue their language studies. Especially in light of students' increased awareness of the politics of translation, the need to continue developing their language skills became even more important when they realized that their abilities expanded their access to a broader array of materials, information and perspectives.

One of the important issues that we need to consider in our efforts to revise our curricula is the ways we treat and present the texts in original and in translation. As mentioned previously, Wei assumed that the original Japanese and the English translation are "the same material." Translation theory might suggest that these are two separate texts that are not necessarily "the same" (e. g., Sakai 1997, Miyoshi 1979). In fact, several students noted the differences between the translation and the original text. We thus need to press students further to question this idea of "sameness" in our curriculum.

Second, the design of the linked courses taught by two instructors with different disciplinary expertise allows students to learn different approaches to critically engage with texts: the language course particularly focuses on linguistic analysis by paying closer attention to linguistic and semiotic choices that are employed to construct meanings within particular sociocultural contexts; the literature course trains students to analyze literature from a variety of critical approaches (e. g., feminist, Marxist, postcolonial) as well as situate the texts within specific literary and artistic movements and their broader historical and cultural contexts. Together, both courses encourage students to utilize their linguistic and literary analytical skills and integrate their learning in both Japanese and English.

Third, through reading the same/similar texts and discussing relevant concepts or issues both in Japanese and English, students develop critical language awareness (Fairclough 1992, Janks 2009). They began to recognize how the cultural context of language shapes the different approaches to a topic and gained a keener sense for linguistic and other semiotic choices that authors make to create meanings appropriate for a specific audience.

Even though students became aware of different intended audiences, some still maintained particular assumptions about the links between linguistic fluency and cultural knowledge. In a previously introduced quote, Ana assumes that readers of the Japanese materials would already have a familiarity with Japanese culture or society, while readers of the English materials might need some explanation about specific cultural references. We argue that students could have taken

this line of thinking further to examine why one would assume that fluency in a language also assumes fluency in a culture. More specifically, what is the basis for assuming that a Japanese reader does not need the same kind of explication about minority communities and cultures that a reader of English would? Japanese readers may not necessarily have an awareness of the experiences and issues of individuals from minoritized communities, even if they understand the Japanese language and are familiar with Japanese society (Wei seems to have awareness of this fact in a previous quote.). Additionally, this distinction between readers of Japanese and readers of English translations also automatically assumes that readers of translations lack linguistic fluency and consequently, also lack cultural knowledge. We need to challenge the way that students are still tying linguistic fluency to cultural fluency when in fact they are separate bodies of knowledge.

Relatedly, through engaging with texts in the original and the translation, our curriculum helps students to develop heightened awareness of translation as a critical element in developing translingual and transcultural competence (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages 2007). In these courses, students are literally “shuttling between languages and cultures” through the process of translanguaging—exploiting the knowledge and resources in both languages to further their learning. Because of the importance of translation within literary studies, we argue that the pairing of language and literature courses is particularly effective in developing students’ critical literacy and cultural fluency through an emphasis upon the practice of translation. Through the course pairing, we decenter language—or challenge the “dual monolingualism” (Fitts 2006)—that tends to create a language hierarchy where one language is privileged over the other. In our courses, we encouraged students not to rely on a single language (English in the seminar or Japanese in the language class) and instead promoted working between and within two (or more) languages.<sup>8</sup> Even though students may be doing this unconsciously in the language course (for example, translating from their first language into Japanese in their head, etc.), our arrangement puts this multiple language work in the foreground, brings it to their awareness, and allows them to be conscious of using both, and also to think about the ramifications of using both languages.

The linked courses also have an important implication for the structural issue that foreign language departments face at tertiary-level academic institutions. The curricular project described here is an attempt to challenge the existing structural inequality and hierarchy



between language instructor and “content” (such as literature) instructor (Sudermann and Cisar 1992, Tohsaku 2010) by acknowledging both literary and language study as unique *disciplines* and fulfilling our shared goal of critical literacy and cultural fluency. This arrangement gives equal teaching credits to each instructor, rather than having one (almost always, the language instructor) teach the course as an overload (Hanabusa 2015). In addition, this arrangement also sends a message to students about the equal value of these courses. Language study is not just a supplement to another discipline, but rather is a discipline unto itself through which students gain critical skills and knowledge.

A final comment about the collaborative aspect of this project. Although we were solely responsible for our respective courses, we worked together to develop the curriculum (selection of readings, shared film showings, etc.). Communication and maintaining a balance between collaboration and independence were essential for the success of our project. Through many discussions while developing and teaching the courses, we came to understand both the shared goals for the pairing as well as our goals for each course individually. This mutual understanding allowed us to develop the courses in a way that fulfilled our common aims while also acknowledging the independent agency of each instructor.

This collaboration also allowed us to learn more about each other’s discipline. Literature specialists working at liberal arts colleges often are expected to teach language despite having minimal training, especially compared with the training colleagues in language pedagogy receive. Working collaboratively enabled the literature specialist to learn more about the theory and practice of language pedagogy, knowledge that enhanced both her teaching and research. Many language specialists regularly incorporate literary texts in their language curriculum (especially for the upper-level courses) without disciplinary training in literary analysis. Lack of literary analytical training tends to make their instructional focus on language development, comprehension of the storyline, and discussions on how students personally relate to the story. In other words, the story is often treated as a static artifact, an object of linguistic analysis. However, in this curricular collaboration, through our regular meetings reporting on each class and discussing the texts used in class, the language specialist was able to encourage students to engage in deeper analysis and discussion of texts. She also deepened her appreciation towards literature as an important means for social and cultural critique. We believe that this curricular collaboration maps out

one path toward transforming foreign language programs for students, for faculty, and for each discipline.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This hierarchy has also been reinforced by the history of area studies in the United States. In the specific case of Japanese studies in the United States, language courses were generally taught by native speakers while the “content” courses, like in many other area studies courses, were usually taught by non-native speakers who were educated in the United States and more often than not had advanced degrees. It is unsurprising that content courses taught by intellectuals trained in the U. S. academy were privileged over language courses taught by native speakers, who were assumed to lack the same kind of training in their own discipline because their language fluency was taken for granted. Here again we see a lack of recognition of language pedagogy as a discipline that requires training.
- <sup>2</sup> This term describes a “[s]phere of interculturality that enables language students to take an insider’s view as well as outsider’s view on both their first and second cultures” (Kramsch 2011: 354–355). Kramsch argues that the “third place” is not so much a space, but rather a “process of positioning the self both inside and outside the discourses of others” (Kramsch 2011: 359). The “third place” thus encompasses that which is not fully expressed.
- <sup>3</sup> While the myth of homogeneity of Japanese language and people promoted by *Nihonjinron* is obsolete among scholars of Japanese Studies, it is still ubiquitous in public consciousness in Japan (see, for example, special section on “The politics of speaking Japanese” edited by Miller, 2015).
- <sup>4</sup> We put quotations marks on terms such as “minority/minorities,” “race,” “Japan,” “Japanese people,” and “Japanese language” because we question the meanings that these social constructs communicate.
- <sup>5</sup> Wei’s assumption that the original Japanese and the English translation are the “same material” needs to be challenged from the perspective of translation theory. We touch upon this point later in section 6. Conclusions and Future Considerations.
- <sup>6</sup> While translanguaging is the process of mediating between languages, translation is the practice of rendering one language into another in a written or oral form. Translation can be considered as one specific way of practicing translanguaging (Stathopoulou 2015, Gorter and Cenoz 2015).
- <sup>7</sup> Michael Weiner juxtaposes the “other” with the Japanese self, indicating that such “others” are individuals or communities “against whom [Japanese] identity has been produced and reproduced at particular historical junctures”

(Weiner 2009: 3). In her study of Japanese cinema and otherness, Mika Ko discusses otherness as referring to subjects and communities “who are in a marginalised position in relation to the ‘dominant’ Japanese” (Ko 2011: 4).

<sup>8</sup> Generally speaking, most of the students, whether or not they had studied Japanese, developed and maintained an awareness of their assigned readings as translations. Close readings of the texts were often accompanied by questions about the accuracy of a translation or the resonance of a particular phrase in the original Japanese. The effect of the course pairing (and encouragement of translanguaging) on those students who were only taking the literature course (and had never studied Japanese language) requires further investigation which would certainly shed important light on our curricular implications. For example, how does awareness of a text as a translation affect readers’ approaches? Did students approach a translated text differently from an original even if they did not have the ability to access the latter? If so, how and why? We might also consider how these practices affected students’ attitudes toward language study. One student who had not studied Japanese expressed misgivings that she could not read the original texts and voiced a desire to study the language in the future. It also might be relevant to note that students who studied the Korean language and culture made important contributions to the unit on the *Zainichi* Koreans and brought in awareness of a third language.

APPENDIX I  
Organization and Core Materials Used in the Both Courses

Unit Theme	Language Course	Literature Course
Orientation (1-2 classes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>竹内渉 (2009) 「あなたはなに民族？」</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michael Weiner (1997), “The Invention of Identity: ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in Pre-war Japan”</li> <li>Tessa Morris-Suzuki (1998), “Race”</li> </ul>
<i>Ainu</i> (5 classes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>榎森進 (2007) 「アイヌ民族の歴史: エピローグ」</li> <li>ビデオ: 「アイヌモシリ: アイヌ民族の誇り」</li> <li>萱野茂 (1990) 「アイヌの碑」 (excerpt)</li> <li>エッセイ: 宇井真紀子 (2011) 「アシリレラさんと私」</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kayano Shigeru (1994), “<i>Our Land Was a Forest: An Ainu Memoir</i>”</li> <li>Chiri Yukie and Kyoko Selden (2009), “The Song the Owl Himself Sang, ‘Silver Droplets Fall All Around,’ An Ainu Tale.”</li> </ul>
<i>Burakumin</i> (5 classes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>まんが: 島崎藤村 (2007) 「漫画版: 破戒」 (excerpt)</li> <li>映画: 住井すゑ 「橋のない川」 (2013)</li> <li>インタビュー: 安藤緑 (2003) 「大切なもの、それはプライド」</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shimazaki Tōson (1906), Excerpts from “<i>The Broken Commandment</i>”</li> <li>Sumii Sue (1959-1960), “Stars and Frosts,” Excerpt from <i>The River with No Bridge</i>.</li> <li>Nakagami Kenji (1976), “The Cape.”</li> </ul>
<i>Okinawan</i> (5 classes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>新聞記事: 「米兵女性暴行: 沖縄に基地がある限り」 (東京新聞ウェブ版社説, 2012.10.18)</li> <li>大城立裕 (1967) 「カクテルパーティー」 (excerpt)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ikemiyagi Sekihō (1926), “Officer Ukuma”</li> <li>Kushi Fusako (1932), “Memoirs of a Declining Ryukyuan Woman”</li> <li>Ōshiro Tatsuhiko (1967), “Cocktail Party”</li> <li>Medoruma Shun (1997), “Droplets”</li> </ul>
<i>Zainichi Korean</i> (5 classes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>雑誌記事: 「日常に潜む「嫌韓」」 (AERA 2014.3.24)</li> <li>金城一紀 (2000) 「Go」 (excerpt)</li> <li>映画: 行定勲 「GO」</li> <li>映画: 野澤和之 「ハルコ」</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FILM: Yukisada Isao, “Go”</li> <li>FILM: Nozawa Kazuyuki, “Haruko”</li> <li>Kim Sa-ryang (1939), “Into the Light”</li> <li>Kim Tal-su (1952), “In the Shadow of Mount Fuji.”</li> <li>Noguchi Kakuchū (1958), “Foreign Husband”</li> </ul>

Note: The materials used for both courses as common texts are indicated by the boldfaced font.

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