

# Land of Inspiration



# Preparing for a Global 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By studying Japanese you not only learn to communicate in the language, but you also develop an understanding of and empathy for the people and their culture.

Through the learning of Japanese, you will become respectful and inter-culturally competent individuals and globally conscious citizens. This will help you to thrive in the competitive world of the future.



# Learning Japanese Will Impact Your Life

Learning Japanese will connect you with fascinating Japanese culture and people !

It can open up many career opportunities!

Learning Japanese can enrich your life through the enjoyment of Japanese anime, literature, philosophy, cuisine, and more!



# Message from *Senpai* (alumni)

I took Japanese at Columbia for two main reasons: the quality of the program and career advancement. Columbia's Japanese language is considered top-notch, and the program produces graduates who are able to use Japanese well in almost any situation. I know fellow graduates who went on to become scholars, diplomats, businessmen, and scientists dealing with Japan. I even know a fellow alumni who made appearances on Japanese television! Also, depending on your career path, Japanese as a second language can be useful. Back in my Columbia days I studied Materials Science and Engineering at SEAS. This is a highly technical field where Japan is considered a world leader and possesses a significant amount of technical expertise and scientific knowledge not found in other countries. However, the vast majority of Japanese scientists and engineers do not speak English well enough to hold a basic conversation, let alone discuss scientific collaborations or business deals. Thus, learning Japanese is the only way to gain access to the Japanese scientific and engineering community.

The greatest strength of the Columbia Japanese program is that it provides a solid foundation for self-directed language acquisition. As anyone familiar with language acquisition already knows, the only person who can truly teach you a language is yourself. The Japanese program at Columbia helps you accomplish this by teaching you how to learn the language on your own. Within 3 years, I went from knowing nothing to reliably reading novels and newspapers, watching TV, and surviving a wide variety of situations requiring Japanese language ability. In addition to classroom instruction, the program provided weekly language practice sessions on Fridays and opportunities for intensive study abroad immersion programs. Even now, I still use the methods I learned over 10 years ago when encountering new words, phrases, and grammar, which just shows how effective they are. (continued on the next page)

David Ordinario '11  
Materials Science, SEAS  
Research Scientist III at Shiseido Co., Ltd.



# Message from *Senpai* (alumni)

The language and culture lessons gained from the Columbia Japanese program proved useful when embarking on my career. After graduate school, I was able to participate in a highly competitive postdoctoral research program at Tokyo University sponsored by the Japanese government. Afterwards, I was offered a lifetime staff scientist position at Shiseido Co. Ltd, a major Japanese cosmetics manufacturer. A major factor in being offered such amazing opportunities was the language and culture training I received from Columbia. As mentioned before, English-speaking Japanese scientists and engineers are extremely rare so Japanese language skills are mandatory. Furthermore, experience dealing with both Japanese and foreign cultures is highly sought-after by major Japanese corporations looking to expand overseas due to the shrinking Japanese domestic market and the shockingly low number of Japanese citizens with any international experience. In short, there are many career advancement opportunities for students of Japanese language and culture!

Aside from career advancement, a working knowledge of Japanese language and culture is helpful for daily life in Japan. Most foreigners experience isolation due to an inability to speak with the local population. In contrast, understanding Japan and the Japanese people allowed me to integrate with society and continue doing all the things I grew up doing in New York. I was able to meet many people I otherwise wouldn't have, and even became a full-time member of a symphony orchestra in Tokyo. None of this would have been possible without the language and culture education I received in college!

David Ordinario '11  
Materials Science, SEAS  
Research Scientist III at Shiseido Co., Ltd.



# Message from *Senpai* (alumni)

I entered the Japanese language program my freshman year at level three, having just returned from a gap year in Tokyo as an exchange student. While I spoke Japanese conversationally, I had a limited vocabulary and many gaps in my grammar.

The Columbia Japanese Program was rigorous and did an excellent job of providing me with a structured base and practical skills, giving me the confidence to read, write, listen, and speak with fluency. I still remember studying for the daily vocabulary tests and the feeling of accomplishment as my ability to communicate improved.

By my third year of studies (level five), I had progressed to the point that during a study abroad I was able to take engineering classes in Japanese alongside native Japanese speakers. Perhaps more importantly, however, I was confident in my ability to communicate with other students, and I joined extracurricular clubs with ease, making lifelong friendships with my Japanese classmates.

While I did not major (or minor) in ELAC, the Columbia Japanese Program enabled me to pursue multiple work opportunities using Japanese as the primary language. My first job was at a Japanese hospitality company that has just expanded to the U.S., and since then I have worked for 9.5 years in Japan, both at Japanese companies as well as freelance consulting jobs with a number of companies that spoke zero English. I am currently in charge of the marketing department at a Japanese conglomerate, with most of my work performed in Japanese.

There is no doubt in my mind that the Columbia Japanese Program influenced the direction of my life after college and enabled me to build a career in a language I could not speak just a few years prior.

Todd Spitz, '08  
Mechanical Engineering, SEAS  
Director of Marketing at LIVNEX Co., Ltd





# Is Japanese easy to learn?

**Yes!**

**Japanese  
pronunciation  
is simple !**

**Only 5  
vowels and  
13  
consonants!**

**Pitch is not  
so critical!**

**The  
pictographic  
characters are  
challenging but  
interesting !**



**Japanese nouns  
have  
no gender!**

**Japanese  
grammar  
rules are  
regular !**

# Does learning Japanese make you smarter?

Learning languages can lead to improvement in:



**Yes!**

**General language and reading/writing skills**

**Problem solving skills and critical thinking**

(Boaz, et al., 2012)

**Listening skills**

(Krizman et al., 2012)

**Language sensitivity and awareness**

(Werker & Sebastian-Galles, 2011)

**Memory**

(Morales et al., 2013)

**Open mindedness and flexibility**

(Gold et al., 2013)

**Concentration**

(Bialystok & Craik, 2010)



# What are the benefits of learning Japanese ?

**ENGAGE**

engage with another culture and place

**MAKE**

make new friendships

**USE**

use the language with visitors from Japan

**BROADEN**

broaden career opportunities

**INCLUDE**

include language skills in a job application



# Is Japan a safe place to visit?



Japanese people are polite and helpful



Japan has a low crime rate.



Japanese are well prepared for natural disasters and evacuation drills are conducted frequently.



Street signs and public announcements are often given in English!



Yes!



# KŌBAN



**KŌBAN** , neighbourhood police boxes, are found in around 6,000 locations all over Japan.

They are there to help people and to keep the community safe.



Source: Ministry of International Affairs and Communications. (2018). 第32次地方制度調査会第5回専門委員会. Retrieved from [https://www.soumu.go.jp/main\\_sosiki/singi/chihou\\_seido/singi/02gyosei01\\_03000176\\_00009.html](https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/singi/chihou_seido/singi/02gyosei01_03000176_00009.html). (第4回専門小委員会におけるヒアリング省庁に対する追加質問及び回答 (警察庁) [https://www.soumu.go.jp/main\\_content/000582794.pdf](https://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000582794.pdf))

たのしく  
日本語をべんきょうしましょう！

Let's enjoy studying Japanese!

