

Teaching Practical Entrepreneurial Skills to Japanese University Students

日本の大学生への実用的経営技術の教授

Robert Sheridan

Abstract: With the advance of globalization and the emergence of English as a lingua franca of business, the importance of teaching business content in English education in Japan is evident. This article introduces a way in which “real world” business studies and practice can be incorporated into the English as a foreign language classroom as part of a Content and Language Integrated Learning program. It showcases the semester-long projects of students who have taken the class over the past four academic years, showing their contributions to society through the donation of their profits to charities helping communities.

Keywords: Business studies in English education in Japan, Content and Language Integrated Learning program (CLIL), Business English as a Lingua Franca (BELF)

要約

グローバル化の発展とビジネス共通語としての英語の出現により日本の英語教育においてビジネスに関する事を教える重要性は明白である。この論説は「実社会」においての実務研修や実践を EFL クラスに内容言語統合型学習の一環として組み入れる方法を紹介する。在学中 4 年間クラスを受講した学生達のコミュニティを支援する慈善活動からの利益を寄付するという社会貢献を説明しながら彼らの 1 学期に渡るプロジェクトを例示する。

キーワード：日本の英語教育におけるビジネス、内容言語統合型学習（CLIL）、ビジネスリングフランカとしての英語

English as the Global Language of Business in Japan

English is rapidly becoming the lingua franca of the world and consequently the global language of business. As far back as the mid-1990s, a study of Japanese management (Kameda & et al., 1996) revealed that 57% of Japanese managers used English when dealing with Southeast Asian business partners compared to only 9% of those who conducted business in Japanese or their counterpart’s local language. In 2012, two major Japanese companies, Rakuten and Uniqlo, joined other Asian-based organizations such as Samsung, Fast Retailing and Microsoft in Beijing by adopting English as their official common corporate language reinforcing this shift (Neely, 2012). Moreover, the Toyota Motor Corporation recognizing this trend, has replaced many of its Japanese managers in Europe and North America who lacked English proficiency with local managers (Du-Babcock, 2012).

With the advance of globalization and the emergence of business English as a lingua franca (BELF), the

importance of teaching business content in English education in Japan is evident. Most current business courses in English at the university level focus on teaching business terminology through memorization and case study review. However, this teaching method often fails to adequately prepare students for “real world” business practices. In order to address this need, business courses should be given more attention as part of the growing trend towards content and language integrated learning in English as a foreign language (EFL) instruction. The course introduced in this article was designed to teach business skills and vocabulary practically through application.

Origins of the Course and Class Project

With the goal of offering general courses in English at a Japanese university, Otemae University introduced a program of content and language integrated learning courses, Global Japan Studies (GJS) and Global Business Studies (GBS) in September 2012. As part of the GBS program, the Entrepreneurship course (now known as the Business Planning course) was developed by the author to provide students with the necessary entrepreneurial skills to independently create, implement and operate an enterprise. Throughout the course the students use real money to produce tangible products to meet the needs, wants and demands of actual customers with the purpose of making a profit.

The course was modeled after the Junior Achievement (JA) of Canada Company Program, where the instructor had prior success as an advisor to All Star Productions, the 1999 JA Central Ontario Company of the Year. In the JA Company Program, groups of secondary school students from grades 9-12 work together with the assistance of advisors to simulate the operations of a corporation by creating, managing, and liquidating a business over an 18-27 week period. The program is not only geared towards fostering the business knowledge and skills of its participants, but to also developing a greater understanding of the significance of leadership, personal responsibility and cooperation (Junior Achievement of Canada, 1990).

The JA Company Program goal is to achieve a profit, which is distributed to the student achievers (the shareholders) at the completion of the program. Additionally, the students are encouraged to reinvest their profits back into the JA Company Program helping finance future ventures. In the Business Planning course, the instructor provides the necessary startup capital as a business loan. After this debt is repaid, the students donate the remaining profits to a charity of their choice.

Taking into consideration the reduced time period and that business studies are not included in the curriculum of most junior high schools and high schools in Japan, students lack the academic background, basic principles, and language associated with business. Therefore, the JA Company Program had to be modified to best accommodate the Japanese students requirement for language support while developing their content knowledge within a 15-week timeframe, the typical length of a Japanese university semester. The course description and objectives for the Business Planning course are as follows:

Course Description

This 15-week course provides students with the opportunity to understand the role of business in our society by creating an enterprise of their own. Students will work together to design, organize and operate a real business. Students will experience how a small enterprise functions while working within the structure of the Japanese economic system.

Course Objectives

Students will work together to:

- Create and run an enterprise of their own
- Develop & evaluate their corporate mission statement and goals
- Research and identify target markets and product ideas
- Create a business plan and final annual report
- Analyze and decide on marketing strategies
- Take on different management roles within a team context
- Uncover some of the factors which make a business successful in Japan

*(For additional details see the syllabus in *appendix 1*.)

The Course and Class Project

The 15-week course can be divided into 3 phases: the *Planning Phase*, the *Production and Sales Phase* and the *Financial and Presentation Phase*. Each of these phases are crucial in teaching the students the skills integral for creating, implementing and operating a business. Each phase was built upon knowledge learned in the previous section, providing solid reinforcement of lessons as the course progressed.

The Planning Phase

The *Planning Phase* takes place over the first five weeks of the course. During this phase, students develop relationships through team-building activities. As a class they brainstorm ideas for a company and its product, forming teams based on similar business interests and mutual skills they possess to run a business such as sewing or artistic design. In their smaller company groups they develop a business plan, mission statement and goals, conduct marketing research and do a cost-benefit analysis (see figure 1).

This is the most important segment of the course as it provides the students with a solid foundation on which to build upon throughout the rest of the semester. The students often require additional support in understanding the definitions and terms of business language as well as guidance in the development of their new companies, products and business plans. The need for this additional support was reduced following the implementation of a

prerequisite for this course, General Business Administration. This course was added to Otemae University's GBS program in 2014.

Class	Date	Theme	Brief Description	Assignment/Report
01	28-Sep	Course Outline and Team-Building	Explanation of the course and team-building activities	
02	5-Oct	Brainstorming Ideas for a Company	Hold an executive meeting to discuss ideas for a company.	Weekly Group Report
03	12-Oct	Corporate mission statement and goals	Develop & evaluate a corporate mission statement and goals	Weekly Group Report
04	19-Oct	Market surveys and cost benefit analysis	Determine potential products for their target market	Weekly Group Report
05	26-Oct	Business Plan	Developing the company's business plan and implementation strategies	Weekly Group Report

Figure 1

The Production and Sales Phase

The lengthiest and most challenging portion of the course is the second segment, the *Production and Sales Phase*. Over an 8-10 week period the newly formed companies work as a team to order materials, manufacture products and market and sell them (see figure 2). Although considerable time is provided in most of these classes for product production, most teams have needed extra time outside of class to develop enough inventory to meet sales forecasts.

As part of the course, the students are required to sell their products during the two-day Otemae University School Festival and at the Language Education of Otemae (LEO) year-end party. The students are also encouraged to sell their products outside of these events as well as to liquidate all of their assets when dissolving their companies. For example, in 2012, the students worked closely with the CELL Library to sell their products in the school library while promoting awareness for natural disasters and disaster relief. In 2013, the students sold their products at the LEO 15th Anniversary Party. In most years, students attempted to generate sales of their products through Social Network Services (SNS) and/or custom orders.

Class	Date	Theme	Brief Description	Assignment/Report
06	2-Nov	Production	Implementation of the business plan and ordering materials for product production	Weekly Group Report
07	9-Nov	Sales techniques and Production	Operate the company and produce and sell its product	Weekly Group Report
	<i>14&15 – Nov (School Festival)</i>	Sales and charity drive	Sell your products and collect clothes for donation	
08	23-Nov	Financial Reports	Prepare monthly reports	Weekly Group Report
09	30-Nov	Sales techniques and Production continued	Operate the company and produce and sell its product	Weekly Group Report
10	7-Dec	Sales techniques and Production continued	Operate the company and produce and sell its product	Weekly Group Report
11	14-Dec	Sales techniques and Production continued	Operate the company and produce and sell its product	Weekly Group Report
12	<i>19-Dec (Christmas Party)</i>	Sales and charity drive	Sell your products and collect clothes for donation	

Figure 2

At the mid-point of this segment, immediately after the school festival, financial reports are prepared and a self-reflection worksheet is given as homework in order to measure the success rate of each company and encourage the students to reflect on how to improve their business plans. Students are asked to evaluate their financial statements and to answer the following questions:

- Are you satisfied with your current product? How could you improve your product and the production of it?
- Are you happy with the number of items you sold at the school festival? Why or why not? How could you have sold more items?
- How did you promote (advertise) your product? How could you promote it in the future?
- Where/How could you sell your product in the future?

Through this exercise, every year the students were able to identify the weak points of their businesses and self-correct. For example, groups recognized that their sales pitches, the quality of their products, and promotional methods needed to be improved, production costs needed to be reduced and the organizations for which they were fundraising for needed to be better explained.

The Financial and Presentation Phase

The final three weeks of the course constitute the *Financial and Presentation Phase* (see figure 3), where students

are required to prepare final financial reports as well as a final presentation addressing all points indicated in figure 4.

Prior to the addition of the GBS General Business Administration course as a prerequisite for this course, the students struggled with accounting so the companies in the first 2 years of this course were limited to creating trial balances to show their financial situation. After that, students were able to produce proper financial statements, such as balance sheets and income statements. Such skills were immediately practical to their daily lives, and this helped many students make connections about learning the importance of business practice.

13	21-Dec	Financial Reports	Prepare annual reports	Weekly Group Report
14	18-Jan	Financial Reports	Prepare annual reports	Weekly Group Report
15	25-Jan	Final Presentations	Final presentations and reflection	Final Report and Presentation

Figure 3

Entrepreneurship Final Presentation

Students will be able to:

- Describe their Business Plan and why they decided on the product they chose
- Describe their product and the benefits to purchasing their product
- Describe the operations of their business
- Present the financial statements of their company
- Reflect on their product and team

The presentation must include the following information regarding your company:

1. Your product and its description
2. Your Business Plan (you do not need to include financial strategies)
3. The Three C's (Concept, Customer, Capital)
4. Market Research conducted
5. Results of your Market Research
6. Advertising and how you sold your product
7. Your product's slogan and why you chose that slogan
8. The features and benefits of your product (Sales pitch)
9. The financial statements of your company
10. Strengths and weakness of your product
11. Successes and/or failures of your team
12. Closing

The presentation should have at least 12 slides including:

- Title and Closing slides
- Results of your Market Research (chart)
- Your product (picture and description)
- A minimum of 5 pictures or graphics

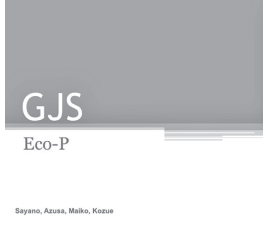
Figure 4

Final Results and Student Presentations

2012

Company Name	Product
Eco-P (Figure 5)	Handmade eco-friendly pencil cases made out of used clothing
Cutissue (Figure 6)	Cute, handmade purse-sized tissue cases
Fortune Jewelry (Figure 7)	Unique, handmade jewelry based on the customer's fortune
Bookmark Moai (Figure 8)	Simple and designer handmade bookmarks

All of the businesses in the inaugural year of the program were profitable. The students' profits in addition to charitable donations resulted in a contribution of ¥46,380 to the Red Cross for disaster relief in the Tohoku area.



GJS
Eco-P

Sayano, Azusa, Maho, Kozue

The Three C's

- Concept**
Our product uses strong cloth so it can be used as pencil case, wallet, make up pouch and more.
- Customer**
All people can like and use it. Students and women who use make up are our target customers.
- Capital**
Lain from teacher
Cost : Cheap price (Use our old clothes.)
Profit : Profit is not so much (We have to setting many palace and advertise and the cost lower.)

slogan

Let's start to be responsible and recycle. We can do it with Eco-P.

Why we chose this slogan?
We have handmade all of our pencil-cases out of old clothes.
So, our product is made out of recycled materials.

The 3 trail balances
After sold in the library

Account	Debit	Credit
Cash	9810	
Supplies	1339	
Loan		2500
Revenue		9810
Supplies	1161	
Expenses		
	12,310	12,310


PRODUCT

Pencil Case

- Our pencil case out of old clothes.
- So, they are recycled and good for environment.

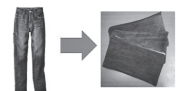
Market Research conducted

Date: 1 week
Place: school
Object person: students




The features and benefits

All of our pencil-cases are made from old clothes so it is recycled material.
The pencil-cases are made out of strong material such as denim so they are very durable.



Strengths and weakness of our product

Strengths	Weakness
• strong	• simple design
• durable	• not uniform size
• recycle	



Business Plan

Business Idea

- The factors will influence the demand for our product
 - All people use pencil case.
- The type of business
 - Sales.
- Our business socially responsible
 - Recycle and donation

Results of your Market Research

Want to buy

NO

YES

Coming school festival

NO

YES

The 3 trail balances
After school festival

Account	Debit	Credit
Cash	7010	
Supplies	419	
Loan		1580
Revenue		7010
Supplies	1161	
Expenses		
	8590	8590

Successes and/ or failures of our team

Successes	Failures
• SNS	• planning
• quality	• absent
	• count of orders


Business Plan

Opportunity and Market Analysis

- Our competitors
 - School festival and Stationery Stores
- Our competitive advantage
 - Handmade, Simple Design, Recycled Clothes and Cheap Price
- Our product promoting
 - School festival, Word-of-mouth, flyer and SNS

Advertising and how we sold our product

- Hand bill
- Poster
- Buzz marketing




- Set up to "Charity for TOHOKU"

The 3 trail balances
After Christmas party

Account	Debit	Credit
Cash	7010	
Supplies	1339	
Loan		2500
Revenue		7010
Supplies	1161	
Expenses		
	9510	9510

Impression



At first we were worried whether we can make pencil cases.

However, we were able to make well them and a lot of people bought the product.

Figure 5

- 65 -

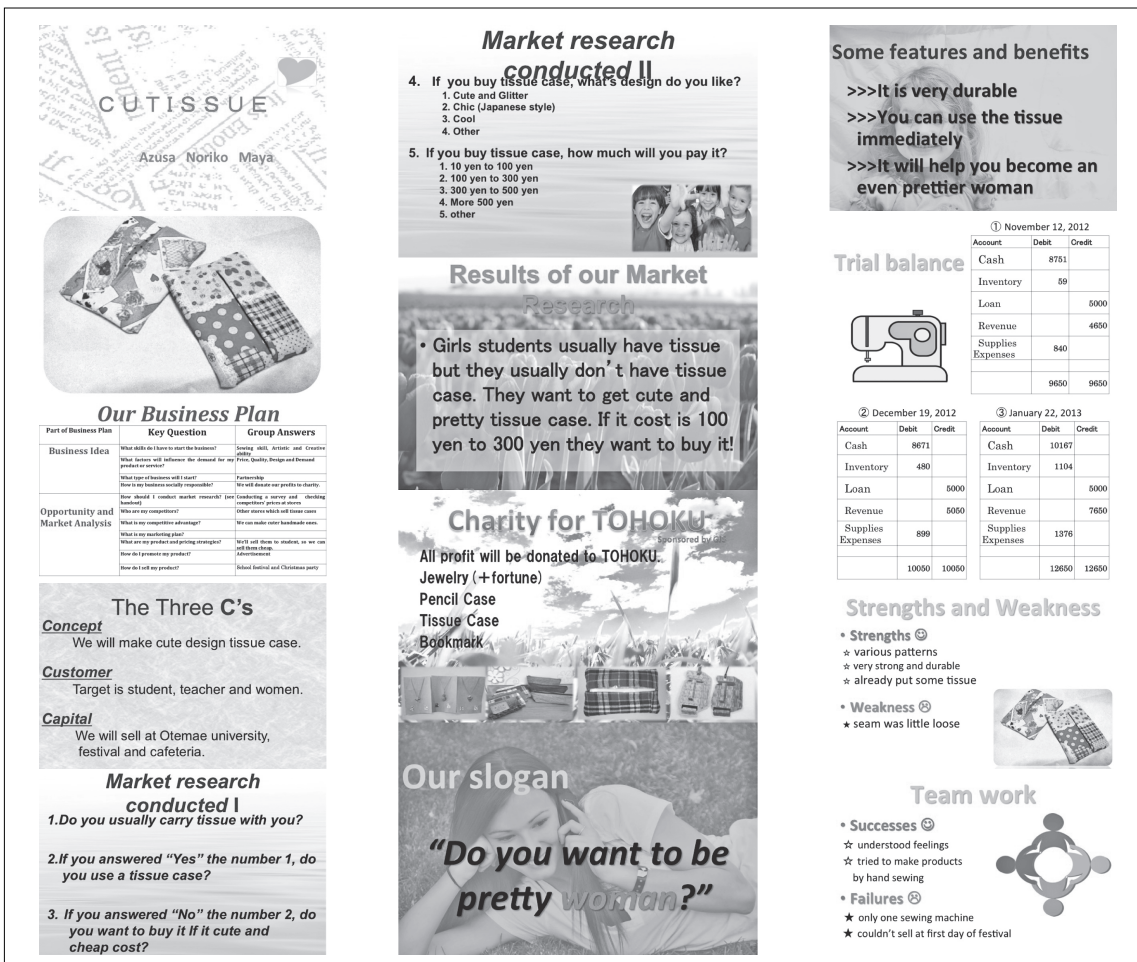


Figure 6

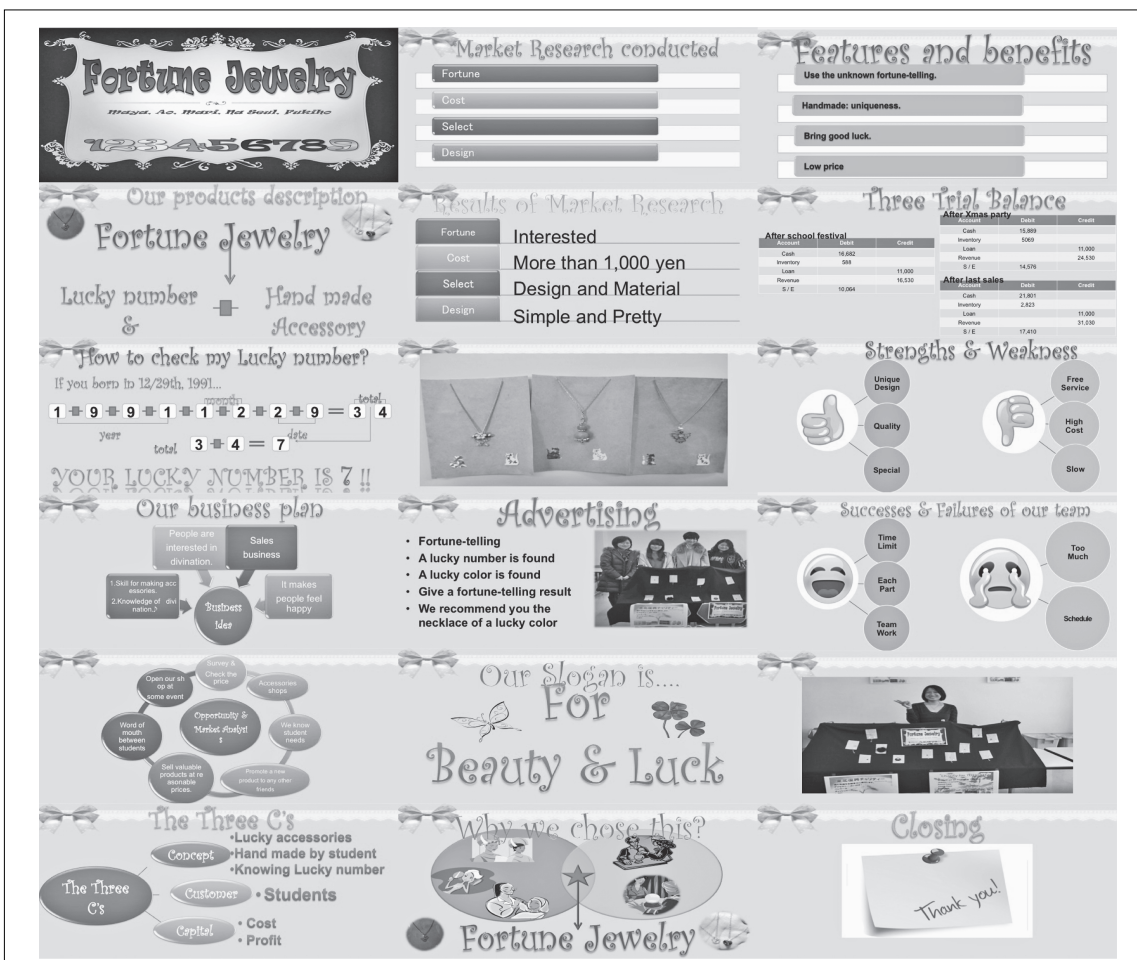


Figure 7



Figure 8

2013

<i>Company Name</i>	<i>Product</i>
<i>Economic-P</i> (Figure 9)	Hand warmers
<i>Chelshe</i> (Figure 10)	Custom photo and designer magnets
<i>3C Buttons</i> (Figure 11)	Custom and designer buttons

In 2013, 11 students took the course, forming three groups. All of the businesses were profitable, however, one group made an expensive purchase prior to being approved for a start-up loan by the instructor. Although they worked diligently to generate sales followed by an attempt to liquidate the asset, they were unable to recover their financial liabilities. This year's class venture fell short on monetary gains, yet the lessons in business planning were plentiful.

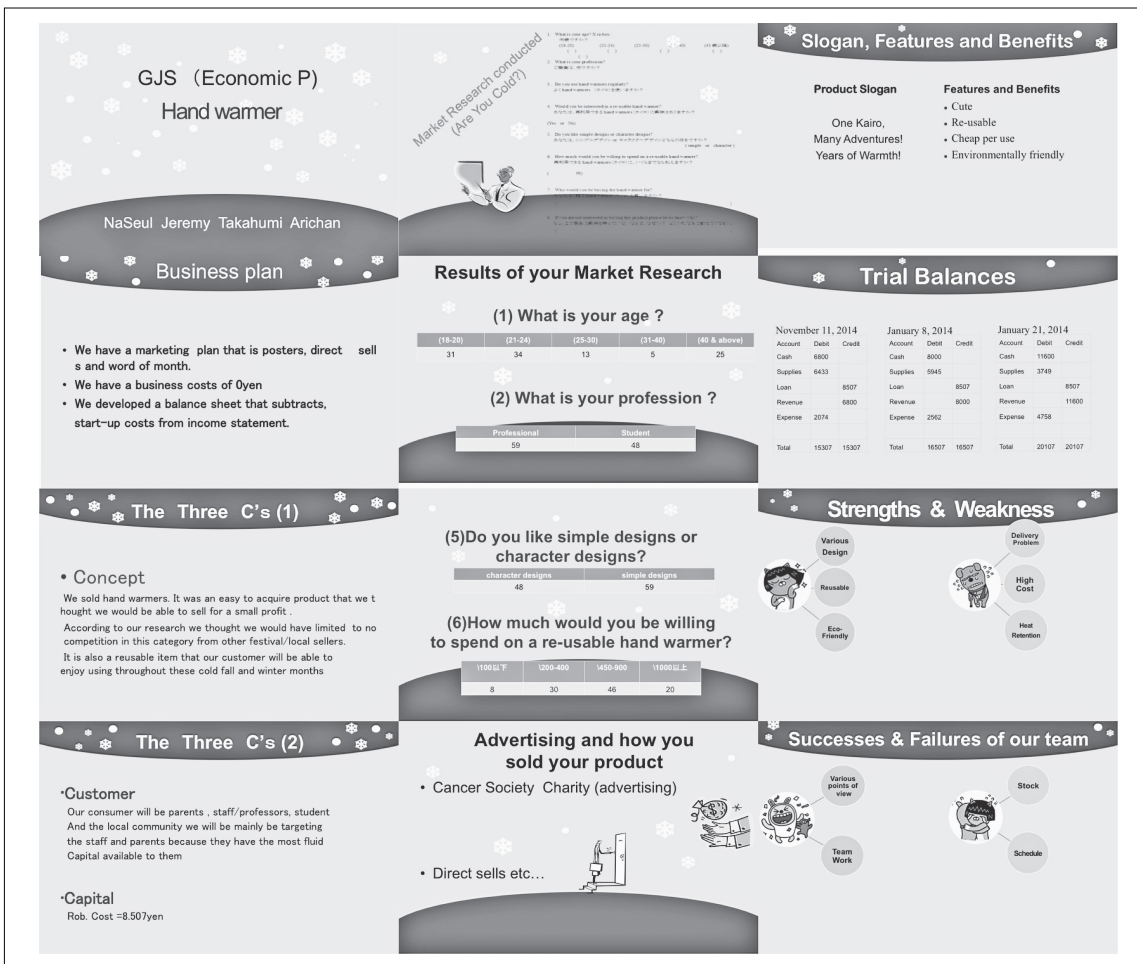


Figure 9

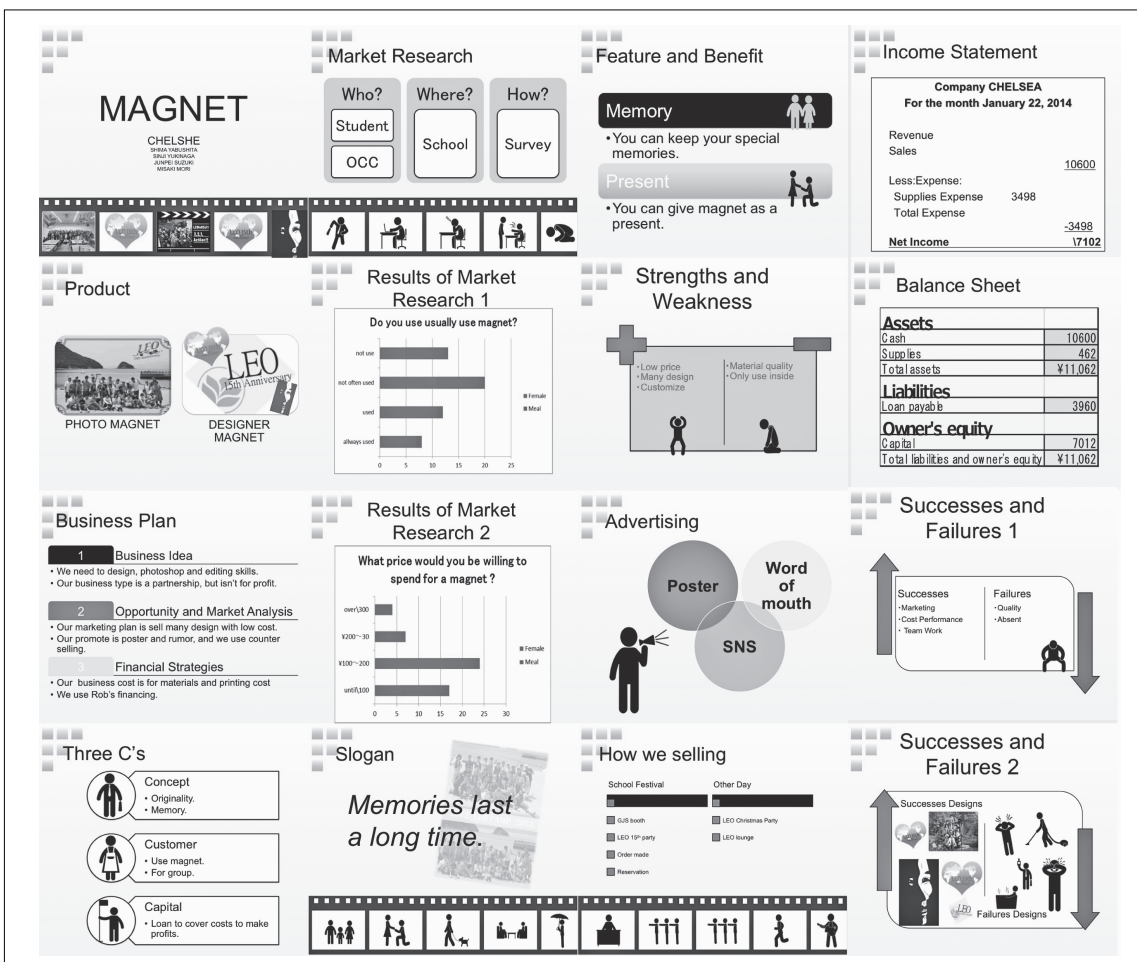


Figure 10

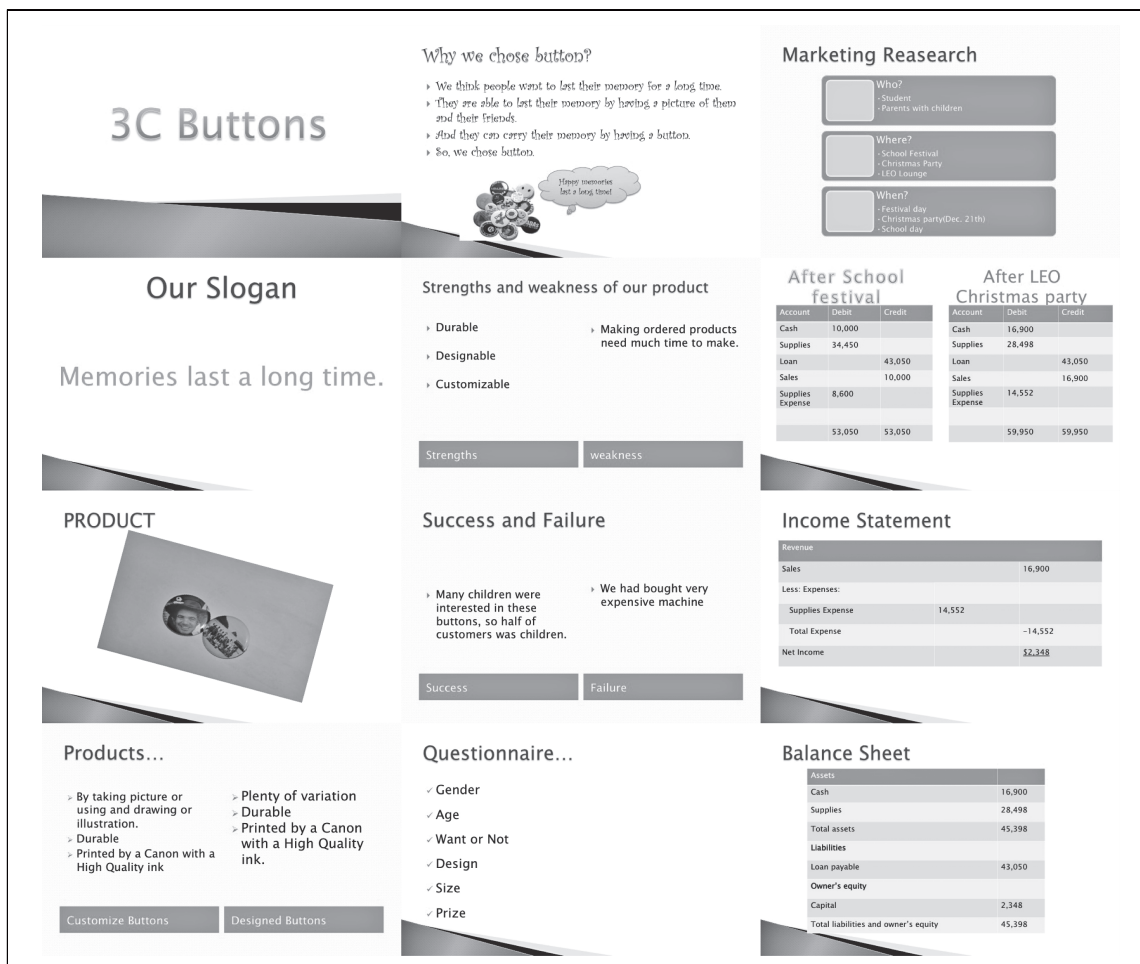


Figure 11

2014

Company Name	Product
Jeana (Figure 12)	Handmade accessories
Loopies (Figure 13)	Handmade misangas

In 2014, 8 students took the course, forming two groups. Both of the businesses were profitable. The students' profits in addition to charitable donations resulted in a contribution of ₱19,540 to the street children in Cebu, Philippines. In this year and the subsequent year, the causes were strongly influenced by the service learning projects implemented at Otemae University.

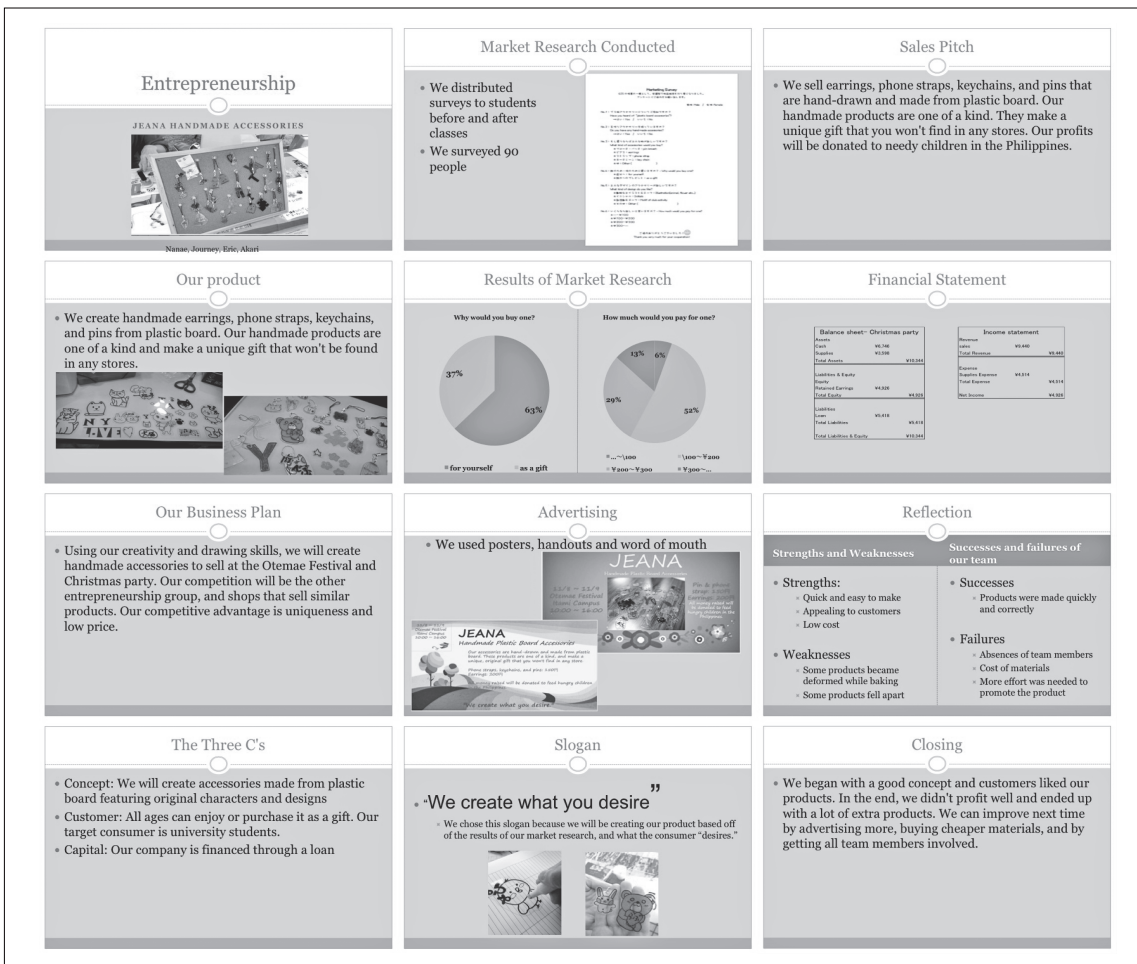


Figure 12

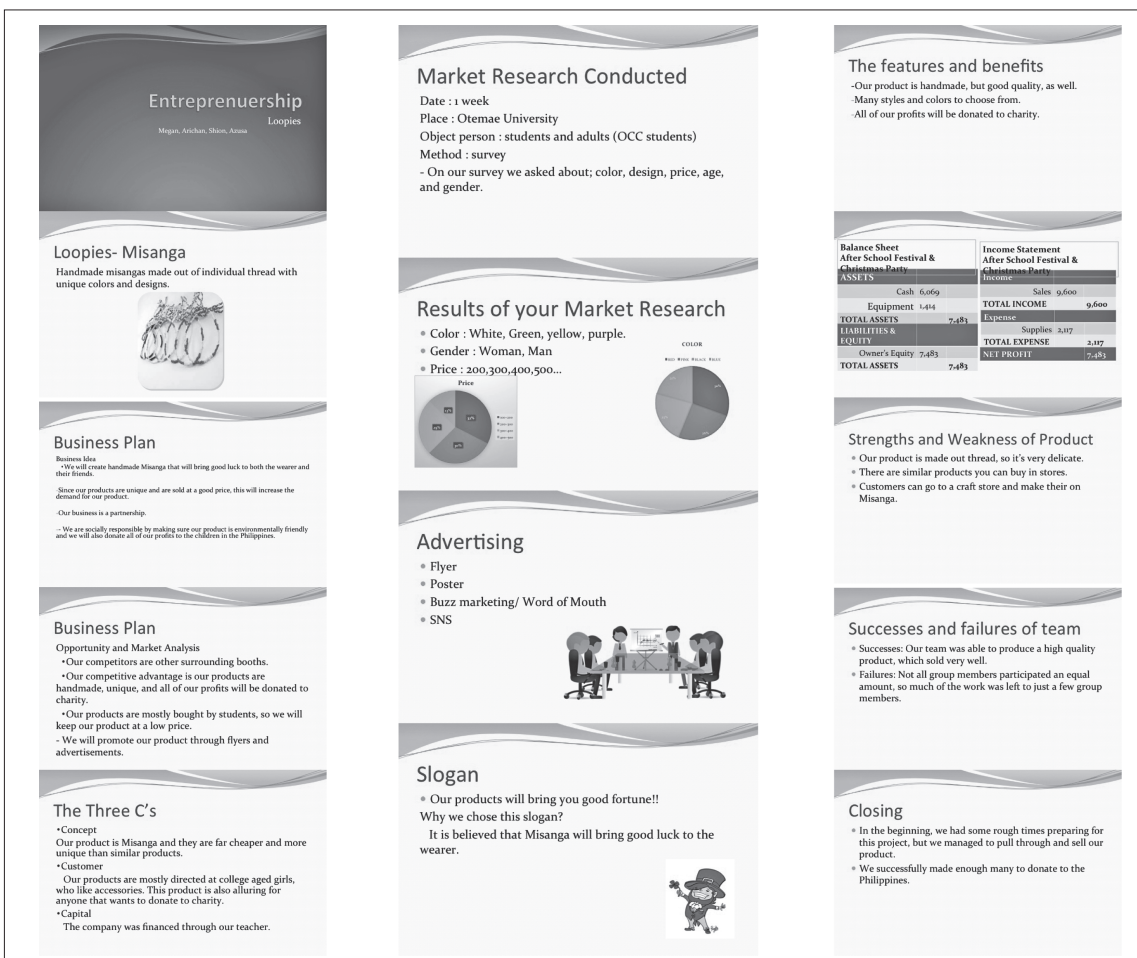


Figure 13

Company Name	Product
Shine Your World (Figure 14)	Handmade snow globes

In 2015, seven students took the course, forming one company. The business was profitable. The students' profits in addition to charitable donations resulted in a contribution of ¥30,110 to *Yui no kai*, a volunteer society working to save buildings on Nagashima Aisei-en as part of the institution's bid for UNESCO World Heritage Status.

The Three C's

- Concept:** We created snow globes made from some used jar, figurines and some ingredients.
- Customer:** Our target consumer is Otemae university students.
- Capital:** Our company is financed through a loan.

Our business plan

- Our business is partnership type of business. And, it's socially responsible of Hansen's disease.
- Our competitors are OIC, other booths and craft store.

How did we sell our product?

We used SNS, poster, and flyers to advertise our products.

Further more,

- Tried to sell our products in school festival and Christmas party at school.
- Customer can donate money to Aiseien that is the place to Hansen's disease if they buy our products.

Financial Statement

November

Balance Sheet		Income Statement	
Assets		Revenue	26,800
Cash	20,160	Less: Expenses	
Supplies	36,132	Supplies Expense	9300
Total Assets	36,492	Total Expenses	9300
Equity	35,042	Net Income	17,450
Net Income	17,450		
Total Liabilities + Owners Equity	36,492		

December

Balance Sheet		Income Statement	
Assets		Revenue	5,200
Cash	25,560	Less: Expenses	
Supplies	14,092	Supplies Expense	2,040
Total Assets	39,652	Total Expenses	2,040
Equity	36,490	Net Income	3,160
Net Income	3,160		
Total Liabilities + Owners Equity	39,652		

Market Research Conducted

- We surveyed 144 people.
- We hand out this paper (→) to student in each classes that we have.

Results of your Market Research

Male 62+Female 82=144

Have you ever bought a snow globe before?
 If you answered "No", would you like to have one if it was cute and reasonable?

Are you interested in making a snow globe?

Colors

Design

Price

Other price
 ⇒ 400yen 2000yen 500yen

How do we advertise & sell our products?

- We use different types of advertisements

Help Aiseien become a World Heritage Site! Buy a Snow globe!

スノーグロームで
長崎厚生館を世界遺産に登録しよう!

Strength and Weakness of products

Strengths

- Customers will not see the products in any stores (only in our company)
- They can look for the character they know

Weakness

- When the product is shake too much the item inside the jar get under
- Customers can also make it in their house
- Some of the products have water leaking outside
- Products are very fragile

Product's slogan & why we choose it?

- Slogan : shake it and shine your world!!!
- We choose the slogan because ...
 - when people shake the snow globes, it shines and make them smile ☺
 - we make the product for donation and we want to make people happy by our snow globes

Successes and Failure

Success

Good quality control, to be able to sold more than what we use.

Failure

Not enough team work and time scheduling, left over items.

Our product and its description

Snow globe

Our snow globes are hand made, so there're nothing same design one by one. Of course, our products are high quality and totally original. In addition, its selling by **keystone pricing**.

Keystone pricing is when the mark-up equals the cost of the item you are selling. Essentially, you're selling the product for twice what you paid for it. In addition, it's the most common strategy in retail.

The features and benefits

- Snow globe**
 - They are handmade products made by us.
 - Our products could be a nice gift for friends or even self collection.
 - There were Christmas , character , nature style of snow globe.
 - The best part of buying this product was you got a warm decorations and at the same time you had donation to charity.

Closing

- First, we had a hard time gathering materials, but we managed to get them all in time.
- We were able to sell more than what we expected.
- Finally, we were able to make a profit and we will donate it along with the charitable donations we collected to Nagashima Aisei-en. The total amount is: ¥30,110

Figure 14

Conclusion

As illustrated in the final presentations, the class projects and the course as a whole can be viewed as successful based on the following three criteria. First and foremost, in each year the students were able to achieve their goal of running a profitable business and in three out of the four years, the classes were able to repay their debts and donate

the remaining profits to a charity of their choice. In addition, students were able to reflect on their own practices and use the business knowledge they learned in the classroom to revise real-world business practices. Through the practical application of their knowledge, these students are a successful demonstration of the way business studies and practice can be incorporated into the EFL classroom as part of a content and language integrated learning program. Finally, this course exhibits an effective way instructors can equip their students for participation in a worldwide market as Japanese business practices are increasingly integrated into a global economy.

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Appendix 1

Business Planning - Creating and Running Your Own Business

授業開始年度	2015	開講学期	秋学期	
科目コード	Z10452	授業コード	45560	
授業科目名	事業計画 (GBS 科目)	開講曜日・時限	月曜 4 限	
担当教員名(代表)	ロバート・シェリダン (Robert Sheridan)			
Course Objectives	<p>Students will work together to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and run an enterprise of their own • Develop & evaluate their corporate mission statement and goals • Research and identify target markets and product ideas • Create a business plan and final annual report • Analyze and decide on marketing strategies • Take on different management roles within a team context • Uncover some of the factors which make a business successful in Japan 			
Course Contents				
① Ability Development Method	The students will be responsible for creating a company, managing its daily operations and preparing financial reports.			
② Assignment/Report	Students are required to do weekly assignments along with a final report and presentation.			
③ Course Description	This 15-week course provides students with the opportunity to understand the role of business in our society by creating an enterprise of their own. Students will work together to design, organize and operate a real business. Students will experience how a small enterprise functions while working within the structure of the Japanese economic system.			
Weekly Homework	Students will be required to work in groups and complete weekly tasks and reports.			
Course Plan (This schedule is tentative and may be changed)				
Class	Date	Theme	Brief Description	Assignment/Report
01	28-Sep	Course Outline and Team-Building	Explanation of the course and team-building activities	
02	5-Oct	Brainstorming Ideas for a Company	Hold an executive meeting to discuss ideas for a company.	Weekly Group Report
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08	23-Nov	Financial Reports	Prepare monthly reports	Weekly Group Report			
09	30-Nov	Sales techniques and Production continued	Operate the company and produce and sell its product	Weekly Group Report			
10	7-Dec	Sales techniques and Production continued	Operate the company and produce and sell its product	Weekly Group Report			
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12	19-Dec (Christmas Party)	Sales and charity drive	Sell your products and collect clothes for donation				
13	21-Dec	Financial Reports	Prepare annual reports	Weekly Group Report			
14	18-Jan	Financial Reports	Prepare annual reports	Weekly Group Report			
15	25-Jan	Final Presentations	Final presentations and reflection	Final Report and Presentation			
Achievement Goals and Learning Effects							
① Knowledge Level	Students will learn how a small enterprise functions while working within the structure of the Japanese economic system.						
② Ability Level	Students will design, organize and operate an enterprise of their own.						
C-PLATS (Level) -2~7							
Communication	5	Presentation	5	Leadership	5	Action	5
Creativity	5	Planning Skill	5	Logical Thinking	5	Analytical Skill	5
Team Work	5	Social Responsibility	5				
Evaluation Method	Regular attendance, active participation, weekly group reports and a final presentation are required for completion of the credit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance and Active Participation 30% Weekly Group Reports 30% Final Report and Presentation 40% 						
Textbook	The teacher will provide the students with handouts and other materials. You need to bring a binder and textbook to class every week.						
References	JA Company Program						
How to contact	robert@otemae.ac.jp						