

Research on the Teaching Reform of Foreign Language Public Courses Taking Japanese Public Elective Course as an Example

Shanshan Tan¹

¹ Dalian Jiaotong University, Dalian, Liaoning, China

ABSTRACT

With the acceleration of China's internationalization process and the normalization of epidemic prevention in the post epidemic era, the cultivation of internationalized and versatile talents is facing greater challenges, and the reform of foreign language public courses in universities is urgently needed. Foreign language public courses have problems such as low total class hours, lack of motivation for students to learn, insufficient "charm" of classroom teaching, and students' lack of attention. In the post pandemic era, the reform of foreign language public courses should actively utilize information technology, continuously improve course content, explore innovative teaching methods, and build diversified teaching evaluation methods.

Keywords: Universities, Foreign language public courses, Teaching, Reform.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since February 2017, the Ministry of Education has actively promoted the construction of new engineering disciplines, fully exploring the formation of a leading Chinese model and experience in global engineering education, and assisting in the construction of a strong higher education country. Universities have started offering Japanese language courses for non Japanese major students and have actively considered and researched the courses: Zhao Lihong and Chen Zhongshan (2015) [1], Guo Huifang (2020) [2], Jiang Xingchuan (2020) [3], Li Qunqun (2016) [4] et al. conducted research on public Japanese language teaching. These research results provide a good reference for the construction and reform of public Japanese language courses. The Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education released ten key work points for 2019 in April 2019, among which one was specifically listed as "promoting the reform of public foreign language teaching". During the epidemic, teachers and students completed teaching tasks through online teaching. In the post pandemic era, how should teachers respond to new forms of education? Especially for non professional public basic foreign language

courses, where should teachers go? It has not been reflected in previous studies. This article aims to explore the reform measures of Japanese public elective courses through teaching practice of course models.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION OF JAPANESE PUBLIC ELECTIVE COURSES

The Outline of the National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020) proposes to "focus on expanding the scale of cultivating applied, composite, and skilled talents." [5] With the acceleration of China's internationalization process, cultivating applied and composite talents is gradually being valued by major universities. At present, there are the following problems in the teaching of Japanese public elective courses.

2.1 *The Total Number of Class Hours Is Small, the Teaching Time Is Scattered, and the Learning Effect Is Not Good*

The total class hours of public elective courses, although slightly different from each school, are generally 32 or 36 class hours per semester, with

one class per week and ranging from 2-4 class hours per class. The students who choose courses are all students with zero or only weak foundation in Japanese, and the scattered teaching time makes it difficult to ensure teaching effectiveness.

2.2 *Students Have Different Learning Objectives and Lack Motivation for Subsequent Learning*

The cultivation of international and versatile talents has been highly valued by major universities, and interdisciplinary courses have been opened for students to freely choose from. Zhao Lihong (2015) conducted a targeted questionnaire survey to comprehensively understand students' needs for Japanese language learning. According to statistical data, 75% of students believe that learning a second foreign language is beneficial for achieving their own goals; 49% of students believe that the most popular second language is Japanese. If learning Japanese, 51% of students hope to study on campus, and 18% of students hope to self-study or participate in tutoring classes. If the school offers elective courses, 58% of students would like to take them. Regarding the purpose of selecting public Japanese language courses, 49.5% of students are employed, 25.2% are interested, 14.4% are studying abroad, and 10.9% are taking the postgraduate entrance examination. [1] From these statistical data, teachers can see that students have a high demand for Japanese language learning, and schools can offer relevant courses to meet these needs. At the same time, teachers can also see that students have diverse needs and different purposes for learning Japanese. Nearly half of the students choose to learn Japanese because of their employment. Students with different needs have different levels of enthusiasm in the learning process. Love is the best teacher. Although sufficient interest can support learning enthusiasm, it gradually weakens and eventually loses as the learning content deepens. During the teaching process, teachers often see some students gradually relax their Japanese language learning due to insufficient energy, such as busy professional courses, etc.

2.3 *The Teaching Method Is Single and the Classroom Lacks "Charm"*

Due to the short duration of elective courses and long intervals between each class, teachers often suffer from students' weak grasp when designing teaching content and organizing teaching activities,

resulting in difficulty in carrying out classroom activities, dullness, and lack of interaction.

2.4 *The Curriculum Evaluation Method Is Procedural, and Students' Enthusiasm Is Not High*

In recent years, process evaluation has gradually entered people's perspective, relying on the activities carried out by teachers in class and the active participation of students. However, due to the fact that students in elective courses are not students of the same major and grade, and they are not familiar with each other, the implementation of course activities is limited, and process evaluation is difficult to carry out. In the end, the course evaluation still returned to the test paper, and language proficiency and communication ability could not be reflected in the course evaluation system, resulting in low enthusiasm for students to learn language use. In order to achieve high grades, they passively memorized and memorized words and grammar, ultimately losing the original intention of cultivating international and composite talents.

2.5 *Insufficient Attention from Students and Insufficient Review After Class*

The nature of public elective courses determines students' attitudes towards the course. Fewer students actively review after class, which puts higher demands on teachers who undertake elective courses. How can teachers mobilize students' enthusiasm? How to design a classroom so that students can digest and absorb all the content taught in class?

3. RESEARCH ON THE REFORM MEASURES OF JAPANESE PUBLIC ELECTIVE COURSES IN THE POST EPIDEMIC ERA

The biggest change brought by the epidemic to university teaching is that online teaching has completely changed the traditional classroom teaching mode. On May 14, 2020, Wu Yan, Director of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education, introduced the situation of online education in higher education institutions throughout the country during the pandemic. As of May 8th, 1454 universities across the country have launched online teaching. 1.03 million teachers have provided 1.07 million courses online, totaling 12.26 million courses, including both theoretical

and experimental courses. A total of 17.75 million college students participated in online learning, totaling 2.3 billion people. [6] However, online teaching has brought both surprises and shortcomings. Surprised by not being limited by space or location, during that period of "staying indoors", the contradiction between "teaching" and "learning" was perfectly resolved, achieving "no stopping teaching, no stopping learning". The quality of teaching and learning is difficult to guarantee, and students' listening state is not controlled.

3.1 Reflection on Online Teaching

Japanese language public elective course is open to all undergraduate students in all majors of the school, without the need for prior courses. It has a total of 36 class hours, with 3 class hours per week and a maximum of 60 students. The number of students who choose courses each academic year will exceed this number, or even double, indicating their enthusiasm for learning Japanese.

In the spring semester of 2020, a comprehensive online course was conducted to summarize the characteristics of online teaching of Japanese introductory courses for non Japanese major students. The details are as follows:

3.1.1 Online Teaching Is Not Conducive to Teachers Correcting Students' Pronunciation Learning Stages

For introductory courses, the pronunciation and writing of kana are particularly important. In face-to-face classes, the process of teachers leading and students following is essential. In face-to-face classes, teachers can timely judge and correct students' pronunciation problems by observing their mouth shape and listening to their voices. Online courses do not have such conditions.

3.1.2 Situational Exercises, Lacking Practical Exercises, Which Affect the Ability to Apply Foreign Languages

In teaching, setting up situations to immerse students, thinking about cultural issues based on the situation, and selecting language elements based on the situation are also the key points of "student centered" classroom teaching reform. Language and culture are interdependent and mutually influencing, and language is an important carrier of culture. Culture has a constraining effect on language. So

when teachers set up situations, they are often rooted in cultural elements, and all aspects related to culture, such as etiquette and ideas, need to be conveyed to students. These contents, in addition to the language of expression, sometimes also need to be combined with body language, gestures, etc. Although online teaching is not limited by time and space, it is not conducive to the transmission of body language, which greatly affects the development of application skills for foreign language learners.

3.1.3 Online Teaching Allows Students to Better Understand Their True Thoughts Through Bullet Screens and Message Areas

As mentioned earlier, students in public elective courses come from various majors and grades in the school, and they are unfamiliar with each other. In previous teaching, the classroom atmosphere was relatively dull. Some students were shy of showing themselves in front of strangers, while others were unable to actively interact due to unfamiliarity with the people around them. When setting classroom tasks, teachers need to mobilize the enthusiasm of students in advance, so that students can move from strangers to acquaintances to acquaintances. During the online teaching process, the message area and bullet screen provided by the platform make the originally dull classroom "lively". Students can freely express themselves online, creating a lively and orderly atmosphere in online classrooms. The online classroom environment helps students who do not speak frequently in offline classrooms to raise their questions in the message area, without paying too much attention to their classmates' "eyes". [7]

3.2 Teaching Reform Practice

From the perspective of dialectical materialism, there is no end to learning and no fixed method to teaching. What kind of teaching mode should be adopted, and it should be done according to the times and the situation. In response to the current situation of Japanese public elective courses and the teaching situation in the spring semester of 2020, combined with the background of the post pandemic era, the following reforms were made to the new round of courses in the autumn semester of 2020.

3.2.1 *Keeping Students' Online Teaching "Not Offline" After Returning to School, and Finding a Combination of "Online plus Offline" Blended Teaching*

Blended teaching combines the advantages of traditional teaching and online teaching. Mixed teaching is a comprehensive teaching form combining traditional classroom, blended learning and flipped classroom. Its purpose is to cultivate students' ability of collaborative learning and autonomous learning through teaching activities. Students interact with teachers and resources anytime and anywhere through the learning environment, allowing them to independently increase their learning time and improve teaching quality. In traditional classrooms, teachers teach in large classes to improve teaching efficiency. Teaching activities are carried out under the premise of combining the classroom and the virtual teaching environment to ensure students' independent learning and provide students with collaborative learning.

After six months of full online learning, students return to the classroom and use online methods to complete exercises, upload audio, and expand cultural content. Through online platforms, teachers can directly upload PPTs or micro lessons, which is beneficial for students to preview and review; Students can always search for their exercise errors and voice playback, identify their shortcomings, and improve learning effectiveness and efficiency.

3.2.2 *Changing Traditional Teaching Methods — Incorporating Teaching of Basic Knowledge Points into Language Proficiency Enhancement Exercises*

For students with zero foundation in Japanese, learning Japanese kana is the most tedious and tedious part of the entire learning process. Many students who choose courses out of their interests and hobbies give up on continuing to study hard in the process of learning phonetics. During the teaching process, the innovative integration of Japanese kana and phonetics learning into daily communication conversations received high praise from students during the autumn semester. For example, in the first course, there was no direct introduction to the explanation of kana, but rather an explanation of Japanese language characteristics, Sino Japanese language connections, cultural differences, and ideological differences between

China and Japan. A large number of examples were introduced, and through interaction and thinking, students had a preliminary understanding of the language and cultural differences between the two countries, laying the foundation for future learning. For each class, a daily or workplace communication scenario is set, progressing from simple to difficult, step by step. Let students first master the Japanese expression methods in specific situations, and explain the cultural differences between China and Japan in specific situations or common knowledge such as business etiquette that should be mastered as a social person. After students can fluently express themselves, they can then explain each kana one by one. This way, students can not only express themselves, but also complete the study of kana, mastering the essentials of cross-cultural communication, compared to pure kana learning. Because each course has language gains in specific contexts, students have a stronger sense of achievement and a greater interest in learning.

3.2.3 *The Teaching Content Should Be Enriched and Practical, and Multiple Teaching Methods Should Be Integrated to Create a Charming Classroom*

Teachers integrate teaching content and integrate it with students' language and cultural abilities in interviews, receptions, and other occasions. The aim is to cultivate students' foreign language communication skills, communication strategies, and professional literacy in a relaxed atmosphere under different cultural backgrounds, as well as in different workplace contexts.

Charming classroom refers to the ability of teachers to attract the attention of all students during the teaching process, enable students to fully integrate into the classroom, interact fully, and stimulate students' learning enthusiasm. What should teachers do to achieve this effect?

Teachers use appropriate teaching methods to create a charming Japanese language classroom.

The second language teaching method is a specific method of handling language elements and cultural knowledge, training language skills and communication skills in textbook writing and classroom teaching, guided by teaching theories and principles. It includes the method of arranging the order of teaching content, explaining language points, and training language communication skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Teachers should arrange teaching content reasonably to create a charming Japanese language classroom.

The importance and value of teaching content itself always outweighs teaching methods and tools. Proper application of educational technology can enrich teaching methods and improve teaching effectiveness, but content always dominates. [8] The teaching content is the main clue of the course. Compared to culture and literature, language knowledge can be dull. If the entire course is focused on language knowledge, it will inevitably lead to students' fatigue and lack of enthusiasm. At this point, teachers should arrange some content that students are interested in and beneficial for future employment and in-depth research in the classroom, which will inevitably increase students' enthusiasm.

Teachers focus on strengthening the construction of course information resources.

During the epidemic, the sharing of resources on major online teaching platforms provided a vast learning space for teachers who had previously rejected or distrusted online education. In the post pandemic era, teachers should continue to make full use of online resources, integrate various teaching resources, focus on improving their information literacy, and create various teaching resources based on their own course content.

Teachers' evaluation of teaching is diverse, combining process evaluation and summary evaluation.

Process assessment should run through the entire teaching process, considering and judging the cultivation of students' abilities in various aspects, and is a complex design and practical process. Effective assessment in the classroom advocates promoting learning assessment, changing the traditional thinking of "grading homework", and promoting learning through assessment is its ultimate goal.

4. CONCLUSION

The most significant challenge faced by current foreign language education is actually the policy of cultivating multilingual talents proposed by the reform of public foreign language teaching. [9] The term 'multilingual' here refers more to Japanese, French, or German besides English.

In foreign language public courses, there are currently common problems such as low total class

hours, lack of motivation for students to learn, insufficient "charm" of classroom teaching, and students' lack of attention. In the post pandemic era, the reform of foreign language public courses should actively utilize information technology, continuously improve course content, explore innovative teaching methods, and build diversified teaching evaluation methods, in order to maximize the absorption of knowledge by students in the classroom. The future has arrived, and teachers need to analyze the problems in the current curriculum with a more cautious attitude. Teachers need to reform the course content with stronger confidence. Teachers need to have stronger courage to promote innovation and comprehensively cultivate students' learning abilities. Only by continuously exploring and practicing educational laws and teaching methods can teachers meet the challenges brought by the new era.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funds: 1. The 2021 annual topic of the "14th Five-Year Plan" of Liaoning Provincial Educational Science achievements. "Research on the Cultivation of Foreign-related Talents under the New Pattern of 'One Circle, One Belt, Two Zones'"(Project No: JG21DB085); 2. The 2021 annual topic of the "14th Five-Year Plan" of Liaoning Provincial Educational Science achievements, "A Study on the Cultivation Model of Craftsmen in Great Countries - Japan's Experience and Reference"(Project No: JG21DB084)

REFERENCES

- [1] Zhao Lihong, Chen Zhongshan. Research and Practice on the Teaching Model of International Japanese Public Elective Course in Applied Undergraduate Colleges [J]. Journal of Liaoning University of Science and Technology, 2015 (4): 85-87
- [2] Guo Huifang. Exploring the Reform Path of Public Basic Japanese Language Teaching in Higher Vocational Education - Taking the Vocational and Technical College of Inner Mongolia Agricultural University as an Example [J]. Education Modernization, 2020 (14): 30-32
- [3] Jiang Xingchuan. Research on the Reform of Public Japanese Language Teaching in Universities under the New Situation [J]. Talent, 2020 (11): 172-173

- [4] Li Qunqun. A Study on the Teaching Method of Public Japanese Language in Art Colleges: A Case Study of Communication University of China's Nanguang College [J]. *Journal of Higher Education*, 2016 (5): 101-102
- [5] Ministry of education. Outline of the National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020 [EB/OL]. 2010-07-29,http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A01/s7048/201007/t20100729_171904.html
- [6] Ministry of Education. During the epidemic period, 1.03 million teachers from 1454 universities conducted online teaching [EB/OL]. 2020-05-14,http://news.youth.cn/gn/202005/t20200514_12327989.htm
- [7] Li Zhanzi. Functional Linguistic Discourse Analysis in the Post Epidemic Era [J]. *Foreign Language Studies*, 2020 (5): 1-6
- [8] Ren Wen. Interpretation Teaching in the Epidemic and Post Epidemic Era: Case Analysis and Reflection from a Teacher's Perspective [J]. *Chinese Translation*, 2020 (6): 69-74
- [9] Guo Yingjian. Reflections on Several Major Issues in Foreign Language Education in the Era of "New Liberal Arts and Big Foreign Languages" [J]. *China Foreign Languages*, 2020 (01): 4-12