

Exploration on the Cultivation of Senior High School Japanese Teachers in Colleges and Universities

Lu Li^{a,*}, Jiayue Tian^b

Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an, 710128, China

^a13152370006@163.com, ^bjiayue_tian@163.com

**Corresponding author*

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Abstract: With the deepening of foreign language curriculum reform in primary and secondary schools and the reform of multilingual foreign language college entrance examination, there has been a “Japanese craze for national college entrance examination”. However, compared with the rapid growth of the number of candidates for the college entrance Japanese examination, the number of Japanese teachers in senior high schools is still significantly insufficient, and the cultivation of Japanese teachers in colleges and universities is still in its infancy. Based on “the knowledge requirements of Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards”, “the experience of front-line teachers” and “the expectation of Japanese candidates for the college entrance examination”, this study believes that colleges and universities should cultivate senior high school Japanese teachers from the following aspects: (1) the curriculum should pay attention to interdisciplinary; (2) cultivate Japanese teaching ability in practice; (3) pay attention to Japanese education in senior high schools and the college entrance Japanese examination; (4) cultivate positive psychological quality.

1. Research background

General High School Curriculum Plans (2017 edition revised in 2020) ^[4] issued by the Ministry of Education in 2017 stipulates that the foreign languages include English, Japanese, Russian, German, French and Spanish. The schools can independently choose the first foreign language course, and are encouraged to create relevant foreign language conditions to offer a second foreign language course. The regulations of the Ministry of Education on the enrollment of ordinary colleges and universities in 2023 also clearly point out that the foreign languages in the national unified examination subjects are divided into six languages, including English, Russian, Japanese, French, German and Spanish, and candidates can choose one of them to take the examination.

With the deepening of foreign language curriculum reform in primary and secondary schools and the reform of multilingual foreign language college entrance examination, there has been a “craze for the college entrance Japanese examination”. This craze is closely associated with the advantages of strong support from national policies, relatively easy college entrance Japanese examination, large space for raising scores, low competitive pressure and so on (Liu Yun 2020: 57-58) ^[3]. Liu Yun (2020) ^[3] made statistics on the number of Japanese candidates for the college entrance

examination in China from 2017 to 2019, and found that the number reached 48,122 in 2019. Among them, the number of Japanese candidates from Guangdong, Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces ranked top three for three consecutive years. In 2019, the number in the three provinces reached more than 5,000, with an increased rate of 73%~123% over the previous year. In the same year, the number in Hubei, Shandong, Guizhou and Jiangxi provinces also exceeded 3000. The statistics showed that the number of Japanese candidates for the college entrance examination was increasing year by year, which is precise because of the advantages of Japanese in the college entrance examination. Therefore, the college entrance Japanese examination is the best choice for those candidates with poor English to “overtake in a turn”.

However, compared with the rapid growth of the number of candidates for the college entrance Japanese examination, the number of Japanese teachers in senior high schools is still significantly insufficient (Huang Junjun, Huang Chu 2022: 61) ^[2]. Japanese majors in college and universities rarely offer Japanese normal education at the undergraduate level, so Japanese major students who have never been exposed to systematic pedagogy theory and teaching practice for four years may have some difficulties in adapting to the status of Japanese teachers in senior high schools, shouldering Japanese education in senior high schools and guiding the college entrance Japanese examination.

Faced with this situation, Xi'an International Studies University took the lead in setting up Japanese normal education as a major in 2021, aiming to cultivate a group of Japanese teachers in senior high schools who are proficient in Japanese language, basic theories and knowledge of modern education, and have the basic ability to impart knowledge and educate people, and are competent in Japanese education, scientific research and management in middle schools. However, the cultivation of Japanese teachers is still in the exploratory stage. This paper attempts to explore the knowledge and ability needed to be a qualified Japanese teacher in senior high schools from three perspectives: “the knowledge requirements of *Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools* (2017 Edition, revised in 2020)”^[1], “the experience of front-line teachers in senior high schools” and “the expectation of candidates for the college entrance Japanese examination” to provide a reference for the cultivation of Japanese teachers in colleges and universities.

2. The knowledge and ability needed of a qualified senior high school Japanese teacher

2.1. The knowledge requirements of *Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards*

Curriculum standards can offer clear guidance for textbook compilation, teaching implementation and examination evaluation. In June 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the *Japanese Curriculum Standards for Senior High Schools* (2017 Edition, revised in 2020) ^[5] (hereinafter referred to as Japanese Curriculum Standards). Since then, the Expert Working Committee of Basic Education Curriculum Textbooks of the Ministry of Education also organized the revision group of *Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards* ^[1]. The compilation of *Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards* ^[1] is to make Japanese teachers in senior high schools, teaching researchers and textbook writers better understand the specific situation of the revision of *Japanese Curriculum Standards* ^[5], implement the spirit of curriculum standards in practical teaching, and grasp the direction during textbook revision. *Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards* ^[1] first reviews the achievements of Japanese curriculum reform in middle schools in the aspects of curriculum setting, textbook development, teaching and research activities, teacher training, and the questions setting for college entrance Japanese examination, and the problems and challenges it faces compared with Japanese education in international middle schools, as well as the implementation background of Japanese curriculum reform in senior high schools.

Then it focuses on moral education and the core literacy of Japanese subjects. It summarizes not only the structure, content design and teaching material compilation suggestions of Japanese courses in senior high schools, but also the relationship between the academic quality of Japanese courses in senior high school and the core literacy of Japanese subjects and between academic quality and Japanese course standard in senior high schools. Besides, it explains academic proficiency tests, the suggestions of questions setting for the college entrance examination, and Japanese curriculum implementation and teaching method reform such as teaching and evaluation suggestions, Japanese practice activity design and evaluation form, and expounds the curriculum implementation guarantee such as the integration of Japanese curriculum resources in senior high schools, the professional development of Japanese teachers, the system construction of schools and teaching research, and the application of information technology. Finally, the book looks forward to the opening of Japanese courses in senior high schools and puts forward some problems to be further studied. It is noteworthy that the book summarizes the knowledge structure of foreign language teachers in senior high schools as shown in Figure 1 below.

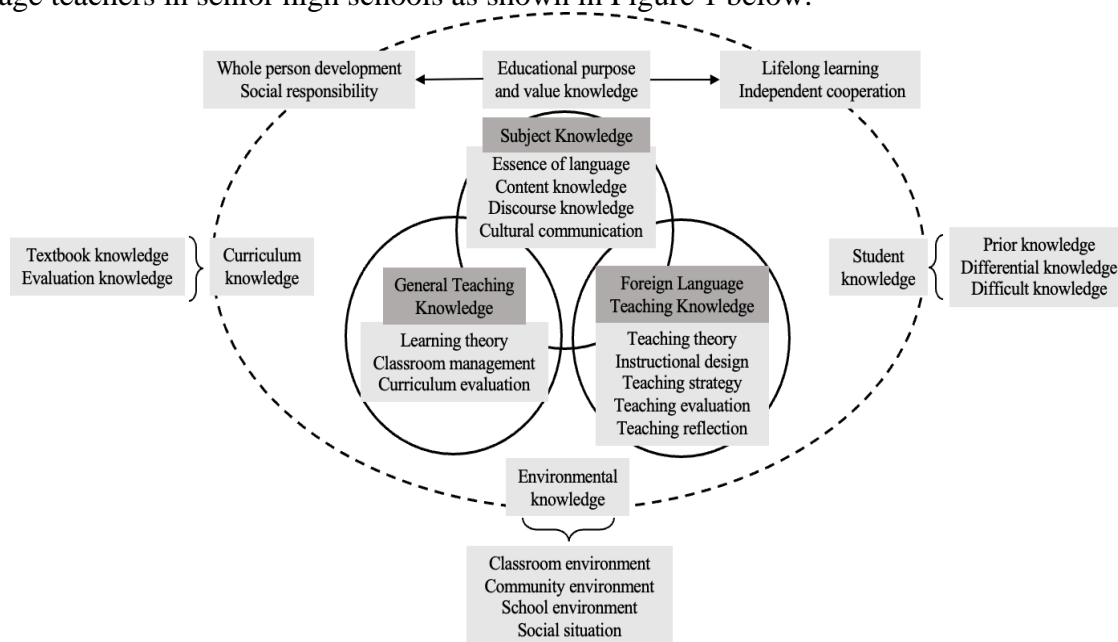


Figure 1: Schematic diagram of knowledge structure of foreign language teachers (quoted from Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards, p.166)

As can be seen from Figure 1, specific subject knowledge, general teaching knowledge and foreign language teaching knowledge are the core knowledge that a foreign language teacher should possess, which reflects that a foreign language teacher should meet the requirements related to “teaching content” and “teaching methods”. After meeting these requirements, teachers need to adjust teaching practice methods, enhance teaching practice abilities and improve students’ learning experience based on their teaching environment, relevant curriculum knowledge, students’ accumulated knowledge, educational purpose and value knowledge, so as to improve teaching effect. As a future Japanese teacher in senior high school, every Japanese normal student needs to grasp the knowledge of foreign language teachers summarized here. Therefore, this framework can provide a reference for colleges and universities in cultivating qualified senior high school Japanese teachers.

2.2. The experience of front-line teachers in senior high schools

The experience and feedback of front-line teachers can provide some reference for the cultivation of Japanese teachers. The paper adopted a semi-structured interview with two in-service Japanese teachers in senior high schools in Shaanxi province. The specific information of the interviewees can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Information of the interviewed teachers

ID	Age	Sex	Teaching years	Educational background	School location
A	28	Female	1 year	Bachelor	Hancheng, Shaanxi
B	28	Female	4 years	Master	Yulin, Shaanxi

The two interviewed teachers were required to answer the following questions, “How to become a qualified Japanese teacher in senior high schools?” and “What suggestions do you have for the cultivation of Japanese teachers for colleges and universities?” Their answers can be summarized as follows: (1) A qualified Japanese teacher should master solid Japanese professional knowledge. The interviewees mentioned that a qualified Japanese teacher needs to “have a perfect Japanese language knowledge system”, “have a fluent oral Japanese ability” and “grasp much professional knowledge before teaching”, it is better for them to “obtain a JLPT N1 certificate” and so on. (2) A qualified Japanese teacher should master the required knowledge of teaching methods. The interviewees answered, “I think the teaching methods I am currently using are relatively simple due to lack of knowledge of teaching methods”, “It is very important for college and universities to offer courses related to Japanese teaching methods”, “When writing teaching plans, I am confused about how to write the teaching methods, and often think about how to organize the teaching process”, “It is critical to obtain the qualification certificate of Japanese teachers in senior high schools”, “It is also very important to think about how to make students clearly understand what I am talking about after I have grasped the knowledge” and so on. (3) A qualified Japanese teacher should accumulate rich teaching experience. The interviewees said, “I need to improve my Japanese level in teaching practice. My Japanese system was also very chaotic before I served as a Japanese teacher. After finishing Japanese teaching for once, my grammar knowledge became clearer”, “I suggest that Japanese normal students participate in some part-time activities about Japanese teaching and actively engage in social practice”, “Colleges and universities should provide practical platforms for Japanese normal students”, “Japanese normal students can treat the audience as real students to deal with all kinds of unexpected situations through simulated classes and other forms. This kind of pre-service training can improve their language and teaching skills”, “If Japanese normal students can clearly explain knowledge in pre-service teaching practice, there will be no big problems in later practical work”, “Japanese teachers should be good at innovation in teaching methods and enhance communication with peers by participating in teaching competition and class evaluation activities” and so on. (4) A qualified Japanese teacher should fully grasp the information related to college entrance Japanese examination. The interviewees mentioned, “it is essential to do the questions of the college entrance Japanese examination”, “Japanese teachers need to invest more time to personally summarize and study the knowledge of the college entrance Japanese examination, and understand every professional concept”, “Japanese teachers should be familiar with the direction of questions and syllabus of the college entrance Japanese examination”, “Japanese teachers should conduct teaching and research in the process of doing the questions”, “Japanese teachers need to establish the belief of lifelong learning” and so on (5) A qualified Japanese teacher should know how to get along with senior high school students. The interviewees replied, “The students in Japanese classes in senior high schools are very different. Students at this age tend to be playful, and teachers should not give up on those who do not enjoy learning”, “For

the students who dislike learning or speak ill of others, Japanese teachers should communicate with their friends and class teachers in time and take the initiative to resolve conflicts”, “strive to establish students’ sense of worship for teachers” and so on.

2.3. The expectation of candidates for the college entrance Japanese examination

The expectation of candidates for the college entrance Japanese examination towards Japanese learning and Japanese teachers can also provide some reference for the cultivation of Japanese teachers. The paper adopted a semi-structured interview with four students in Japanese classes in two senior high schools in Shaanxi province. The specific information of the interviewees can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Information of the interviewed students

ID	Age	Sex	Grade	Class rank(Number of students)	School location
A	16	Male	Senior Two	Top two(14)	Hancheng, Shaanxi
B	17	Female	Senior Three	Fifth or sixth(10)	Hancheng, Shaanxi
C	16	Male	Senior Two	Top five(17)	Yulin, Shaanxi
D	17	Male	Senior Three	Top three(17)	Yulin, Shaanxi

The four interviewed students were required to answer the following questions, “What kind of Japanese teacher do you expect? What do you hope the Japanese teacher can offer you?” “What kind of Japanese class do you expect? What do you hope to gain from the Japanese class?” and “What do you think of a qualified Japanese teacher in senior high schools?” Their answers can be summarized as follows: (1) A qualified Japanese teacher should have laid a solid foundation for professional knowledge. The interviewees mentioned, “I hope that Japanese teachers are knowledgeable”, “I hope that Japanese teachers can speak many interesting sentences in Japanese, which can be used in daily life”, “I don’t care whether Japanese teachers have studied abroad or not as long as they have accumulated abundant professional language” and so on. (2) A qualified Japanese teacher should have a certain ability to impart knowledge. The interviewees said, “I hope Japanese teachers can speak less Chinese and more Japanese to provide a Japanese environment”, “I hope Japanese teachers can teach Japanese learning experience such as reciting skills”, and “I hope Japanese teachers can guide us to study” and so on. (3) A qualified Japanese teacher should have certain classroom and teaching management abilities. The interviewees answered, “I hope to have a responsible Japanese teacher”, “my self-control ability is not good, so I hope a Japanese teacher will be strict with me so as to urge me to memorize much knowledge needed” and so on. (4) A qualified Japanese teacher should provide academic support on the college entrance examination. The interviewees replied, “I hope Japanese teachers can provide us with related knowledge to further help us to pass the college entrance Japanese examination”, “I hope Japanese teachers can grasp the trend of questions setting of college entrance Japanese examination”, “My main goal is to improve my score in the college entrance Japanese examination”, “I hope Japanese teachers can provide expanded knowledge about the college entrance Japanese examination” and so on. (5) A qualified Japanese teacher can provide emotional support. The interviewees mentioned, “I hope Japanese teachers can create an active classroom atmosphere”, “I hope Japanese teachers can be gentle”, “I hope Japanese teachers can be cheerful and have more communication with us”, “I hope Japanese teachers can be kind, patient and optimistic”, “I hope Japanese teachers can give us appropriate encouragement psychologically, especially when we fail. Be active, don’t be bored” and so on. (6) A qualified Japanese teacher should obtain the Teacher Qualification Certificate. An interviewed student mentioned that “If Japanese teachers obtain the Teacher Qualification Certificate, I think that they have the basic teacher quality”.

3. The cultivation of qualified senior high school Japanese teachers

After analyzing the knowledge structure of foreign language teachers in middle high schools of *Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards*^[1] and the semi-structured interview results of Japanese teachers in front-line high schools and candidates for the college entrance Japanese examination, this paper holds that the cultivation of senior high school Japanese teachers in colleges and universities needs to start from the following aspects:

First, the curriculum emphasizes interdisciplinary. The curriculum should consider the integration of the ontological knowledge of Japanese language and literature (JLL) and the methodology of Japanese pedagogy. While consolidating the basic knowledge and skills of Japanese language, it should further improve Japanese normal students' professional knowledge system of pre-service teachers, that is, fully reflect the intersection of JLL and pedagogy. Therefore, in addition to offering intensive reading courses, conversation courses, audio-visual speaking courses and writing courses related to Japanese language and literature, it is necessary to offer courses on second language acquisition, pragmatics, stylistics, curriculum and teaching theory, pedagogy, educational psychology, teaching methods, testing and evaluation in different grades, so that students can gradually master the basic concepts, contents and methods of Japanese pedagogy.

Second, Japanese teachers need to cultivate Japanese teaching abilities in practice. To implement the development concept of combining theoretical construction with teaching practice, they need to strengthen the simulation of Japanese classroom design in senior high schools, and carry out the evaluation activities of Japanese teaching plans and courseware production in senior high schools. Colleges and universities can organize Japanese normal students to participate in teaching practice in corresponding teaching practice bases before graduation, and help them gain a deep understanding of the first-line teaching environment, the situation of teaching and learning in senior high schools through intuitive teaching experience, which will lay the foundation for the development of Japanese teacher.

Third, a qualified Japanese teacher should keep pace with the Japanese education in senior high schools and the college entrance Japanese examination. For example, *Japanese Curriculum Standard, Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standard*^[1], *National Unified Examination Syllabus* and *Examination Instructions for Enrollment of Ordinary Colleges and Universities (Japanese)* over the years and Japanese textbooks widely used in senior high schools can be regarded as required reading books for Japanese normal students during their undergraduate years, and they can be assessed by writing reading notes and holding written examinations. Students can also be organized to collectively study the real and simulated questions of the college entrance Japanese examination, and try to summarize the knowledge points and rules of examinations.

Fourth, a qualified Japanese teacher should cultivate positive psychological qualities. Teachers with positive psychological qualities are conducive to the construction of active and lively classrooms, and can bring students positive emotional experiences and provide good emotional support. Japanese normal students are an important reserve force in Japanese teachers in senior high schools, so the development and cultivation of pre-service positive emotions not only have a positive impact on individual happiness in study and life, but also promote classroom management, student interaction and career development in the future.

4. Conclusion

Firstly, the paper summarizes the background of Japanese teacher cultivation in colleges and universities. Then, combining “the knowledge requirements of *Interpretation of Japanese Curriculum Standards*^[1]”, “the experience of front-line teachers in senior high schools” and “the expectation of Japanese candidates for the college entrance examination”, it concludes that the

cultivation of qualified Japanese teachers in colleges and universities should focus on (1) interdisciplinary curriculum, (2) cultivating Japanese teaching ability in practice, (3) keeping pace with Japanese education in senior high schools and the college entrance Japanese examination, and (4) cultivating positive psychological qualities.

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