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RESEARCH ARTICLE

RESEARCH ON THE REFORM OF JAPANESE TEACHING AT WENZHOU UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes School of Foreign Studies, Wenzhou University as the research object. Through a questionnaire survey of students who take Japanese as the second foreign language, the existing problems in the Japanese teaching are pointed out from macro perspective, in addition, suggestions and concrete implementation plans are also put forward. It is very important to change the teaching ideas and methods, to improve the scientific research ability of Japanese teachers, to introduce academic leaders and to improve Japanese teaching system and discipline system.

Key Words:

Wenzhou University,
Japanese as the second foreign language,
Education Reform.

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INTRODUCTION

In order to adapt to the trend of world development, Wenzhou University is fully implementing international teaching and making great efforts to cultivate international talents. (Xiao and Li2007: 138) point out that "the internationalization of talents is the inevitable result of the global flow of human resources caused by economic globalization. It means talents, based on their nation's culture, are no longer confined to a region or country, transcending the scope of a country, developing and deploying on a global scale." (Bao 2013: 80) thinks that "international talents are the high-level professionals who can use foreign languages and intercultural communication skills as well as their professional knowledge in the process of globalization, based on local culture, to engage in foreign-related work with an international perspective." Different scholars have examined reform of Japanese teaching from different angles. (Shen2015) started from intercultural communication, analyzing the teaching of "integrated Japanese" course, and proposed teaching and reform scheme. (Wang and Yu 2016) introduced the research status of Japanese major course based on CBI teaching method with the title of "Research on the teaching mode of Japanese listening and speaking courses based on CBI teaching method", and refined the reform measures of Japanese listening and speaking courses. Besides these, Yang and Sun (2007), Zhang (2008), Xie (2011), Li and Qiu (2003), Zhang (2011) and other scholars also systematically explored

Japanese teaching from different perspectives with different methods. Gao (2004) summed up the problems existing in the Japanese as the second foreign language teaching, as a compulsory course or an elective course through her many years of teaching experience, and put forward reform plans and teaching methods. Wang (2006) mainly started from the use of Japanese in real life, explaining that in the teaching, teachers should put listening and speaking in the first place so as to promote the reading and writing as well as pay attention to the training of listening, speaking and intercultural communication skills. Besides, Ma (2008), Yang (2007), Xiang and Wu (2010) have made a systematic analysis of Japanese as a second foreign language from different aspects. The works of above scholars have promoted the teaching reform of Japanese and played an important role in the development of Japanese education in China's universities. Throughout the above research, we found the following deficiencies. Most of the literatures put forward reform and its demonstration from macro and theoretical level, but few had been done through questionnaire survey. Therefore, this paper uses questionnaire to clarify the current situation and existing problems of Japanese teaching in Wenzhou University, and proposes corresponding reform plans and implementation measures.

RESEARCH METHOD

This paper takes School of Foreign Studies, Wenzhou University as the research object. The survey is completed through questionnaire. The respondents are students who take Japanese as their second foreign language. This survey is

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conducted in January, 2017. A total of 136 questionnaires were distributed and 121 valid ones were recollected. Questionnaires were distributed by teacher who takes advantage of break between classes, and collected in two ways: one is submitting immediately when finishing and another is submitting later after class.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The gender ratio of respondents is shown in Table 1. There are 5 males (4.1%) and 116 females (95.9%), totaling 121 people. The main reason for the serious gender imbalance in this survey is that the proportion of girls studying in School of Foreign Studies, Wenzhou University is far greater than that of boys. By the end of January 2017, there are 648 students at the School of Foreign Studies, including 16 boys and 632 girls. Table 1 to 9 in this paper are based on author's survey. View from the grade, there are 8 freshmen (6.6%), 56 sophomores (46.3%), 49 juniors (40.5%), 1 senior (0.8%) and 7 postgraduates (5.8%) (As shown in Table 2). According to the syllabus of School of Foreign Studies, Wenzhou University, Japanese as a compulsory course is officially started from the second year of university. As a selective course, Japanese is also available in the third year. The reason why there are freshmen and seniors in the table is that if freshmen are interested in Japanese, they can attend the class under the condition of not affecting their own study. The senior students take this course for various reasons (e.g. suspension, retake, study abroad, etc.). Therefore, this survey is mainly focused on sophomores and juniors.

According to the results, there are 33 people (27.3%) expressed their personal opinions on the unreasonable timing of the Japanese as a second foreign language curriculum. For example, they didn't want to have Japanese course for two consecutive days. Instead, they want to have one-day break. 28 people (23.1%) thought that the course schedule was improper. For example, they think the frequency of Japanese course should be increased in order to learn a foreign language well. 17 people (14%) thought that the grade arrangement of the course was unreasonable. For example, some students thought that Japanese course should start from the freshman year, so that they can learn more systematically and deeply. The remaining 43 people (35.5%) chose the other without giving any reason (As shown in Table 3). As for the answer to why you choose Japanese as your second foreign language course, 27 people (22.3%) said they were interested in Japanese. 62 people (51.2%) said they like Japanese anime. 31 people (25.6%) were to earn credits (Table 4). Only one out of 121 students answered that the purpose of choosing Japanese course was to follow the crowd. That is to say, he just did as others did (As shown in Table 4). Learning a foreign language can not only improve personal qualities, but one can also experience different values of life. However, during the learning process, there is no doubt that students will encounter various problems. Of course, Japanese is no exception. The result of this survey shows that different students will encounter different problems while learning Japanese. The order from difficult to easy is as follows: Grammar, 41 people, accounting for 33.9%; Vocabulary, 30 people, accounting for 24.8%; Listening, 24 people, accounting for 19.8%; Conversation, 13 people, accounting for 10.7%; Translation and Reading & Writing are 7 and 6 people respectively, accounting for 5.8% and 5%, which are about the same. (As shown in Table 5). Therefore, firstly, it is urgent to strengthen

the explanation of Japanese grammar in daily teaching. Secondly, it is necessary to study different ways of remembering words for students of different personalities. Finally, teachers must guide students to apply what they have learned to their daily life in order to develop their Japanese communication skills. No one is perfect. No teacher can ensure that he or she has no flaws and defects during the teaching process. As for how to improve Japanese teaching, it can be seen from Table 6 that 39 students hoped teachers can write clearly in the blackboard, ranked first, accounting for one-third of the total respondents. 37 students wanted teachers to add some Japanese culture in the teaching, ranked second, also accounting for nearly one-third. 16 students hoped teachers can focus on grammar teaching, ranked third, accounting for 13.2%. Increasing translation exercise and conversation are in the fourth and fifth place respectively, which are 13 and 12 people. And 4 people wished teachers were clear in words and moderate in speed.

From the above, we can find the importance of blackboard writing in the teaching process. Blackboard writing is scaffold for students' cognition, mind map for teachers' teaching, and scroll for interaction between teachers and students. Therefore, strengthening the blackboard writing is a task for teachers. Secondly, in addition to teaching Japanese grammar, interspersing some Japanese culture and topics related to Japan can not only increase the classroom atmosphere, but also promote the cultural comparison between China and Japan. Besides, the speed of speech, dialect and other issues will also influence the teaching quality and students' enthusiasm to learn. Therefore, teachers have to strengthen their self-cultivation, which is also an important task. Every semester, the School of Foreign Studies hosts a number of large-scale events on English language and culture. For instance, English speech contest, English dubbing contest, English translation contest. Up to now, there are barely no events related to Japanese. Therefore, the author conducted a questionnaire on what kind of Japanese events you would like to take part in if you have the opportunity.

The results are as follows: 28 students want to participate in Japanese Corner, accounting for 23.1%; 42 students hope to communicate with Japanese students, accounting for 34.7%; 45 students want to study in Japan, accounting for 37.2%. 7 students want to participate in the Japanese academic seminars, accounting for 5%. (As shown in Table 7). Because the options given in this questionnaire are very limited, some students also gave their ideas of participating in Japanese speech contests, serving as Japanese volunteers, working as an intern in Japanese enterprises and traveling to Japan. From the above data, we can see that the students are interested in Japanese and Japanese culture, especially anime. Studying in Japan occupies the first place, which clearly tells us that students want to study in Japan, but so far, the school has no publicity and no staff in charge of affairs about studying in Japan. Therefore, the author suggests that the school should host some activities related to Japanese and do publicity work of studying in Japan well, and appoint a staff to be responsible for it.

Table 1. Gender

Gender	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	5	4.1	4.1	4.1
Female	116	95.9	95.9	100
Total	221	100	100	

Table 2 Grade

Grade	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Freshman	8	6.6	6.6	6.6
Sophomore	56	46.3	46.3	52.9
Junior	49	40.5	40.5	93.4
Senior	1	0.8	0.8	94.2
Postgraduate	7	5.8	5.8	100
Total	121	100	100	

Table 3 Japanese Curriculum

Item	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Time is unreasonable	33	27.3	27.3	27.3
Frequency is unreasonable	28	23.1	23.1	50.4
Grade is unreasonable	17	14	14	64.5
Other	43	35.5	35.5	100
Total	121	100	100	

Table 4 Motivation for learning Japanese

Item	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Interested in Japanese	27	22.3	22.3	22.3
Like Japanese anime	62	51.2	51.2	73.6
To earn credits	31	25.6	25.6	99.2
Follow the crowd	1	0.8	0.8	100
Total	121	100	100	

Table 5. Difficulties in learning Japanese

Item	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Vocabulary	30	24.8	24.8	24.8
Grammar	41	33.9	33.9	58.7
Listening	24	19.8	19.8	78.5
Reading & Writing	6	5	5	83.5
Conversation	13	10.7	10.7	94.2
Translation	7	5.8	5.8	100
Total	121	100	100	

Table 6. How to improve Japanese teaching

Item	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Focus on grammar	16	13.2	13.2	13.2
Japanese culture	37	30.6	30.6	43.8
Clear in words & moderate in speed	4	3.3	3.3	47.1
Writing clear in blackboard	39	32.2	32.2	79.3
Increase time for conversation	12	9.9	9.9	89.3
Translation exercise	13	10.7	10.7	100
Total	121	100	100	

Table 7. Japanese Activities students want to join

Item	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Japanese Corner	28	23.1	23.1	23.1
Communicate with Japanese students	42	34.7	34.7	57.9
Study in Japan	45	37.2	37.2	95
Japanese academic seminar	6	5	5	100
Total	121	100	100	

Table 8 Japanese textbook

Item	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
satisfied	54	44.6	44.6	44.6
relatively satisfied	63	52.1	52.1	96.7
dissatisfied	4	3.3	3.3	100
Total	121	100	100	

Table 9. Foreign teachers and Japanese course

Item	Number	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Elementary	28	23.1	23.1	23.1
Intermediate	28	23.1	23.1	46.3
Advanced	8	6.6	6.6	52.9
Special	57	47.1	47.1	100
Total	121	100	100	

Meanwhile, through appreciating Japanese anime, students can understand Japanese and Japanese culture better so as to enrich their campus life. The author found that many articles mentioned the word of "outdated textbooks" when looking up relevant literature on Japanese teaching reform. However, these articles didn't provide relevant data to prove why textbooks are outdated. Therefore, the author conducted a survey of textbook¹ satisfaction. The results are as follows: 54 people are satisfied, 63 are relatively satisfied, and 4 are dissatisfied. From the data in Table 8, it can be seen that most students are satisfied with the textbook used. The author believes that the textbook is important, but the teaching method is more important than the textbook. Students' overall Japanese ability is largely depending on the professionalism and teaching quality of their teacher. In the actual teaching practice, some teachers only want to complete the teaching task; Furthermore, the teaching concepts of some teachers are backward or weak and their teaching method is monotonous; There are also some teachers who lack the cultivation of cross-cultural knowledge and do not understand the Japanese language habits as well as the characteristics of Japanese society. When facing the students start from zero, they simply explain the knowledge of words and grammatical structures, thus ignoring the social and cultural background behind the language, which to a certain extent has hindered students from learning and understanding the language.

With the process of global internationalization, now more and more foreign teachers are teaching in China's universities. In the teaching, foreign teachers have the characteristics and advantages that Chinese teachers do not have, but there are also many problems. Table 9 shows the results of foreign teachers and Japanese course in the teaching. 57 students think that foreign teachers are more suitable for taking the special Japanese course, occupies the first place, accounting for about half of the total people surveyed. 28 students reckon that foreign teachers are more suitable for primary and intermediate Japanese course, each accounting for 23.1%. Only 8 students think that foreign teachers are more suitable for advanced Japanese course, accounting for about 7%. In addition to English teachers from various countries around the world, there is also a Japanese teacher from Japan who teaches in the School of Foreign Studies. At first, the Japanese foreign teacher was mainly responsible for elementary Japanese course. But since 2015, the teaching content has changed, he shifted to the Japanese culture course. Based on the reality and feedback from students, the school made such adjustment. The results of this survey are in complete agreement with the school's new policy on Japanese teaching.

Reform and Implementation Plan: Through the above data and analysis, the author proposes the following suggestions. First, change teaching concepts and teaching methods. The

¹Currently, the textbook of Japanese as the second foreign language used in Wenzhou University is *Standard Japanese (Second Edition)* published by the People's Education Press.

traditional teaching concept is no longer suitable for the demand of modern society for Japanese teaching. The author advocates breaking the traditional teaching mode and developing diversified ones. To adopt the Content-Based Instruction, which is abbreviated as CBI². CBI is a foreign language teaching mode that combines language learning with content. Unlike traditional foreign language teaching methods, it changes the center of teaching from the mere focus on the dissemination of language knowledge to effectively conduct teaching activities by using real materials by the theme. CBI also emphasizes the flexibility of teaching contents. During the teaching process, teachers should continuously evaluate the effect of students and ready to adjust the teaching content according to the evaluation result. CBI aims to cultivate students' communicative competence and their ability to communicate with native speakers in real environments. Real interpersonal relationships are closely related to cultural factors of language and non-verbal imagination (Wang and Yu 2016: 24). Meanwhile, we do not need "time-consuming", "inefficient" and "dumb" Japanese. In the future Japanese teaching, we should thoroughly implement the concept of "learning and using", abandoning the teaching mode based on teacher telling but transferring to the one based on teacher guiding. Let students actively participate in the whole process of teaching, giving full play of their own talents and personality, and truly making students the main body of the teaching.

Second, improve the Japanese teaching team and introduce academic leaders. At preset stage, the teaching task is so heavy that teachers have no time to further study and improve themselves. There are not enough leading figures in scientific research and lack of innovation in Japanese teaching. So far, it still remains at the textbook level. There is a lack of research on oral Japanese communication training and how to memorize words better. Students have a strong interest in Japanese culture and anime, some students even want to study in Japan. However, at the same time, Japanese cultural researchers are in a great shortage in the School of Foreign Studies. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the faculty construction and provide students with an environment in which Japanese is actually used. In addition to the students' hard work, the "teaching" and "guidance" of teachers are also very important factors to the students' Japanese proficiency. Lifelong learning is one of the teachers' duties. The future society will eventually become a learning society. Teachers should constantly improve themselves and set an example for students to learn. In-service teachers should actively participate in training and learn advanced teaching concepts and methods to welcome the demand of the new era. According to the results of a questionnaire survey conducted by the China Foreign Language Education Research Center, the main problems and the causes of these problems in the current college Japanese teaching are listed as follows: teachers are seriously lacking (31.5%), teachers' level needs to be improved (30.8%), textbooks are not good (17.1%), teachers' input is insufficient (16.1%), and others (26.2%). At the same time, the shortage of Japanese academic leaders and researchers is also an important factor affecting Japanese teaching. Therefore, it is extremely urgent to train or introduce these two talents. Third, to improve Japanese teaching and discipline system. So far, Japanese in

Wenzhou University is only a second foreign language, it has not formed a complete teaching and discipline system. Besides, the university attaches great importance to the examination-oriented education, ignoring the actual practice of Japanese, which leads to students' low interest in learning and teachers' inflexibility in teaching. The education department of government should pay more attention to the construction and teaching of Japanese discipline. Apart from English, Japanese is equally important for Wenzhou University to adapt the trend of internationalization. Therefore, it is of great significance to establish a complete Japanese discipline system.

Conclusion

This paper takes School of Foreign Studies, Wenzhou University as the research object. Through a questionnaire survey of students who take Japanese as the second foreign language, some existing problems in the Japanese teaching are pointed out from macro perspective, in addition, suggestions and concrete implementation plans are also put forward. This paper mainly analyzes the current situation and existing problems in the Japanese teaching by questionnaire survey, but from the micro perspective, there are still many shortcomings. Therefore, in the future research, interviews with students and teachers should be intensified so as to further understand the needs of students as well as the opinions and suggestions of the teachers.

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²For more information about the concept, rationale, model, characteristics and origin of the CBI teaching method, please refer to *A Review of CBI Foreign Language Teaching Researching in China within Recent 15 Years* (Gu Feirong, Yu Shengmei. 2009).

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