

Japanese Study in Both China and Japan

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Abstract. With the deepening of the process of globalization, the study of a second foreign language is also increasing in various countries. China and Japan are geographically close to each other and have had many cultural exchanges historically. Therefore, the number of Chinese people learning Japanese is increasing rapidly, and research on Japanese learning is also constantly carried out. This paper focuses on the differences between Japanese language learning in both China and Japan. Based on the existing literature research, this paper puts forward some new and constructive suggestions on the Japanese learning methods of Chinese people through the comparison of Japanese learning between China and Japan. Through the research, China and Japan have obtained completely different status quos and reasons from the four perspectives of learning motivation, classroom activities, teaching feedback and learning outcomes. China pays more attention to test-oriented strategic teaching than Japan. Instead, Japan prefers to help foreigners master the language to adapt to daily life. The Japanese teachers are affectionate and encourage communication, while the Chinese students respect their teachers and do not communicate much. The learning outcomes of the two countries are also different because of the motivation and cultural background but achieve their own goals. Japanese teaching can increase teaching interaction through the perspective of sharing culture, and at the same time, according to the different learning purposes of students, the teaching scope can be expanded accordingly to achieve the learning results expected by students.

Keywords: Japanese learning; Japan and China; cultural exchange.

1. Introduction

In recent years, with the increase in international communication, more and more people begin to learn a second foreign language. In China, the homology of Japanese characters and Chinese characters makes learning Japanese as a second foreign language easier for Chinese people to master. At the same time, if people choose Japanese as a second foreign language, they may use it to replace English scores in important exams such as college entrance examinations and postgraduate examinations. At a time when 90% of Chinese students choose English as the language of college entrance examination, Japanese is the choice of a few people, and the pressure of competition is less since the Japanese examination requirement is lower and its difficulties of learning are also lower than the English's. As a result, the number of Japanese language learners in China has increased significantly. Nowadays, the JLPT (The Japanese language proficiency test for foreigners) has become a hot topic in China. Especially for high-level examination registration, the competition for exam places is extremely fierce [1].

The topic of studying abroad has returned to the center of discussion as the Covid-19-related troubles have gradually passed. Japan, the home of the Japanese language, changed its policies several times in just a year after the pandemic to encourage international students to study there. Japan is closer to China than the United Kingdom or the United States, and the cost of studying abroad is relatively low. According to the Study Abroad Market Survey in Japan, the number of applicants for international students has increased by 63%. Since the school start time in Japan is April every year, while in China, school starts in September every year, almost all students will choose Japanese language schools to spend this period, which is from this year's September until next year's March. Japanese language schools are numerous in Japan and will increase as the number of students studying in Japan increases. In the course of studying in Japanese language school, students can learn Japanese and better adapt to life in Japan.

In January 2008, Japan announced a plan to send 300,000 international students to Japan, aiming to reach the target number by 2020. However, according to statistics, the number of international students in Japan reached 312,214 in 2019, reaching the target ahead of schedule [2]. The vast majority of these students will go to Japanese language schools. The existence of encouraging Japanese language schools also allows students to study in Japan without having to reach a high level of Japanese proficiency and also attracts some students who just want to learn Japanese and want to learn about Japanese culture. Compared with studying Japanese in China, the same learning experience and study time in Japan can enable students to have a resume for going abroad. Because of the different cultural concepts between countries, the teaching of Japanese is also very different from Japan and China. This has also aroused people's attention to the cultural expression in Japanese teaching.

This paper will analyze and compare Japanese learning in Japan and China from four perspectives: learning motivation, classroom activities, teaching feedback, and learning outcomes. This paper analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of Japanese language teaching in China and Japan, respectively, and puts forward some suggestions from the perspective of cultural exchange. Based on the previous studies of Japanese education in China and Japan, this paper analyzes, summarizes and compares Japanese education in the two countries.

2. Learning Motivation

Learning motivation is the purpose of learning Japanese. Clearly, China and Japan would have very different aims because learning Japanese in China is equivalent to learning a second foreign language, while in Japan, it is to learn the mother tongue of Japanese people.

2.1. China's Learning Motivation

In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the "Regulations on the Enrollment of Ordinary Colleges and Universities", which clearly states that "foreign languages in the national unified examination subjects are divided into six languages, such as English, Russian, Japanese, French, German, and Spanish, and candidates can choose one of them to take the exam [3]."

From the beginning of primary school, the second language that Chinese students learn is English, so other languages besides English are minority languages in China. With the promotion of the "Belt and Road Initiative", the demand for minority language talents in China is rising, which not only promotes the vigorous development of domestic minority languages but also brings new challenges to domestic language education. Influenced by regional, cultural, economic and other factors, Japanese has always been the mainstream of minority language learning in China. In addition, Japanese learning is relatively fast compared with English in the college entrance examination, the studying period is short, and the demand for studying abroad is increasing year by year. Other factors show that Japanese has become the best choice in the hearts of many candidates [4]. In particular, since 2016, the number of Japanese candidates in the national college entrance examination has increased from less than 10,000 to about 250,000 in 2022, with an annual growth rate of nearly 100% to 200%. This situation stimulated the reform and development of Japanese teaching [2].

In addition, with the opening and improvement of the country's economic environment, more and more foreign-funded enterprises have begun to look to China. Nowadays, the number of foreign-funded enterprises in China is increasing year by year, and the importance of foreign-funded enterprises to the Chinese market is also increasing. Due to the needs of management and development, many foreign-funded enterprises require employees to master the language of the corresponding country; that is, Japanese capital injection enterprises require employees to master Japanese, or those who master Japanese can get higher wages and returns. Not only foreign-funded enterprises but also some domestic enterprises seeking to expand overseas markets are gradually increasing the requirements for employees to master a second foreign language, such as Japanese [5].

However, in the recruitment of Chinese enterprises, the personnel department staff responsible for recruitment may not be able to master Japanese as a second foreign language. As a result, in the recruitment of enterprises, the ability to meet second foreign language requirements is solidified by the results and grades of the JLPT examination. Job seekers began to pursue JLPT exam results and paid more and more attention to the JLPT rather than the commands of the Japanese. Nowadays, Japanese classes in China also have many pre-exam training courses to help candidates train for the exam. All in all, the main motivation for Japanese learning in China is to pass the exam and gain more advantages in various competitions.

2.2. Japan's Learning Motivation

Teaching Japanese in Japan is definitely aimed at foreigners. As a highly aging country, Japan has been attracting foreigners to study or work in Japan for many years, and eventually choose to live in Japan. The number of foreigners in Japan has been increasing since 2012 and reached an all-time high of about 2.96 million in June 2022, according to official government statistics [6]. The Japanese government has proposed to help foreigners learn Japanese as a second foreign language and adapt to daily life in order to accept foreigners and allow them to better develop together with Japanese society. To this end, the Japanese government's Japanese language teaching policy is to enable foreigners to live in Japan, become interested in Japan, and stay in Japan. Therefore, the Japanese government's motivation for Japanese language education in Japan is to adapt to daily life.

For a foreigner who goes to Japan to learn Japanese or a foreigner who works, the purpose of going to Japan to learn Japanese is to enable them to communicate smoothly with local Japanese people, to understand the professor's lectures, and to understand the boss's instructions. In addition, there will also be requirements to integrate into the society, such as the understanding of the social background and culture of Japan.

As a world-famous animation export country, Japan has many well-known IPs, such as Pikachu and Hello Kitty. At the same time, many young people who are interested in Japanese culture take the initiative to come to Japan to learn more about the culture. It's called culture drive. Compared with studying Japanese in China, studying Japanese in Japan can give students a deeper exposure to these background cultures. There are many young people who are interested in Japanese anime, peripheral toys, etc., and spend a lot of time and money buying these things every year. Studying in Japan makes it easier for them to reach out and spend less money on these cultural areas.

2.3. Comparison

The main purpose of learning Japanese in China is to participate in various examinations. The Japanese language test can bring more opportunities for candidates. Therefore, students often do not pay much attention to Japanese questions that are not covered by the test, such as daily conversation. What students pursue is excellent performance on tests and excellent test scores.

In contrast, Japan does not focus mostly on test scores rather than the practicability of Japanese. The purpose of learning Japanese in Japan is to adapt to life in Japan and to communicate with Japanese people normally. Learning Japanese in Japan does not require students to master very advanced grammatical structures and gorgeous phrasing; they are focused on smooth communication.

The motivation for learning Japanese in China and Japan is completely different, which is caused by their respective views on Japanese. China may view the Japanese as an important tool, while Japan views it as the main talking language. Besides, this completely different learning motivation will inevitably lead to different learning methods and learning results.

3. Classroom Activities

Classroom activities refer to the various practices in the Japanese-taught classroom. Including the teaching method, the way to ask questions, the selection of textbooks, the content of the class and so on, all the content that happens in the classroom.

3.1. China's Classroom Activities

The main textbooks used in Japanese teaching in China are written by Chinese people, such as "Standard Japanese" and "New Japanese Course". Textbooks pay attention to the understanding of words, and almost all textbooks have a special word list section. At the same time, people pay attention to the study of grammar and have a special plate to organize and summarize the grammar in the unit. Since some Japanese textbooks currently available in China are written in Chinese, they pay special attention to the difference between similar grammar in grammar learning [7].

Japanese classes in China usually take the form of learning words first and then learning new grammar. The study of grammar generally starts from the angles of grammar composition, usage, semantics and more, combined with example sentences. During the learning process, teachers generally do not specify the form of notes or make mandatory requirements for notes. After the completion of the grammar study, the text of each lesson will be studied, and the text will generally use the new words and grammar learned in the unit [8].

Due to the Chinese tradition of "respecting teachers and respecting the way" since ancient times, teachers have a high authority over students. The Japanese class in China is mainly completed by the teacher's explanation. If students do not ask questions throughout the teaching process, there will be little active communication from the teacher. In addition to textbooks, the content of the class is almost not related to other content, including language development background, cultural background and more. Because the main motivation of Chinese Japanese learning is to pass the exam, many teachers will use the original JLPT exam questions as a reference in the grammar teaching of the course to help students' better answer [9].

3.2. Japan's Classroom Activities

Japanese textbooks are written entirely in Japanese. That's why it is also difficult for beginners to use the textbooks properly. However, Japanese textbooks are more conducive to understanding the editor's intentions when learners enter the intermediate level or above. There are many kinds of textbooks written by Japanese people; the most well-known is "Our Japanese", which is also gradually starting to be used by some Chinese people. This set of books focuses on daily communication, and the dialogue scenes in the original text are easy to appear in daily life. In addition, there are many supporting exercises in the book, and there are also special listening practice books for learners to consolidate. In addition, the Japanese government introduced the concept of "simple Japanese" after the 1995 earthquake in Japan [10]. The so-called simple Japanese is the Japanese that uses simple words to replace complex words and simple sentence patterns to correctly express one's ideas. This kind of Japanese allows learners to pick up quickly and allows Japanese people to understand and perform simple sentences.

The purpose of simple Japanese is to help foreigners master Japanese as quickly as possible and adapt to life in Japan. However, although simple Japanese can be understood and communicated, it is not completely correct Japanese. If people rely too much on simple Japanese, they will be regarded as foreigners with poor Japanese, and they will be easily picked on and disrespected by others [11].

In Japanese language classes, the teachers are usually all Japanese. They pay attention to the interaction of the class, although the teacher is also lecturing, but will require students to make their voice be heard or make sentences, which requires the participation of every student in the class. There is also a focus on vocabulary and grammar, but the teachers are happy to chat with students, introduce the background culture of the text, and share content that students are interested in. However, due to the shortage of teachers with professional Japanese teaching backgrounds, the phenomenon of part-time teachers is widespread. It is difficult for part-time teachers to explain logically and clearly similar grammar points [12].

3.3. Comparison

China and Japan have different emphases on the selection of Japanese language teaching books. China focuses on the mastery of grammar and words, while Japan focuses on the use of daily life. In

addition, Chinese and Japanese textbooks have different rules for certain usages, such as the classification of Japanese verbs.

Both Japanese courses are taught by teachers, but Japan will emphasize more interaction, while China will pay more attention to the knowledge points related to the test questions.

Due to the different perspectives and motivations of the two countries, the methods of learning Japanese are completely different. At the same time, different classroom activities will also have different learning feelings. It is impossible to say whether the teaching of the two countries is good or bad because it is for completely different purposes. However, for students who have studied both modes of learning, the structure of instruction can also be conflicting and may cause confusion for students.

4. Teaching Feedback

Teaching feedback is worthy of students' absorption and learning of each class's teaching content. It is generally reflected in the form of homework, dictation, quizzes, unit tests, etc.

4.1. China's Teaching Feedback

From the beginning of primary school education in China, there is an assignment, which is to copy words. This form of operation is widely used. Repeat transcription to deepen the memory of words that are not fully mastered. Even though most learners of Japanese as a second language are teenagers and adults, assignments to transcribe words still occur frequently. Copying words over and over again can help students remember them, but it takes much time and isn't for everyone.

In addition, homework in China is usually based on examples and exercises from teaching books because many Chinese teachers do not have the ability to set questions for specific grammar and content. Therefore, the exercises after class are mainly the exercises left in the textbook and the special textbook corresponding workbooks. At the same time, there will be a lot of JLPT original exercises to help students better cope with the test.

In China, the assessment of the mastery of the classroom learning content is generally a unit test or the JLPT original question of the corresponding level is tested directly after the completion of a level of learning. The results of the test and the feedback on the homework are used to give students a better understanding of their Japanese level.

4.2. Japan's Teaching Feedback

The daily tasks of Japanese learning in Japan are quite different from those in China. Japanese language learning in Japan will pay special attention to the part of the preview. Teachers will ask students to preview the words and grammar they are going to learn before class in order to save class time and improve efficiency. In addition, since the class is taught by a Japanese teacher, learning the meaning of words in advance can help students understand the content of the class.

In addition to paying attention to the preview, each class will have the teacher's exercises for the question and the practice of composing sentences. This form of homework requires students to deeply understand the newly learned grammar knowledge and, at the same time, apply it to a specific scene so that students can better master Japanese. Also, Japanese language learning in Japan focuses on the expression of ideas, so there will be assignments in the form of essays. Teachers will correct the grammar and diction errors word for word and then give feedback on the whole text.

There will be more Japanese study tests in Japan than in China. After all, it is the mother tongue of the Japanese, and the Japanese know more about how to set questions and how to verify the students' learning. Japanese examinations include kanji examinations, word-meaning examinations, unit examinations, semester examinations, and more. Each section will have a test of the meaning of the word and Chinese characters. Finally, all the content learned in the whole semester is covered, and the final exam of the semester is conducted. The exam in Japan is completely different from the JLPT exam. The type of question, the way of answering, and the content of the investigation are

different. The scope of the test is only the application of recently learned knowledge. Doing well on this exam does not mean that students will easily pass the JLPT; it only means that students have reviewed and consolidated what they have learned. Although there are many examinations in Japan, they do not pay attention to test scores but to the mastery of knowledge, as explained in the previous article on learning motivation.

The teacher records the score for every exam, especially the final exam. If the student's grades do not show the teacher that the student has mastered the learning tasks for the semester, the student will not be promoted to the next class. That is, instead of learning further new knowledge, students must relearn what they have already learned.

4.3. Comparison

China and Japan have different views and attitudes towards homework. In China, the hope is to deepen students' memory of what they have learned through assignments such as transcription or to improve students' ability to cope with exams through the examination of the past years. The Japanese approach to homework is to see students' independent use of new learning content through various forms, such as sentence formation, word selection and filling in the blanks, to conduct independent propositions and improve students' language application ability.

The goal of learning Japanese in China is to pass the JLPT exam. Therefore, when studying Japanese in China, it is not considered necessary to test the content of the daily course. If there is a test that is different from the content of the JLPT test, the purpose is simply to allow students to check their mastery of the study. Although the purpose of Japanese learning is to master the Japanese language for daily life, the Japanese encourage the assessment of the content of the daily study to ensure that students are indeed equipped with the ability to acquire new knowledge and use it. In addition, Japan distinguishes students' abilities through examinations and carries out targeted teaching.

5. Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes include the efficiency of Japanese learning, the passing rate of JLPT after Japanese learning, etc. Because of the different motivations of Japanese learning in China and Japan, the results of Japanese learning are bound to be different due to the focus of their respective concerns.

5.1. China's Learning Outcomes

The Japanese N1 exam, the highest level of the JLPT in mainland China, has an extremely high pass rate compared to Japan. The grammar examined at the N1 level is hardly used by Japanese people in their daily lives, and at the N2 level, people are already able to communicate freely with Japanese people.

At the same time, since the JLPT contains only four sections, namely vocabulary, grammar, reading, and listening, all the questions are multiple-choice. The performance shown by the test taker may be falsely high; that is, students may not have reached the corresponding level in essence, but students can pass the test through their test-taking skills and luck at the time of the test.

In addition, such a learning style in China means that little importance is placed on spoken Japanese. Many students who have passed the N1 level exam are not even able to express any of their opinions when they travel to Japan [13].

5.2. Japan's Learning Outcomes

Japanese language learning in Japan is a good way for students to adapt to daily life. At the same time, he has a good grasp of the relevant usage of honorifics, which plays a significant role in the work and life of Japan. Because the relevant grammar of honorifics can only be used in work to deal with superiors and subordinates, this is also the aspect that learning Japanese in Japan pays special attention to and reflects.

Japanese language learning in Japan pays relatively little attention to the passing rate of Japanese language-level examinations such as JLPT. The passing rate is not high because teachers do not have special guidance for these exams. It is often the case that after learning the content of N1, they can only ensure that they can pass the N2 exam. Although the Japanese Immigration Administration requires international students to go to Japan, they must pass a Japanese language level test in Japan during the study visa period. However, the required standard is very low, and students only need to pass the Japanese N4 level exam or other exams with the same ability requirements [10].

5.3. Comparison

Because of the different Japanese learning goals in China and Japan, the learning results will naturally vary with the different goals. Chinese study can help students pass exams. China's social background also means that people attach great importance to passing the exam. By studying Japanese in China, students can be more competitive and increase their resume. On the contrary, in Japan, the study of Japanese helps students integrate into Japanese society. In addition to helping students get used to life in Japan, Japan also focuses on spreading Japanese culture and introducing cultural background.

6. Conclusion

This paper compares Japanese learning in China and Japan from four perspectives: learning motivation, classroom activities, teaching feedback and learning outcomes.

Because of the different learning objectives of China and Japan, the classroom activities and learning outcomes derived from them are different. In terms of classroom activities, both China and Japan are teacher-led, but China needs to improve classroom interaction and learn from Japan. In terms of the use of teaching materials, Chinese teaching materials pay attention to the study of grammar, which is more convenient for local learners. However, attention should be paid to the consistency of the standardized terms and classification of teaching materials written in Japanese. Both China and Japan have their own advantages and disadvantages when it comes to homework and exams. Japan's quarterly grading system based on test scores and frequent exams can put students under much pressure. In China, the form of homework is monotonous, and students are not concerned about the daily independent proposition examination, which will make students lack pressure. Finally, in terms of learning results, because the two countries have different learning objectives, the learning results are to fulfill their own learning objectives.

Based on the above analysis and comparison, this paper puts forward some suggestions. First of all, for the form of class, classroom interaction should be increased, and students' interaction can be improved through cultural sharing in different countries. The mastery of cultural background is believed to enable students to master Japanese and have more initiative. In this regard, China could learn from Japan, starting by encouraging students to answer questions and use Japanese openings to express ideas to elicit more classroom interaction. Because the learners come from all over the world, Japan should encourage the exchange and interaction of various cultures, such as diet and living habits. Secondly, the teaching content should meet the different learning purposes of students. Although the main purpose of students studying Japanese in China is to pass the exam, there must also be students who hope to master the use of Japanese so that they can live in Japan in the future. On the other hand, there are students in Japan who only want to pass Japanese proficiency tests such as JLPT. Teachers should expand their teaching perspective and pay enough attention to the special examination while paying attention to the application ability of daily use.

This paper makes a comparison between Japanese learning in China and Japan and puts forward some suggestions for better Japanese learning. However, the perspective of this study is limited to Chinese students' Japanese language learning in Japan and China, and the suggestions put forward are limited. Future studies may focus on international students' Japanese language learning in China and Japan or in other countries to provide more general and constructive opinions.

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