

Research on the Classroom Teaching of "Comprehensive Japanese Course" of Japanese Major

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ABSTRACT

This article takes the "Comprehensive Japanese Course" in the Japanese professional education of Chinese universities as the research object. The teachers of "Comprehensive Japanese Course" were investigated by questionnaire and interview to clarify the problems existing in "classroom language environment" and "classroom teaching activities". The following conclusions can be drawn: 1) Efforts should be made to promote the language environment in class and develop the habit of using Japanese in class; 2) Teachers should respect students' subjectivity and design and implement courses with the goal that students can express their thoughts and communicate in the target language, namely Japanese.

Keywords: "Comprehensive Japanese Course", language environment, teaching activities, major in Japanese

I. INTRODUCTION

The research object of this article is the "Comprehensive Japanese Course" in the Japanese professional education of Chinese universities. The following two points are clarified through the questionnaire survey and interview survey of the "Comprehensive Japanese Course" teachers.

Survey Objective 1: What is the language environment in the classroom? Do teachers mainly use Japanese or Chinese?

Survey Objective 2: What kind of teaching activities are carried out in the classroom, and what kind of teaching consciousness is the teacher integrated into these teaching activities?

II. "COMPREHENSIVE JAPANESE COURSE" IN MAJOR IN JAPANESE

According to the latest data from the Japan International Exchange Fund, the number of Japanese language learners in China is close to 1 million, of which the number of Japanese language learners in universities accounts for 65.6%¹. According to Xiu Gang and Li Yunbo (2011), among the 1,108 full-time institutions of higher learning in China, 40% of the colleges offer Japanese majors, a total of 466, which is the second largest foreign language major after English

majors². In the major in Japanese, the "Comprehensive Japanese Course" occupies the most hours, and plays a central role in the major in Japanese (Horiguchi 2003: 11). Although the name of the course is called "Comprehensive Japanese Course", it is not so much a reading subject as it covers the pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar teaching of Japanese, and it is positioned as a comprehensive subject that cultivates Japanese ability (Shinozaki 2006: 151).

Regarding intensive reading classes, there are many advance researches. Among them, the "Comprehensive Research on the Main Course of Chinese Japanese Education" carried out by the Beijing Japanese Studies Center can be said to be the master of such research. Cao Dafeng (2005) pointed out that the Comprehensive Japanese Course is also called "comprehensive Japanese", "basic Japanese" and "advanced Japanese". It is a type of class that has been formed after a long-term development and evolution of our foreign language teaching (Cao Dafeng 2005: 121). The teaching of Comprehensive Japanese Course is based on the "new words-grammar-sentence-by-sentence explanation text-question and answer-practice". The teacher is the main body, which is not conducive to mobilizing the initiative of students and the cultivation of oral expression skills (Cao Dafeng 2005: 123).

Ge Qian (2014) concluded through an investigation that intensive reading classes are guided by teachers, and focus on teaching words and grammar.

¹ The Japan Foundation, Current Situation of Japanese Language Education Abroad From the 2015 Japanese Language Education Institution Survey [M]. Tokyo, The Japan Foundation.

² Xiu Gang, Li Yunbo, Overview of Chinese Japanese Education 1 [M]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 3022: 46.

III. SURVEY SUMMARY

The questionnaires and interviews in this article surveyed 26 Japanese teachers in nine universities in China. Among the Japanese teachers who participated in the survey, 58% had teaching experience of 10-20 years, and 50% had taught Comprehensive Japanese Course for more than 5 years. The survey duration was from June to October 2016. The surveyed Japanese textbooks are "Comprehensive Japanese" and "New Japanese", which are widely used by Chinese Japanese majors.

The survey method was a combination of questionnaire survey and interview survey. The questionnaire asked questions about the teachers' use of language and teaching activities in the classroom.

IV. SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Language environment of "Comprehensive Japanese Course"

This questionnaire first asked whether to use Japanese or Chinese during the "Comprehensive Japanese Course". The results show that "a. All using Japanese" is 0 people", "b. Using both Japanese and Chinese" accounted for 69%", "c. Except Japanese example sentences, all using Chinese" accounted for 31%. Furthermore, in the questionnaire, the teacher who selected "b. Using both Japanese and Chinese" was asked about how to distinguish between Japanese and Chinese in various classroom activities.

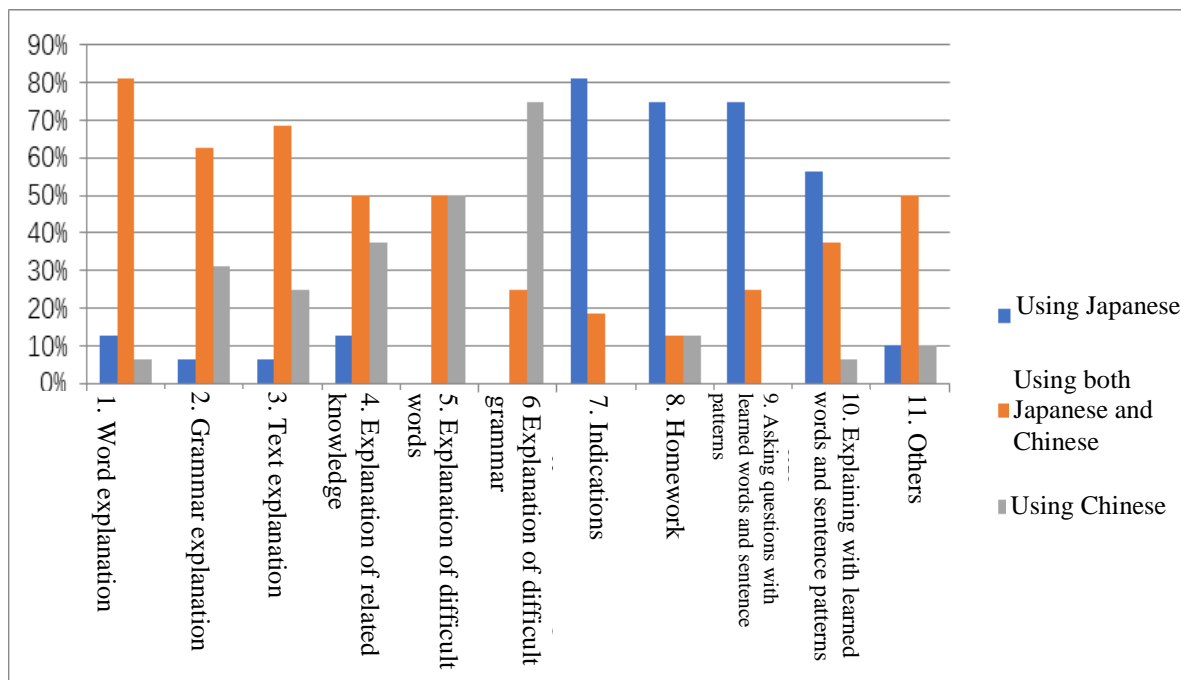


Fig. 1. The teachers' specific language use of who "b. Using both Japanese and Chinese".

As shown in "Fig. 1", there are many teachers who choose "b. Using both Japanese and Chinese" or "c. Using Chinese" in classroom activities 1-6 related to teachers' "explanation". However, in all classroom activities using learned words and sentence patterns, that is, 7-10, the proportion of "using Japanese" increased significantly. In the interview survey, the teachers were asked whether to use Japanese or Chinese in the classroom. The results showed that the four factors of "the grade of the class being taught", "the overall Japanese level of the class being taught", "student response", and "the teacher's own Japanese ability" were the main influencing factors.

B. "Comprehensive Japanese Course" teaching activities

Regarding the teaching activities of "Comprehensive Japanese Course", in this questionnaire, "1. Top three teaching activities where teachers spend most time in class", "2. Top three teaching activities that teachers think are helpful for Japanese learning", "3. Teachers believe that it is necessary to spend more time on teaching activities (multiple choices)", these three questions above were asked.

Regarding questions 1 and 2, points are given according to the order of the answers, that is, 3 points for the first place, 2 points for the second place, 1 point for the third place, and 0 points for the unselected items.

In this way, the total score of each item was calculated. Question 3 is different from the previous two questions. Because it is a multi-selectable question, when calculating the total score of each item, the scoring

method is giving 1 point to selected items and 0 points to unselected items. The survey results are shown in "Fig. 2" and "Fig. 3" below.

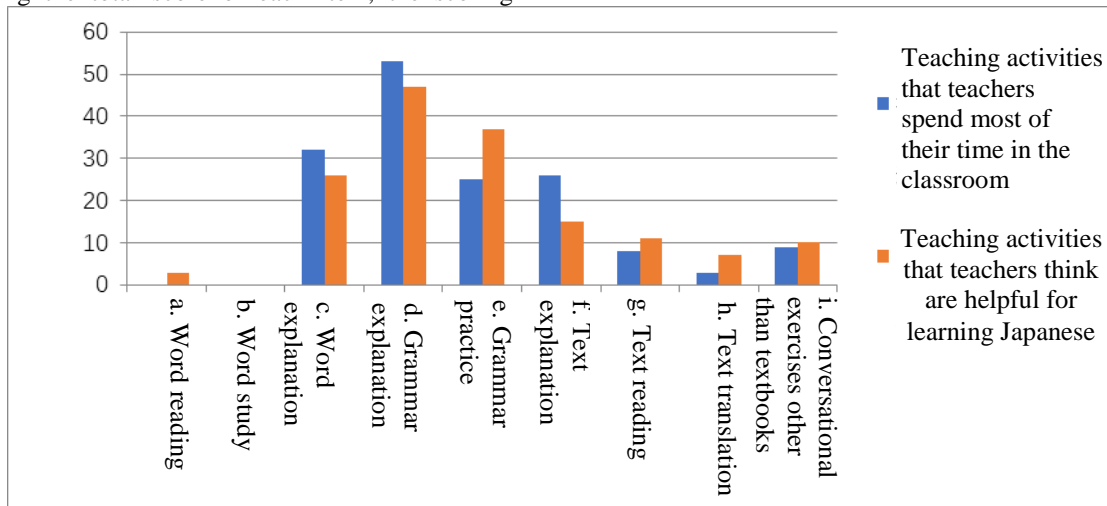


Fig. 2. "Teaching activities that spend the most time in class" and "teaching activities that teachers think are helpful for Japanese learning".

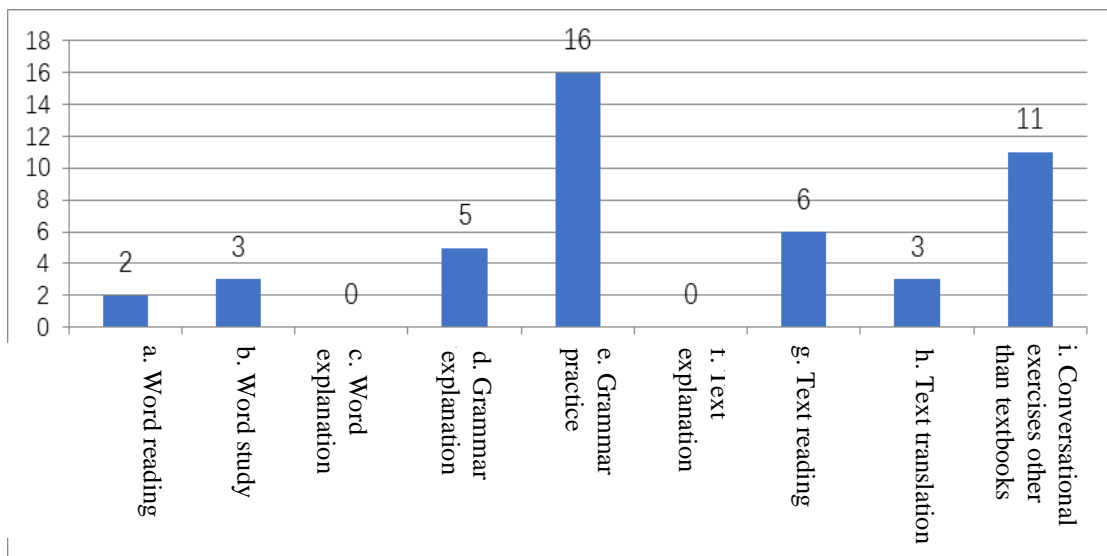


Fig. 3. "Teaching activities that teachers think it is necessary to spend more time on".

As shown in "Fig. 2", among various teaching activities, teachers spend the most time on grammar and word explanation. Leng Limin (2005) pointed out that the main problem in the Comprehensive Japanese Course is to focus on the explanation of language knowledge with the teacher's explanation as the center. This situation has not improved in ten years. Today's Comprehensive Japanese Course is still centered on teachers' unidirectional explanations.

Comparing the "teaching activities that spend the most time in class" in "Fig. 2" with the "teaching activities that teachers think is helpful for Japanese learning", it will be found that the top scores are "c."

"d." "e." and "f." and the two have a difference in the order of these four items, such as "e. Grammar practice". However, there is a gap between the two in the ranking of these four items. For example, in the teaching activities of "e. Grammar Practice", there is a clear difference. The author asked questions about the difference in ordering through interviews and surveys. Many teachers answered that they wanted to carry out teaching activities such as "grammar practice" in the classroom. However, due to the compulsory teaching tasks and syllabus, the time in the classroom is limited and it is impossible to practice fully.

In "Fig. 3", the two teaching activities of "e. Grammar practice" (16 points) and "i. Conversation practice outside of textbooks" (11 points) are "teaching activities that teachers think are necessary to spend more time". These two teaching activities are ranked first and second respectively. It can be seen that teachers are fully aware of the necessity of carrying out teaching activities in the classroom for the purpose of application, and the importance of conducting conversational exercises other than textbooks.

As mentioned above, the time allocation of teachers in Comprehensive Japanese Course is constrained by textbooks and teaching tasks. It cannot fully promote the exercises that teachers think are necessary. There is a gap between the actual teaching content and the classroom activities that teachers want to carry out.

V. CONCLUSION

This article investigates and analyzes the language environment and teaching activities of "Comprehensive Japanese Course" and draws the following conclusions.

The first is about the language environment. Of the 26 teachers who participated in the questionnaire and interview survey, no one used only Japanese in the classroom. Teachers choose whether to use Chinese or Japanese according to their teaching activities. The main influencing factors are "the grade of the class being taught", "the overall Japanese level of the class being taught", "students' response", and "the teacher's own Japanese ability".

The second is about teaching activities. The teaching activity that teachers spend most of their time in the classroom is "grammar explanation". In the answer to the "teaching activities that teachers think it is necessary to spend more time", "grammar practice" and "conversational practice other than textbook" are the first and second place respectively. Teachers are fully aware of the necessity of teaching activities aimed at application. It can be seen that there is a gap between the current teaching situation and teachers' consciousness.

The Ministry of Education's "Syllabus for the Basic Stage of Japanese Majors in Colleges and Universities" clearly states that the ultimate goal of foreign language teaching is to train students to have the ability to communicate across cultures. In classroom teaching, they must adhere to the principle of intensive speaking and practice, focusing on practice³. In order to achieve this goal, the Comprehensive Japanese Course, which is the core main course of university Japanese education,

should respect the subjectivity of students and design and implement the course with the goal that students can express their ideas in the target language, that is, Japanese, to communicate. About how to make students truly become participants in classroom activities, and what kind of teaching activities are more conducive to give play to students' subjectivity, these issues need more in-depth research in the future.

In addition to investigating the language environment and teaching activities of "Comprehensive Japanese Course", this survey also used the grammatical points where students are prone to confusion as an example to investigate the specific classroom instruction methods of intensive reading class, of which would be discussed in detail in the further study.

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