

Research on Cultivating Japanese Language Talents in Provincial Universities of Jilin under the Background of the New Liberal Arts

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ABSTRACT

The construction of the “New Liberal Arts” emphasizes interdisciplinary integration, technological empowerment, and value guidance, providing a significant opportunity for the transformation of foreign-language majors in universities. Focusing on Japanese-language programs in provincial universities of Jilin Province, this paper analyzes their current talent cultivation status and challenges, and proposes an optimization path centered on a “Japanese+” approach and supported by regional characteristics. The paper finds that existing problems include homogeneous training objectives, unbalanced curriculum structures, insufficient practical platforms, and a homogeneous faculty knowledge structure. In response, this paper suggests reconstructing a goal system of “solid foundation, strong capabilities, and prominent features,” building a curriculum cluster of “Japanese + regional studies/emerging industries,” deepening industry–education integration and smart-teaching reforms, forming interdisciplinary faculty teams, and perfecting a diversified evaluation mechanism, with the aim of cultivating highly qualified, composite Japanese-language talents that serve national strategies and the revitalization of Jilin Province.

Keywords: *New liberal arts, Provincial universities in Jilin, Japanese language major, Interdisciplinary integration, Regional characteristics.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by the deep integration of the global knowledge economy and information technology, higher education is undergoing profound transformation. “New Liberal Arts” construction strategy proposed by China advocates breaking down disciplinary barriers, promoting the integration of humanities and sciences, strengthening value orientation, and aligning with social demands, thereby injecting new momentum into traditional liberal-arts disciplines[1]. As an important branch of the humanities and social sciences, the Japanese-language major urgently requires adaptive reconstruction of its talent cultivation model under the guidance of the New Liberal Arts concept. Jilin Province, located at the core of Northeast Asia, maintains close economic, trade, and cultural exchanges with Japan, South Korea, and Russia, and shoulders the crucial

mission of serving the national “Belt and Road” opening to the North and the Northeast Revitalization Strategy. Several provincial universities in Jilin (e.g., Northeast Electric Power University, Changchun Normal University, Jilin International Studies University, Tonghua Normal University) offer Japanese-language programs and serve as the main forces for cultivating regionally needed Japanese-language talents. However, faced with the requirements of the New Liberal Arts and the new demands of regional development, these Japanese-language programs still have significant challenges in talent cultivation orientation, curriculum system, teaching methods, and practical components. This study aims to thoroughly analyze the current situation and difficulties of talent cultivation in Japanese-language programs at provincial universities in Jilin Province, explore innovative talent cultivation paths that align with regional development under the New Liberal Arts

background, and provide theoretical references and practical solutions for improving talent cultivation quality and serving local economic and social development.

2. CONNOTATION OF THE NEW LIBERAL ARTS AND ITS REQUIREMENTS FOR TALENT CULTIVATION IN JAPANESE-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

The “new” in New Liberal Arts fundamentally refers to breakthrough and integration:

- **Interdisciplinary Integration:** its aim is to break the single knowledge framework of language and literature, actively integrate relevant disciplines such as international relations, regional and country studies, comparative culture, digital economy, international business, and information technology[2], and construct a “Japanese+” composite knowledge structure.
- **Technological Empowerment in Teaching:** it can fully utilize modern information technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data, and virtual reality to innovate language teaching models (e.g., intelligent translation-assisted learning, corpus analysis, virtual simulation of intercultural communication scenarios), thereby improving learning efficiency and the authenticity of cross-cultural communication.
- **Value Guidance and Patriotic Sentiment:** it can strengthen course ideology and politics, embed a Chinese standpoint, a global perspective, and critical thinking into language-culture instruction, cultivate students’ ability to tell China’s story well, and promote mutual learning among civilizations[4], so that they deeply understand the complexity of China-Japan relations and the responsibilities they bear.
- **Demand Orientation and Practical Ability:** it can closely align with national strategies (such as Northeast Asia regional cooperation) and local economic and social development demands (such as Jilin’s pillar industries of automobile manufacturing, ice-and-snow tourism, pharmaceutical health care, optoelectronics information, etc.), emphasizing students’ practical application ability, innovation ability, and ability to solve complex problems.

- **Innovation in Talent Cultivation Models:** it can promote industry-university cooperation, university-region cooperation, and inter-university collaboration in talent cultivation; explore flexible and diversified cultivation models such as project-based learning, micro-majors, and industry colleges.

These requirements put forward systematic reform demands for the talent cultivation objectives, curriculum system design, teaching content updates, teaching-method reforms, faculty construction, and evaluation mechanism innovation of Japanese-language majors at provincial universities in Jilin.

3. CURRENT SITUATION AND CHALLENGES OF TALENT CULTIVATION IN JAPANESE-LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AT PROVINCIAL UNIVERSITIES IN JILIN

Based on surveys of representative provincial universities in Jilin (including analyses of training plans, interviews with faculty and students, and some publicly available data), the following major problems were identified:

3.1 Homogenized Training Objectives and Lack of Regional Characteristics

Most training objectives of institutions are rather general, focusing on “language skills+ literature and culture knowledge,” without clearly reflecting the unique positioning of serving the local development of Jilin Province (such as Northeast Asia economic and trade cooperation, the Changchun-Jilin-Tumen development and opening, international ice-and-snow tourism, and the international cooperation in automotive industry). Consequently, they lack differentiation from ministry-affiliated or coastal universities, and graduates’ competitiveness is limited.

3.2 Rigid Curriculum Structure and Insufficient Interdisciplinary Integration Overemphasis on Language Skill Courses

Fundamental Japanese courses (Basic Japanese, Advanced Japanese, Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing, etc.) often account for over 60% of the total credits (in one surveyed university, up to 78%), crowding out space for interdisciplinary courses.

- Weak or Absent “Japanese+” Modules: Specialty courses related to Jilin’s provincial context, Northeast Asian regional studies, Business Japanese (especially concerning Jilin’s pillar industries, such as Automotive Japanese, Ice-and-Snow-Tourism Japanese), cross-border e-commerce, Japanese educational technology, and Sino-Japanese comparative culture are insufficient, lack systematization, or lack depth.
- Low Integration of Technological Empowerment Courses: Few courses on Japanese-language corpus applications, computer-assisted translation, or virtual simulation of cross-cultural communication are offered, failing to fully leverage technology to improve teaching effectiveness.

3.3 Weak Practical Teaching Components and Obvious Disconnect Between Industry and Education

Limited On-Campus Practice Platforms: Language laboratories and simulated training rooms are outdated, and authentic, project-driven practice is lacking.

Unstable, Low-Level Off-Campus Internship Bases: Partner enterprises are mostly Japanese manufacturing firms offering only basic positions or language-training institutions, which do not closely align with Jilin’s key modern service industries or emerging sectors (such as the digital economy and cultural and creative industries). The professional relevance of internship content is low.

Scarcity of High-Quality Practice Projects: Opportunities for students to participate deeply in local foreign affairs activities, large exhibitions (such as the Northeast Asia Expo), cross-border e-commerce operations, or regional research projects are rare.

3.4 Homogeneous Faculty Knowledge Structure and Insufficient Interdisciplinary Teaching Capacity

Most full-time instructors have backgrounds in language and literature and lack systematic knowledge and practical experience in economics, management, regional studies, or information technology[3]. It is difficult to recruit or cultivate “dual-qualified” teaching with interdisciplinary backgrounds and industry experience. Faculty

members also need further training in applying new technologies to teaching.

3.5 Evaluation Mechanisms Overemphasize Language Knowledge, Lack of Composite Competency Assessment

Academic evaluations still rely primarily on language-knowledge tests (such as JLPT pass rates) and traditional written examinations, without an effective system to assess students’ cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, information-technology application, collaborative project skills, and other composite competencies.

4. OPTIMIZATION PATH FOR CULTIVATING JAPANESE-LANGUAGE TALENTS IN PROVINCIAL UNIVERSITIES OF JILIN UNDER THE NEW LIBERAL ARTS BACKGROUND

In light of the above issues, and combining the New Liberal Arts concept with Jilin’s provincial characteristics, the following optimization strategies are proposed:

4.1 Reconstructing Training Objectives

A Positioning of “Solid Foundation, Strong Capabilities, and Prominent Features” should be clarified.

Solid Foundation: Students possess solid Japanese - language fundamentals (listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating) and systematic knowledge of Japanese society and culture must be ensured.

Strong Capabilities: Cultivating cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking and innovation, information-technology application abilities, autonomous learning capabilities, and international business practice proficiency (especially aligned with Jilin’s industrial characteristics) should be focused.

Prominent Features: Two main directions have to be emphasized: “Japanese + Northeast Asian Regional Studies” and “Japanese + Applied Skills for Jilin’s Characteristic Industries”. The former serves Jilin’s role as a bridgehead in Northeast Asia cooperation, cultivating students’ abilities to conduct research on Japan’s and broader Northeast

Asia's politics, economy, and society. The latter closely aligns with Jilin's pillar industries—automobile manufacturing, ice-and-snow tourism, pharmaceutical health care, modern agriculture, optoelectronics information—cultivating composite application talents who understand Japanese, understand industry, and understand international rules (for example, automobile-technology Japanese interpreters, ice-and-snow-tourism marketing planners, pharmaceutical health care international-business professionals).

4.2 Optimizing the Curriculum System

4.2.1 Building an Integrated Curriculum Cluster of “Core + Modules + Practice”

the Core (approximately 40%-45%) must be solidified: Streamline traditional language-skill and literature-culture core courses, and introduce Content - Based Instruction (CBI) to integrate disciplinary knowledge within language learning.

4.2.2 Strengthening the “Japanese +” Characteristic Modules (Approximately 30%-35%)

Module 1: Japanese + Northeast Asian Regional Studies: Courses such as Japanese Politics and Economy, Northeast Asian International Relations, Japanese Society and Culture Topics, Jilin-Northeast Asia Cooperation, and Regional Research Methods can be offered.

Module 2: Japanese + Characteristic Industry Applications: Aligned with each institution's strengths and local demands, courses like Automotive-Industry Japanese, Tourism Japanese (with an emphasis on ice-and-snow tourism), Business Japanese Practice (including cross-border e-commerce), Scientific and Technical Japanese Translation, and Japanese Corporate Management should be offered, which will encourage the development of institution-specific teaching materials.

Module 3: Japanese + Digital Humanities: Courses such as Japanese Corpus Linguistics, Computer-Assisted Translation, Digital Practice in Cross-Cultural Communication, and Japanese Multimedia Design and Production can be offered.

4.2.3 Expanding Practice and Innovation (Approximately 25%-30%)

The substantial increase of the proportion of credits allocated to practice should be done. This includes professional-awareness internships, on-campus language/business/translation integrated training, off-campus enterprise-or-institution internships, participation in the Northeast Asia Expo and other major events as volunteers or project practitioners, entrepreneurship and innovation projects, and graduation-design (thesis) formats that encourage research reports, translation portfolios with analysis, project proposals, and so on.

4.3 Deepening Industry-Education Integration and Smart Teaching

Universities or colleges should build Collaborative Platforms and Technology-Empowered Scenarios

High-Level Practice Bases should be Co-constructed: Establish deep partnerships with FAW Group Corporation, Changguang Satellite Technology, Jilin Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, key ice-and-snow tourism resorts, renowned cross-border e-commerce enterprises, pharmaceutical companies with close Japan cooperation, and the Northeast Asia Expo Organizing Committee. Jointly develop internship projects and co-found industry colleges or specialized classes (such as “Ice-and-Snow-Tourism Japanese Talent Class,” “Automotive Japanese Translation Specialty Class”).

Universities or colleges should introduce Enterprises into Teaching, Emphasize Project-Driven Learning: Invite industry experts to participate in course design, teach as guest lecturers, or serve as mentors; integrate authentic enterprise projects into course assignments or internship content (e.g., translation of product manuals, preparation of market research reports, exhibition planning simulations).

Universities or colleges should embrace Smart Teaching: Build smart classrooms and virtual simulation laboratories; leverage online platforms (e.g., Chinese University MOOC, XuetangX) to introduce high-quality teaching resources; promote blended teaching and flipped classrooms; utilize AI-assisted tools for essay correction, speaking practice, and translation training; establish a Japanese-language corpus for teaching and research support.

4.4 Building an Interdisciplinary Faculty Team

Teachers' Composite Competency should be enhanced

Universities or colleges should tap Internal Potential and Provide Training: Encourage and fund language and literature faculty members to pursue further studies in economics, management, regional studies, or information technology as a second specialization or certificate; organize teaching-staff secondments to partner enterprises; routinely hold interdisciplinary teaching and research activities, as well as technology-application training.

External Expertise and Facilitate Resource Sharing can be introduced: Flexibly recruit experts from related disciplines and industry elites as part-time instructors or guest speakers; universities should establish faculty resource-sharing mechanisms with other regional universities and research institutions (e.g., Jilin Provincial Academy of Social Sciences' Northeast Asia Research Institute).

A "Dual-Qualified" Teaching Team may be developed: Establish clear standards and incentives for "dual-qualified" teachers to enhance both their theoretical teaching capacity and their practical-guidance capabilities.

4.5 Perfecting a Diversified Evaluation Mechanism

Comprehensive Abilities and Development should be Focused

Diversified Evaluation Content: teachers should shift from single language-knowledge assessment to integrated evaluation of language proficiency, cross-cultural communication skills, critical thinking, practical abilities (project outcomes, internship performance), information-technology application and team collaboration.

Diversified Evaluation Entities: teacher evaluations, student self-evaluations and peer evaluations, enterprise-mentor evaluations, and third-party evaluations (e.g., competition judges, certification bodies) should be incorporated.

Varied and Formative Evaluation Processes: teachers should strengthen formative evaluation, emphasize continuous feedback on the learning process, and adopt multiple assessment methods such as written exams, oral tests, project reports,

portfolios, internship appraisal, competition results, and professional certifications.

Evaluation Empowered by Technology: teachers may employ online platforms to record learning trajectories and perform data analytics, thus providing support for personalized teaching and precise evaluation.

5. OPTIMIZATION PATH FOR CULTIVATING JAPANESE-LANGUAGE TALENTS IN PROVINCIAL UNIVERSITIES OF JILIN UNDER THE NEW LIBERAL ARTS BACKGROUND

In recent years, Northeast Electric Power University's Japanese-language program has attempted to incorporate New Liberal Arts concepts in its reforms:

5.1 Objective Adjustment

It is clear to propose cultivating "application-oriented talents who serve Jilin's external opening, possess solid Japanese fundamentals, strong business practice capabilities, and a certain Northeast Asia regional perspective."

5.2 Curriculum Additions

Beyond core courses, it introduced unique courses such as "Japanese Bookkeeping," "Intercultural Communication," "Regional and Country Studies," and "Japanese Corporate Culture and Workplace Japanese."

5.3 Enhanced Practice

It is crucial to established stable internship bases with the Jilin City Foreign Affairs Office, Jilin City External Propaganda Centre, and Jilin City Confucian Temple Museum, organizing students to participate in local language-service work.

5.4 Technological Integration

It is important to built a simultaneous interpreting room and introduced Japanese bookkeeping software into teaching.

5.5 Evaluation Reform

In courses such as "Basic Japanese," adopted a "Formative Evaluation (40%) + Summative

Evaluation (60%)” approach, increasing the weight of students’ daily learning performance in formative evaluation.

Preliminary results show that students’ practical abilities and employment competitiveness have improved; however, challenges remain in expanding faculty’s interdisciplinary backgrounds, deepening industry-university cooperation, and systematizing characteristic course clusters. This case indicates that while the direction is correct, systematic deepening is still required.

6. CONCLUSION

The New Liberal Arts construction offers a historic opportunity for Japanese-language programs at provincial universities in Jilin Province to break through development bottlenecks and reshape core competitiveness. In response to national strategic demands and regional development needs, each institution must be bold in breaking traditional barriers, guided by service to Jilin’s comprehensive revitalization and Northeast Asia cooperation, and deeply understand the New Liberal Arts’ core tenets of “interdisciplinary integration, technological empowerment, value guidance, and demand orientation”. By scientifically reconstructing cultivation objectives to highlight local characteristics, systematically optimizing curriculum systems to strengthen “Japanese+” integration, deepening industry-education integration to build high-quality practice platforms, embracing technological innovation to empower teaching and learning, building interdisciplinary faculty teams to enhance teaching capacity, and perfecting diversified evaluation mechanisms to drive holistic development, universities can cultivate composite, application-oriented, and innovative Japanese-language talents with patriotic sentiment, global vision, solid expertise, innovative spirit, and practical abilities. This not only concerns the survival and development of Japanese-language programs themselves but is also key to enabling provincial universities in Jilin to serve the local area and contribute to the nation, thereby establishing their unique value in the new landscape of higher education. Future research can further focus on the refined design of characteristic course modules, the construction of long-term mechanisms for industry-education integration, the scientific evaluation of smart-teaching effectiveness, and the longitudinal tracking of graduates’ career development.

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