

# Research on the Ecology of Cross-Cultural Education in Japanese Language Education in Chinese Universities

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## To cite this article:

Wang Junhong, Nan Sining. (2024). Research on the Ecology of Cross-Cultural Education in Japanese Language Education in Chinese Universities. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 12(1), 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijll.20241201.11>

**Received:** December 13, 2023; **Accepted:** December 23, 2023; **Published:** January 8, 2024

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**Abstract:** This study explores the current educational ecology of cross-cultural foreign language teaching in colleges and universities through a questionnaire survey of 1,027 Japanese language learners in colleges and universities. The research found that: (1) The cross-cultural theoretical education in Japanese language teaching inherits the educational ecological resources for cultivating Japanese language communicative ability, so it has advantages in curriculum setting, cross-cultural information acquisition environment, teacher teaching, etc.; (2) In terms of cross-cultural practical ability, although all universities basically provide cross-cultural practical activities for overseas study or short-term overseas experience, the popularity rate is not high. Japanese language learners mainly rely on communication and interaction with foreign teachers in teaching, and indirect contact activities such as elective courses on foreign cultural knowledge; (3) The school provides few professional and targeted cross-cultural exchange activities. Japanese language learners lack enthusiasm for participating in cross-cultural practical activities. It can be seen that there is an imbalance in the educational ecology of cultivating cross-cultural abilities in Japanese language teaching in Chinese universities. The cultivation of cross-cultural abilities in foreign language teaching cannot be achieved through a certain course alone. It is necessary for schools to serve as the main body of cross-cultural education ecology and foreign language teaching as the carrier of cross-cultural teaching. Achieve mutual complementarity and promotion of theoretical teaching and cross-cultural practice in cross-field cooperation among various disciplines and departments.

**Keywords:** Chinese Universities, Japanese Language Teaching, Cross-Cultural Practice, Educational Ecology, Curriculum

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## 1. Introduction

Different countries have huge differences in historical traditions, language and culture, institutional customs and religious beliefs. Problems and difficulties such as culture shock and cross-cultural conflicts will inevitably arise in cross-cultural exchanges. Sound cross-cultural communication helps avoid discrimination and misunderstanding, and promotes tolerance and understanding between individuals of different cultures. As globalization accelerates in depth and breadth, cross-cultural exchanges and cooperation have become the norm in the development of the international community. Exchanges and cooperation between China and other countries in the world in economic, cultural

and other aspects are increasing day by day, and the demand for international talents with cross-cultural abilities has also increased accordingly. [14]. Cross-cultural ability is one of the key elements in the composition of global governance talents and international organization talents. [10, 16]. Foreign language is an important carrier of cross-cultural communication. As the main group of cross-cultural communication, foreign language learners need to have strong cross-cultural abilities. In March 2018, the Ministry of Education of my country promulgated the "National Standards for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in General Universities", which listed intercultural ability as one of the important training objectives of foreign language education. It has become a milestone in the construction of cross-cultural foreign language teaching in Chinese universities.

Cross-cultural foreign language teaching organically combines language teaching with cross-cultural education. It is the important development direction of foreign language education in the 21st century. It has been widely recognized in the foreign language community and is being fully implemented. [20]. Cultivating intercultural competence requires a systematic, ongoing education ecosystem. This study takes cross-cultural teaching in Japanese language education in Chinese universities as the research object. Through questionnaire survey, Based on the concept of educational ecology, analyze and examine curriculum construction, teachers' teaching activities, Provide a reference path for exploring and building an educational ecosystem that cultivates Japanese language learners' cross-cultural abilities.

## 2. Literature Review

Since the 1960s, domestic and foreign scholars have started from the development of the connotation of intercultural competence. Discussed the goals, principles, approaches and strategies for cultivating cross-cultural abilities in foreign language teaching. And conducted preliminary exploration and reflection on the cultivation of intercultural competence in different foreign language courses through empirical research [13]. Theoretical research on intercultural competence mainly focuses on general intercultural competence and specific intercultural competence. Three areas: emic and etic, Western perspective and non-Western perspective. [6]. In terms of the connotation of intercultural competence, scholars generally agree with the five-dimensional model of intercultural competence proposed by Byram (1997), which consists of attitude, knowledge, interpretation/connection skills, discovery/interaction skills, critical cultural awareness, etc. And based on this theory, more extensive theoretical exploration has been carried out. [2]. Such as Deardorff (2006) pyramid model. [5]. The theoretical research on intercultural competence by Chinese scholars is basically based on discussions based on traditional Western theories. But it also pays great attention to the acquisition of cross-cultural knowledge and the dynamics and locality of cross-cultural competence. Zhong Hua et al. believe that intercultural communicative competence covers communicative competence and intercultural competence [19]. Wu Weiping constructed a six-dimensional intercultural competency model including domestic cultural knowledge, foreign cultural knowledge, attitude, intercultural cognitive skills, intercultural communication skills, and awareness [17]. The developed localized scale for cross-cultural competency assessment of Chinese college students has been well applied in teaching and empirically tested in domestic universities. Scholars such as Xu Lisheng proposed a "progressive-interactive training model" for cross-cultural abilities. [18]. This model takes cross-cultural personality training as the goal and incorporates five elements: knowledge, motivation, skills, context and effect. Taking globalization as the context, cultivating learners' cross-cultural abilities in a step-by-step manner through knowledge acquisition, motivation cultivation, and skill training. Pay attention to the important role

of communication and interaction between both parties in achieving communication effects and cultivating cross-cultural abilities. [18]. Peng Renzhong et al. combined with the background and goals of foreign language education in the new era, Based on existing intercultural competence and intercultural foreign language teaching theories, Construct a theoretical model and practical model of cross-cultural foreign language teaching that is applicable to all types of foreign language courses and takes into account both the macro and micro levels. [14]. The development of the intercultural competency model provides a solid theoretical reference for the practice of intercultural foreign language teaching. At the practical level of cross-cultural teaching, scholars have discussed the objectives, principles, and methods of cultivating cross-cultural abilities in cross-cultural foreign language teaching. Sun Youzhong proposed the basic principles of cross-cultural teaching for foreign language majors such as speculation, introspection, inquiry, empathy and experience. [15]. In the empirical research on cross-cultural teaching, research on cross-cultural teaching practice is mainly carried out in English courses. For example, Huang Wenhong implemented the process cultural teaching model. [9], Fu Xiaoqiu and Zhang Hongling implemented the cross-cultural training method [7], Zhang Hongling and Zhao Han discussed the application of ethnographic teaching methods [20]. Theory is the basis of practice, and practice promotes the development of theory. Cross-cultural foreign language teaching in our country has made great progress in recent years. However, with the rapid development of modern information technology, the forms of cross-cultural communication in real and virtual spaces are becoming increasingly diverse. And achieve a high degree of extension in space and time. The research field of intercultural competence is more open, and intercultural foreign language teaching faces more complex and diverse challenges. Existing research on cross-cultural foreign language teaching models has not considered both the macro and micro levels. Teaching practice is mainly concentrated in English education, and issues such as how intercultural competency theory is combined with foreign language teaching in other languages need to be further explored. Cross-cultural competency training needs to focus on dynamics and development [11]. Cross-cultural foreign language teaching is a dynamic and open long-term learning process [4]. Therefore, it is necessary and feasible to construct an educational ecosystem for cross-cultural foreign language teaching and realize the ecologicalization of educational goals and educational content. Based on principles and mechanisms such as ecosystem, ecological balance, and co-evolution, Studying the phenomenon of cross-cultural education and its causes is helpful to grasp the laws and development trends of cross-cultural teaching.

## 3. Research Design

### 3.1. Research Sample

The subjects of this study conducted a questionnaire survey among Japanese language learners in grades 1-4 from seven universities in three provinces in Northeast China. Sample

information includes basic information such as gender, major, grade, Japanese language proficiency certificate, etc.

### 3.2. Research Tools

This study is based on the intercultural competency model of four competency dimensions proposed by Byram (1997): knowledge, skills, attitudes and awareness. Its theoretical content is summarized as: "Knowledge of other countries' cultures, knowledge of one's own culture, cross-cultural communication skills, language communication skills, cognitive and interactive skills, attention to and respect for the values, beliefs and behaviors of different cultures, critical cultural awareness and self-awareness, etc. The competency dimension plays a key role in enabling individuals to communicate and interact effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures in specific intercultural settings" [1]. Furthermore, a questionnaire on the ecological status of cross-cultural competency education in Japanese language teaching was designed based on the actual situation of the cross-cultural education ecology of Japanese language education in China. The main content of the questionnaire includes two parts: the first part examines the setting of cross-cultural knowledge courses and the acquisition of cross-cultural knowledge by Japanese learners; the second part describes Japanese learners' cross-cultural awareness, attitudes and cross-cultural communication status.

### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

This study coordinated in advance with teachers or counselors from the colleges where the survey was planned to distribute questionnaires to Japanese major students and ensured even distribution among all grades. A total of 1027 valid questionnaires were collected, and SPSS25.0 was used to perform descriptive statistical analysis on the questionnaire data. The descriptive statistical analysis mainly includes the proportion of the sample population to the total population, the mean (the mean value of receiving cross-cultural education) and the standard deviation (the degree of dispersion of receiving cross-cultural education).

Among the survey respondents, 9.4% are first-year college students, 40.1% are sophomores, 38.9% are juniors, and 11.5% are seniors. Moreover, 29.5% of students hold foreign language proficiency certificates.

## 4. Result Analysis

### 4.1. Cross-Cultural Teaching Courses

Since the "National Standards for the Teaching Quality of Undergraduate Majors in General Universities" lists cross-cultural ability as one of the important training goals of foreign language education, the Japanese major has set up cross-cultural related courses in a targeted manner based on the original professional courses. and reform. As can be seen from Table 1, in terms of the setting of courses related to domestic and foreign cultural knowledge, "Are there any courses related to the language, literature and culture of your own country in the courses you study? (Q1-3)", "yes" accounted for 70.0% of the answers %. "Are there any courses introducing foreign cultures in your required courses? (Q1-4)", 70.1% of the answers were "yes". "Are there any courses introducing foreign cultures in your elective courses? (Q1-4)", 54.8% of the answers were "yes". The acquisition of foreign cultural knowledge is mainly completed through professional courses. Items 3, 4, 8 and 9, whether they are elective courses or compulsory courses, have a higher proportion of courses that introduce foreign cultural knowledge. Moreover, the proportion of Japanese language learners taking elective courses is very high, nearly 80%. In contrast, in items 1, 2, and 7, the proportion of courses on international understanding, international practices, laws and regulations, etc. is generally low. In particular, international understanding education courses have the lowest proportions. The results show that Japanese language learners in Chinese universities have a strong interest in learning cross-cultural knowledge, and schools generally set up cross-cultural courses in corresponding majors. However, in addition to professional knowledge, there is a lack of cultivation of cross-cultural understanding from a global perspective.

*Table 1. Descriptive statistical analysis of cross-cultural knowledge curriculum.*

Cross-cultural knowledge course description items	N	percentage	mean	standard deviation
Q1-1: Have you ever taken any classes related to international understanding education?	179	17.4	1.83	.392
Q1-2: Have you heard any speeches or promotions related to international understanding education?	258	25.1	1.75	.457
Q1-3: Are there any courses on learning the language, literature and culture of the native country among the courses you are studying?	719	70.0	1.31	.486
Q1-4: Are there any courses introducing foreign cultures in your required courses?	720	70.1	1.30	.458
Q1-5: Are there any courses introducing foreign cultures in your elective courses?	563	54.8	1.46	.521
Q1-6: Have you ever taken courses in other majors besides your own?	567	55.2	1.45	.509
Q1-7: Have you learned about international practices, regulations and other knowledge about the relations between countries?	230	22.4	1.78	.429
Q1-8: Have you ever bought books or magazines about foreign cultures and customs?	726	70.7	1.30	.469
Q1-9: Are there any courses on introducing foreign cultures among the courses you have chosen?	817	79.6	1.21	.420
Q1-10: Are there any courses introducing foreign cultures among the courses you have chosen?	693	67.5	1.33	.482
Q1-18: Are you interested in learning about foreign cultures, customs, and other aspects?	940	91.5	1.09	.325
Q1-19: Have you ever read books about foreign cultures and customs?	766	74.6	1.26	.465

#### 4.2. Teaching Environment for Cross-Cultural Japanese Teaching

The rapid development of information technology provides a richer and more convenient teaching environment for cross-cultural foreign language teaching. As can be seen from Table 2, items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 28 have generally higher allocation ratios of cross-cultural teaching facilities. Among them, audio-visual equipment accounts for the highest proportion of the total sample population. The proportion of film and television works and cross-cultural materials is also relatively high. Moreover, schools generally provide cross-cultural experiences such as study abroad or summer camps. In contrast, all intercultural exchanges were associated with generally lower frequencies. Among them,

schools in item 21 have a low rate of providing cross-cultural understanding or cross-cultural exchange activities. The results show that the rapid development of my country's economy and science and technology since the reform and opening up has provided very generous hardware resources for cross-cultural foreign language teaching. With the expansion of foreign exchanges, cross-border exchanges and study abroad activities have increased, Although the study abroad and overseas exchange resources of each university are different, they can basically provide opportunities for overseas experience. However, schools offer fewer activities to develop cross-cultural skills training. On the basis of cross-cultural theoretical knowledge and cross-cultural experience, it is important to provide a systematic educational environment for cultivating cross-cultural skills.

Table 2. Descriptive statistical analysis of cross-cultural teaching facilities.

Description of cross-cultural teaching facilities	N	percentage	mean	standard deviation
Q1-13: Does your school have audio-visual equipment for watching foreign film and television works?	909	88.5	1.12	.360
Q1-14: Does your school have CDs and DVDs that introduce foreign cultures?	712	69.3	1.31	.488
Q1-15: Have you ever used school equipment to enjoy foreign films and television works at school?	837	81.5	1.19	.422
Q1-16: Does your school library have books about foreign cultures, customs, etc.?	844	82.2	1.18	.417
Q1-17: Are there many reference materials in the library about foreign cultures outside of professional classes?	761	74.1	1.26	.467
Q1-18: Are you interested in learning about foreign cultures, customs, and other aspects?	940	91.5	1.09	.325
Q1-19: Have you ever read books about foreign cultures and customs?	766	74.6	1.26	.465

#### 4.3. Cross-Cultural Communication Activities

Cross-cultural communication is an important way for Japanese language learners to improve their cross-cultural abilities, and it is one of the important testing dimensions of the effectiveness of cross-cultural education. In the cross-cultural education ecology of Japanese language teaching, foreign teachers, foreign students and other individuals with foreign cultural backgrounds are important carriers of cross-cultural communication activities. As can be seen from Table 3, Japanese language learners in items 12 and 28 have more opportunities to contact foreign teachers, and basic universities provide exchange activities for studying abroad or short-term foreign experience. Items 22 and 27: Each school has different regions, foreign exchange conditions,

etc., so the number of international students enrolled by the school varies greatly. The rate of Japanese language learners participating in exchange activities with international students is very low. Japanese language teaching is basically equipped with courses taught by foreign teachers, so the opportunities or frequency of exchanges between Japanese language learners and foreign teachers are relatively high. Moreover, there is not much overlap between the Chinese education system and the foreign language education system where international students belong to each institution. When schools provide few cross-cultural communication activities, increasing participation in cross-cultural communication activities basically relies on students' enthusiasm. The results of this survey show that students do not actively participate in cross-cultural communication activities.

Table 3. Descriptive statistical analysis of cross-cultural communication activities.

Descriptive items of cross-cultural communication activities in Japanese language teaching	N	percentage	mean	standard deviation
Q1-11: Among the courses you have chosen, are there any courses on foreign cultures taught by foreign teachers?	477	46.4	1.54	.510
Q1-12: Have you communicated with foreign teachers?	799	77.8	1.23	.447
Q1-20: Does your school offer activities to expose you to foreign cultures?	568	55.3	1.45	.521
Q1-21: Does your school provide exchange activities on developing intercultural communication skills?	461	44.9	1.56	.520
Q1-22: Have you ever participated in activities to develop intercultural communication skills?	231	22.5	1.78	.441
Q1-27: Have you ever participated in exchange activities with foreign students?	176	17.1	1.83	.402
Q1-28: Does your school offer opportunities to study abroad or experience abroad?	778	75.8	1.25	.473

## 5. Discussion

On the one hand, cross-cultural foreign language teaching

develops students' language abilities and standardizes oral and written language expression so that students can use language accurately and effectively; on the other hand, it cultivates students' cross-cultural abilities so that students can

treat people with different social and cultural identities equally, and interact effectively and appropriately with them [3]. From the findings and analysis of this study, it can be seen that cross-cultural education in Japanese language teaching inherits the teaching resources for cultivating Japanese language communicative ability, and has a better configuration in terms of curriculum, cross-cultural information resources, and teacher teaching. In terms of cultivating cross-cultural abilities, Japanese language learners rely on interactions with foreign teachers in class, as well as studying abroad or short-term overseas experiences. Schools provide few practical activities to improve cross-cultural competence. In terms of enthusiasm for cross-cultural learning, Japanese language learners are more active in contacting foreign cultural knowledge, reading related books, watching videos, etc. While Japanese language learners are in school, the current most important cross-cultural communication methods are indirect cultural product contact and indirect interpersonal communication. Among indirect cultural product contacts, the most common ones include books or magazines about foreign cultures and customs, foreign culture and native language, literature and culture courses. Indirect interpersonal contact and indirect cultural product contact are conducive to promoting the development of their cross-cultural abilities [8]. Moreover, the indirect interpersonal communication between teachers and students in classroom teaching can effectively cultivate and improve college students' cross-cultural awareness and cross-cultural language communication skills, and effectively improve cross-cultural understanding and cross-cultural cognitive abilities. In contrast, direct oral contact is currently not the main cross-cultural contact method for Chinese college students. Among direct oral contacts, the most frequent exchanges are with foreign teachers in schools. Direct oral contact is conducive to the improvement of their cross-cultural abilities. However, with the technological advancement and development in the Internet age, cross-cultural communication and learning through contact methods such as the Internet and social media play an important role in the development of college students' cross-cultural abilities and foreign language abilities. [12]. Moreover, as online learning gradually becomes the main learning mode for college students, indirect contact can broaden the ways for Japanese learners to acquire foreign cultural knowledge, enhance the depth of cross-cultural cognition, and help improve Japanese learners' positive cross-cultural attitudes. Cross-cultural knowledge, cross-cultural attitudes, and cross-cultural communication skills are important components of cross-cultural competence. By analyzing the cultural knowledge curriculum, cross-cultural exchange activities and foreign language learners' cross-cultural attitudes in foreign language education in colleges and universities, this study found that there is an imbalance in the educational ecology of cultivating cross-cultural abilities in Japanese language teaching in Chinese colleges and universities. In the cross-cultural education ecosystem, in the new round of

foreign language teaching reform, it is clear that cultivating cross-cultural abilities is one of the important teaching goals of foreign language teaching. In teaching practice, the curriculum configuration inherits the teaching resources for cultivating language communicative ability. However, there are few targeted cross-cultural practical activities. Japanese learners have strong cross-cultural enthusiasm, but schools are lacking in providing cross-cultural practical activities.

## 6. Conclusion

The cultivation of cross-cultural abilities in foreign language teaching cannot be achieved through one course alone. It needs to be continuously improved through mutual complementation and mutual promotion in various departments and courses. First of all, the intercultural knowledge curriculum in colleges and universities is quite incoherent, and the cultivation of cross-cultural cognition is limited to the accumulation of knowledge. Therefore, the research and application of cross-cultural foreign language teaching needs to combine the characteristics of foreign language course platforms to explore and expand the cultural elements in the course content. Set specific teaching goals, integrate students' experiential, speculative and interactive learning into the teaching links of discovering, comparing and critically reflecting on culture, so as to train students' foreign language skills while cultivating their cross-cultural abilities. In cross-cultural teaching, teachers can choose and use appropriate teaching activities in specific teaching links based on actual needs and teaching situations. Secondly, most of the cross-cultural practical activities that foreign language major students can participate in are indirect exchanges with foreign teachers in configured courses. Balance theoretical teaching and intercultural practical activities in an educational ecology that cultivates intercultural competence. Encourage foreign teachers or students to conduct cross-cultural exchange activities with foreign language learners. Incorporate intercultural communication activities into foreign language teaching through interdisciplinary collaboration. Provide more systematic cross-cultural training before carrying out cross-cultural practical activities such as summer camps and short-term study abroad. After the cross-cultural practice activities, students are required to reflect and share their experiences, and establish a dynamic cross-cultural education ecological database. Finally, develop a diversity cross-cultural foreign language teaching evaluation tool to provide usable tools for cross-cultural foreign language teaching. For example, reflection logs, learning files, teacher observations, etc. As an overall cross-cultural education ecosystem, schools need to focus on the balanced development of teaching elements.

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## Fund

Research on intercultural communication courses and intercultural ability cultivation in Japanese language education (WYZL2022SH0007).

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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