

# Exploration of Demand-driven Training of Japanese Language Majors

-- Take Zhaoqing University as an example

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses the cultivation of Japanese language professionals based on demand-oriented talents, taking Zhaoqing College as an example. The demand for Japanese language professionals in Guangdong Province, especially in the Pearl River Delta region, is analysed through field research and online research. It is found that the demand for Japanese language talents in Guangdong Province is extensive and in-depth, especially in the fields of cross-border e-commerce and international trade. The article further discusses the industry demand and job requirements, pointing out that Japanese language professionals should have the ability to serve in diversified industry fields, as well as the comprehensive ability of cross-cultural communication and the application of modern information technology. Finally, the article proposes that the training of Japanese language professionals should be based on the strengthening of basic core courses to increase the number of professional skills and practical courses, pay attention to cross-composite courses, incorporate new technologies and information technology tools, and strengthen the cultivation of English proficiency in order to cultivate applied and composite Japanese language professionals who can meet the market demand.

**Keywords:** Japanese Language Professional Training; Demand-Oriented; Intercultural Communication; Complex.

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## 1. Introduction

In the context of globalisation, language, as a bridge of communication, plays a vital role in promoting international exchanges and cooperation. Especially in today's deepening economic globalisation and regional economic integration, there is a growing demand for foreign language professionals. Japanese, as one of the important languages in Asia, is of great significance in promoting exchanges and cooperation between China and Japan in the fields of economy, culture, science and technology. Guangdong Province in China, especially the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, as an important window for foreign economic activities, has a particularly urgent need for Japanese language professionals.

The purpose of this study is to explore the Japanese language professional talent training mode based on demand orientation, take Zhaoqing College as an example, analyse the demand for Japanese language professionals in Guangdong Province, especially in the Pearl River Delta region, and put forward corresponding talent training strategies accordingly. Firstly, through questionnaire survey, graduates' feedback, employers' satisfaction survey and data analysis of recruitment websites, this paper carries out an in-depth study on the geographical demand, industry demand and job demand of Japanese language professionals. Secondly, it explores the professional skills and qualities that Japanese language professionals should have, and the correlation between them and the training objectives and graduation requirements. Finally, based on the results of the research, suggestions are made for the curriculum of Japanese language majors, with a view to providing references and bases for the revision of the talent training programme for Japanese language majors.

## 2. Industry Industry Development Trend and the Demand for Talents

In order to understand the status quo of industry development and the demand for Japanese language professionals, and to better determine the direction of Japanese language professional training, this major has held several research meetings on talent training programme, adopted field research and online research methods, and conducted questionnaire surveys and interviews through telephone, QQ, WeChat and other network channels. In the analysis of industry development trend and Japanese language talent demand, mainly based on (1) questionnaire on the internship situation of Japanese language major in the class of 2020; (2) on-the-job feedback questionnaire of graduates in the past five years; (3) employer satisfaction; (4) recruitment website data talent training programme of four types of survey data, to collect a large amount of information related to the demand for Japanese language professional talent.

### 2.1. Geographical Demand for Japanese Language Professionals

By analysing the data of 51 students' internship units in the class of 2023 and the employment direction of our graduates in the past five years, the main direction of Japanese majors in our university is employment, which, combined with the enrolment rate of graduate school in the past five years, can also indicate that, as a local applied undergraduate university, students' willingness to become a research-oriented talent does not account for the majority. The locations of students' internships and employment units are mainly concentrated in Guangdong Province, which are mainly concentrated in Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Foshan, Dongguan and other cities, which indicates that there is a high demand for Japanese

language professionals in these areas. The diverse nature of the internship and employment units, including Chinese-funded private and foreign enterprises, indicates that there are application scenarios for Japanese language talents in different types of enterprises, showing the continuous demand for Japanese language talents in Guangdong Province, especially in the Pearl River Delta region.

According to the research on recruitment websites such as Wisdom Recruitment, the demand for Japanese language talents in Guangdong Province is reflected in a number of aspects. From the perspective of enterprises, Guangdong Province has a large number of Japanese-funded enterprises, which tend to prefer talents with foreign language skills in the recruitment process. In particular, enterprises in the fields of manufacturing and trading companies have a higher demand for Japanese language talents. In addition, IT, technology and manufacturing enterprises also have a high demand for technical personnel who understand Japanese, as these talents can play an important role in cross-border co-operation and technological exchanges.

In addition, with the deepening of exchanges and cooperation between Guangdong Province and Japan in the fields of economy, trade and culture, the demand for Japanese language talents will continue to grow. Especially in cross-border e-commerce, international trade, tourism and other fields, talents with Japanese language skills will be more competitive. The "2021 Foreign Trade Talent Situation Research Report" released by Wisdom Link Recruitment shows that during the "13th Five-Year Plan" period, Guangdong's position as the first major foreign trade province is solid. General trade gradually occupy the main position, new forms of foreign trade flourish, with cross-border e-commerce, market procurement as the representative of the rapid development of new forms of foreign trade, new modes of rapid development for the high-quality development of foreign trade to inject new kinetic energy. With regard to the cross-border e-commerce operation, which has seen a surge in demand for talents, the demand for talents mainly comes from Guangdong Province, accounting for 51.6% of the country's total, while only Shenzhen and Guangzhou together account for 48.8% of the total. According to the latest customs statistics, Shenzhen has made remarkable achievements in the field of foreign trade in 2024, with total imports and exports reaching 1.41 trillion yuan in the first four months, a year-on-year increase of 31.8 per cent, successfully overtaking Shanghai as the new leader in foreign trade (imports + exports). The characteristic of "China's cross-border depends on Guangdong, Guangdong's cross-border depends on Guangzhou and Shenzhen" also applies to the demand for talents, which also matches the locations and industries of interns and graduates in the questionnaire.

## **2.2. Industry Needs and Job Requirements**

In order to understand the industry and job demand for Japanese language talents in the market in recent years, this research conducted statistics based on the employment data of graduates in the past five years, and also collected Japanese language recruitment information from the online job market.

After analysing the information from the research on graduates it can be found:

(1) Graduates' industries: In the past five years, graduates' internships and employment industries have covered the education industry, automotive industry, foreign trade and e-commerce, logistics industry, financial industry, technology

and internet, manufacturing industry, new energy industry, and cultural communication.

(2) Competent positions of graduates: In the past five years, graduates have entered the organisation and taken up positions such as translators, foreign trade salesmen, purchasing, sales, personnel, clerks, teachers and other traditional industry positions. With the development of media operations, cross-border e-commerce and other new industries, Japanese language-related positions in addition to the above traditional industry positions, but also emerging job needs, such as sales and customer management, product localisation, live assistants, product operations, management operations, customer service, logistics, finance, and other areas of the post, the graduates of the past few years has been a number of students involved in such industries and positions. However, as most Japanese language industry students do not have a high level of computer expertise, there are fewer students employed in website maintenance positions and relatively more customer service positions. With the general rise of shopping platforms, there are also a small number of students to start their own business, open online shops, in Taobao, Alibaba, Amazon and other e-commerce platforms to occupy a seat.

## **3. Professional Skills, Literacy Needs and Training Objectives, Graduation Requirements**

### **3.1. Research and Analysis of the Demand for Skills and Qualifications for Japanese Language Jobs on Job Boards.**

According to the research on the job requirements of the recruitment market, it can be seen that the requirements for the professional skills of Japanese language talents not only include a solid foundation in Japanese language and the ability to use the language, but also involves the requirements for multi-disciplinary abilities such as economics, international trade, business practice, cross-cultural communication, discernment and creativity, etc., and the employers have a higher expectation for the soft skills of the Japanese graduates' communication ability, management ability and innovative thinking. These characteristics reflect the comprehensive demand for professional skills, language proficiency, intercultural communication skills and industry-specific experience in the Japanese language job market. This requires Japanese language majors to focus not only on the cultivation of language skills, but also to strengthen the training of communication ability, practical ability, innovative thinking and cross-cultural communication in the process of education and training.

### **3.2. Research on Graduates' Needs for Japanese Language Job Skills and Qualifications**

Question 6 and Question 12 of the questionnaire, regarding whether students have cultivated a good overall quality, humanistic literacy, international outlook and Chinese sentiment after studying in school, were answered "basically achieved, achieved, fully achieved" by more than 90 per cent of the respondents. More than 82 per cent answered "basically achieved, achieved or fully achieved" in terms of whether or not they possessed intercultural communication skills, critical thinking and innovation skills, and the ability to learn

independently.

In the research on professional knowledge and skills, the answer to the question "Question 8: To cultivate talents with solid knowledge of Japanese language and culture and good ability to use the Japanese language" accounted for 84.46%. In the survey on professional knowledge and skills, 84.46% of the respondents answered "basically reach, reach, and fully reach"; "Question 10: Cultivate talents with a good command of economics, international trade and other related basic theories and practical skills, familiar with international business rules and practices, and with business practice ability." The total percentage of respondents who answered "basically achieved, achieved, or fully achieved" was 67 per cent, which is significantly lower than the achievement level of Japanese language skills.

In response to the 16th question, "In which area do you think the school needs to strengthen the training of students?", "Japanese language skills", "business skills", "communication and cooperation skills", "intercultural communication skills", "information technology skills", "study skills", and so on, we have received a response of "Japanese language skills", "business skills", "business skills", and so on, "communication and co-operation skills", "intercultural communication skills", "information technology skills", and "study skills". Improvement is particularly urgent, accounting for more than half of the survey. It can be seen that the cultivation objectives in the previous version of the talent programme included "Japanese language ability", "business ability", "communication and cooperation ability", "intercultural communication ability" and "learning ability", "cross-cultural communication skills", "learning skills", etc., and the degree of achievement is basically good, but after work experience, graduates have higher expectations for the improvement of the above skills and qualities, which indicates that these skills are the core skills in the workplace, and also reflects the importance of these skills. This shows that these skills are the core skills in the workplace, and also reflects that the "new liberal arts" encourages the intersection of disciplines and the necessity of cultivating the comprehensive quality and interdisciplinary thinking of students, which should be included in the new cultivation programme.

In addition, considering the integration of the "four new (new materials, new equipment, new technology, new techniques)", the demand for "new technologies" such as "information literacy" and "office software use ability", which were not covered in the cultivation objectives of the previous version of the talent cultivation programme, was mentioned for the first time in this research. The demand for "new technologies" such as "information literacy" and "ability to use office software", which were not covered in the training objectives of the previous version of the talent cultivation programme, was mentioned for the first time in this research, and its demand also showed a remarkable performance, reaching almost half of the rate. This is also in line with the concept of "New Liberal Arts" that emphasises the integration of humanities and social sciences with modern technology.

### **3.3. Research on the Demand for Skills and Qualifications for Japanese Language Jobs in Employing Organisations**

In order to effectively understand the enterprise employers' demand for talents and feedback on the training objectives of

our profession, the profession has taken online and offline ways to conduct research. A total of 120 copies of enterprise employers (including internship units) were collected, and 8 government and enterprise units were interviewed through telephone and face-to-face interviews. For employers, the research focuses on the following two questions for investigation: ① compared with your unit of other college graduates, our graduates which which aspects are more outstanding? ② What do you think our institute needs to further strengthen in talent training?

In the survey, employers have common requirements for Japanese language students in terms of language and other qualities, and the job ability tends to be "can speak and do" type of Japanese language talents. As shown in the figure, the comprehensive quality, ideological quality, cultural quality, professional quality, physical and mental quality and vocational quality of Japanese language graduates are generally evaluated higher, which indicates that Japanese language graduates are recognised in various aspects. In comparison with graduates of other universities, employers think that Japanese language graduates of our university are outstanding in terms of practical working ability and professionalism. However, the aspects that employers think still need to be further strengthened include management ability, comprehensive quality, innovation ability cultivation, critical thinking ability, etc., which inspires us to pay attention to supplementing or strengthening the cultivation objectives of the above abilities in the new talent cultivation programme.

Through the above analysis, we can see that there is a certain degree of match between the Japanese language professional training objectives and market demand, but there are also some gaps, should be based on the changes in market demand, the Japanese language professional training objectives positioned in the applied, composite interdisciplinary Japanese language professional training objectives with comprehensive practical ability is accurate and reasonable to adapt to the needs of the community, but also in line with the current education of applied undergraduate colleges and universities development characteristics.

## **4. Feedback from Curriculum Research**

Cultivation objectives and graduation requirements are the starting and ending points of education, while the curriculum system is the guarantee for the ultimate achievement of the cultivation objectives, and the design of the curriculum system must be centred on these objectives, providing students with specific content and knowledge structures to achieve the cultivation objectives, and ensuring that the students can acquire the necessary knowledge and skills through learning to achieve the ultimate objectives.

For the curriculum, the research was conducted through two main questions: ① What suggestions do you have for the revision of the talent training programme of this major? ② Please rate the relevance of the following courses to employment. The research method is mainly questionnaires and interviews. The following are analyses and summaries of the four aspects of the research:

### **4.1. Feedback from the Survey of Teachers and Students in Schools**

The main specific demands of the students in terms of

course offerings were learnt through the class teacher's talks with the students in each class:

- ◆ Would like to see more apprenticeships and practice
- ◆ Wish to abolish some duplicated courses (business Japanese audio-visual speaking and international business negotiation)
- ◆ Increase in second-class activities and competitions related to the Japanese language
- ◆ Increased inter-school and international cooperation in the curriculum
- ◆ Increased oral skills training
- ◆ Addition of teacher training modules
- ◆ Creation of "Japanese Plus" courses to match the job market
- ◆ Increase in Japanese language lectures to provide students with international cutting-edge Japanese language studies
- ◆ Students suggest that the school provide a career planning guidance course instructed by a Japanese language teacher to help students understand the job prospects and career paths in Japanese language-related industries;
- ◆ Wish there were more language choices for second foreign language programmes

It can be seen that: the needs of Japanese language students in terms of learning are diversified, including both language proficiency and professional knowledge, as well as application skills and professionalism, and it is suggested that oral training and practical teaching be strengthened. At the same time, students prefer learning by doing, and hope that more apprenticeship and practice opportunities and extracurricular activities, interdisciplinary cooperation, and improve the employment competitiveness of Japanese language talents. They are also eager to have more guidance programmes for study and employment.

## 4.2. Feedback from Intern and Graduate Research

(1) From the survey of curriculum relevance:

The research asked each participant to rate each course of the talent cultivation programme out of 5 points (Figure). From the data, firstly, the professional foundation core courses are rated higher, with scores above 4.1, which fully shows that the foundation core courses are not only the starting point of professional learning, but also the key stage of students' professional growth and personal development, and that the professional core courses are usually closely related to the industry standards and vocational qualifications, which provide students with the necessary preparation for their careers. Secondly, following the basic courses are the more practical and relatively less theoretical courses: Foreign Trade Correspondence and Communication, Interpretation Theory and Practice, Business Japanese Audiovisual Speaking, Translation Theory and Practice, Business Etiquette, Workplace Training, International Trade Practice, Intercultural Communication, Japanese Speech and Debate, International Marketing, Comparison of Chinese and Japanese Corporate Cultures, International Business Negotiation, and Japanese Business Management. Thirdly, courses that are more theoretical and seemingly less practical scored relatively low, such as Introduction to Japanese Literature, Academic Writing and Research Methods, Selected Newspapers and Periodicals, and Introduction to Japanese Linguistics. As this research is an investigation of

relevance to employment and does not involve the merits and demerits of the courses themselves, although some of the scores are not high, they still have their special roles and necessity of existence in terms of disciplinary structure and quality cultivation, which can be appropriately used as a reference in the deletion of the new programme and can be considered as an addition to the professional awareness courses.

(2) From the views of interns and graduates on the revision of the programme:

In the research targeting 2015-2019 graduates, excluding the basic core compulsory courses, the courses with the highest degree of demand among graduates are the professional skills practice courses, with a degree of demand reaching 27.18%, far exceeding the demand for other types of courses. This is followed by practical courses (such as conversation, listening, correspondence, etc.), cross-compound courses (finance, logistics, trade, etc.) with a demand of 8.74%, and courses closely related to market demand with a demand of 7.77%.

Based on the feedback from the Class of 2020 interns, 31.37 per cent of them indicated that they were "not sure or not available" in terms of course demand. The highest demand for courses is still for professional skills practice courses, with a demand of 17.65%. The next highest demand is for cross-cutting and complex courses (finance, logistics, trade, etc.), with a demand of 13.72%, and for courses closely related to market demand, with a demand of 5.88%.

From the comparison of the two sets of data, it can be seen that: 1) students' demand for practical courses in professional skills are stronger ② the demand for practical course offerings has risen by nearly 9 percentage points, indicating that students are less interested in the new theoretical courses in the 20th edition of the programme, and are more favourable to the practical courses, which also reflects the lack of awareness of the theoretical course curriculum such as humanistic literacy, or insufficient teaching methodology and content to attract students, as well as the students' The pursuit of short-term and obvious effects, while attaching importance to practical courses, students should also be guided to understand the professional curriculum system. (3) The demand for cross-composite courses (finance, logistics, trade, etc.) has also increased by 5 percentage points, indicating that the market demand for the knowledge structure of talents has changed considerably compared with the previous one, and the talent cultivation programme should pay more attention to the composite courses, keep up with the market demand, and find out the right positioning. The demand for office software and information technology tools has also increased significantly, which shows that under the development situation of digital transformation, our curriculum should be integrated with these "new technologies", "new theories" and "new developments". "The increase in demand for teacher education programmes is also evident. ⑤Increasing demand for teacher education courses. With the growth of high school Japanese language education and the demand for teachers, the demand for Japanese language education courses is higher than in the old programme.

(3) Feedback from Employer Research

In interviews with companies, business experts have reported that many companies are now in need of comprehensive human resources, and that more mature companies are looking for "Skills + Japanese" or "Japanese+" human resources, who can use Japanese as a tool,

but do not rule out the need for some pure Japanese language professionals, such as translators. However, there is no exclusion of the need for some pure Japanese language personnel, such as translators. Many graduates of Japanese majors are faced with the problem of transition after entering the company, for example, to the quality department, purchasing and production planning department, legal affairs department or auditing department. Therefore, schools should be more open and focus on inter-professional co-operation in the training of human resources, so as to form a broad-based education and give students more possibilities. There should be more co-operation with enterprises to cultivate talents, shorten the cultivation cycle and achieve win-win situation between schools and enterprises. At the same time, while paying attention to the input of knowledge, schools should put quality training throughout the classroom teaching and teaching outside the classroom, and cultivate students' organisational ability, management ability, stress resistance, communication and coordination ability as well as learning ability through richer classroom and extracurricular practice sessions.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, through the research of market demand for talents, it is only through the service orientation that the positioning of talents can be decided, and the positioning of talents can guide the setting of cultivation objectives, while the cultivation objectives, graduation requirements and curricula should be mutually supportive, so as to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of the cultivation programme, and to jointly support the all-around development of the Japanese language professionals. Therefore, based on the above research results and experts' opinions, the following opinions and suggestions are put forward for the revision of the training programme for Japanese language majors:

1) Service Orientation: The Japanese language training programme should address the needs of the economic development of Guangdong Province, especially the Greater Bay Area, as well as the needs of diversified industry sectors, in particular the growth of cross-border e-commerce and foreign trade.

2) Talent Orientation: The training programme should be oriented to cultivate applied and composite interdisciplinary Japanese language talents with language proficiency, cross-cultural communication ability as well as industry-specific professional knowledge and skills. Focusing on the cross-border e-commerce and foreign trade industry, the programme shall cultivate Japanese language talents who can play a role in marketing, customer service and supply chain management.

3) Establish a perfect curriculum and teaching system, strengthen the professional basic core courses, and focus on

cultivating students' solid basic knowledge and ability of Japanese language in order to improve their competitiveness and adaptability in different industries; increase the proportion of professional skills practice courses and practice courses in order to improve students' practical ability and vocational skills. It is recommended to improve students' practical ability by organising practical activities, such as Japanese culture experience and Japanese speaking practice.

4) Emphasis on cross-composite courses: In order to meet the needs of different students and the employment demands of different directions, it is recommended that courses of different directions be set up according to the characteristics of different students and employment directions. Make use of other advantageous majors in our university to offer professional direction courses for Japanese majors and provide guidance for the construction of professional directions.

5) Adjusting the allocation of course credits to ensure adequate coverage of specialised courses.

In conclusion, according to the results of the research, combined with the suggestions of many parties, the cultivation of Japanese language talents should take into account the market demand, students' needs, employers' feedback as well as the regional characteristics, and formulate an education plan that is both comprehensive, targeted and forward-looking. Through clear cultivation objectives, specific graduation requirements and reasonable curriculum, we can cultivate compound Japanese language professionals who meet the market demand and have professional qualities.

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