

Exploration of College Japanese Teaching Strategies from the Perspective of Project-Based Learning

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Abstract: In the practical process of college Japanese Teaching, cultivating students' comprehensive language application ability and intercultural communication awareness is an important orientation of teaching activities. To achieve this goal, based on Project-Based Learning (PBL), this paper first analyzes its application value in college Japanese Teaching. Then, combined with practical teaching experience, it puts forward strategies such as anchoring curriculum objectives and designing hierarchical project tasks, focusing on language practice and implementing targeted teaching guidance, basing on the learning process and constructing a diversified evaluation system, integrating internal and external resources and building a practical support platform, so as to provide reference for front-line teachers' teaching.

Keywords: Project-based learning; Colleges and universities; Japanese teaching

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1. Introduction

With the continuous renewal of educational concepts, the optimization and adjustment of teaching models have gradually become the key to improving teaching quality. The task-oriented and practical inquiry concepts advocated by Project-Based Learning (PBL) are inherently consistent with the development direction of college Japanese teaching. By guiding learners to carry out a series of learning activities around specific themes, it helps students deepen their language perception and integrate knowledge systems in specific tasks^[1]. To reasonably integrate Project-Based Learning into college Japanese teaching links, it is necessary to combine the acquisition rules of Japanese language and the cognitive characteristics of college students to build an adaptable teaching implementation framework. Therefore, exploring college Japanese teaching strategies from the perspective of Project-Based Learning has important practical significance.

2. The Application Value of Project-Based Learning in College Japanese Teaching

2.1. Promoting the Transformation of Students' Linguistic Knowledge into Practical Competence

Project-Based Learning (PBL), with specific tasks as the link, can build practical scenarios for knowledge application for college Japanese learners^[2]. In the process of completing projects, students need to actively mobilize their existing basic reserves such as vocabulary and grammar, organize language expressions according to task requirements, sort out expression logic, and adjust wording to adapt to specific situations. This task-oriented learning model makes the application of linguistic knowledge a necessary link in project completion, helping students integrate scattered knowledge reserves into coherent language expression ability. It promotes Japanese learning from passive knowledge reception to active application, enabling linguistic knowledge to be gradually internalized into flexibly usable practical competence through practice.

2.2. Strengthening Students' Intercultural Cognition and Communicative Literacy

To learn a language, it is essential to learn the culture embedded in it, and the appropriateness of language expression depends on the speaker's grasp of the cultural context. In Project-Based Learning (PBL), students need to actively explore cultural connotations through language practice, thereby making learning not limited to superficial knowledge memorization^[3]. In the process of completing project tasks, students also need to sort out the connection between linguistic phenomena and cultural backgrounds according to task requirements, understand the situational logic of language use, and the impact of cultural concepts on communication methods. This process encourages students to integrate language application with cultural exploration, enabling them to gradually break their single cognitive dimension, form a three-dimensional perception of Japanese culture, and ultimately better grasp the scale of expression in intercultural interactions.

2.3. Cultivating Students' Independent Learning and Collaborative Abilities

During the PBL process, to complete learning tasks, students need to take the initiative to clarify learning objectives, split task nodes, independently select suitable learning resources, and sort out ideas for language application. This process will gradually strengthen their awareness of independent planning and problem-solving. Meanwhile, most projects need to be carried out in groups; members must divide labor around tasks, communicate on theme directions and content presentation methods, coordinate differences through the exchange of views, cooperate with each other in advancing project progress, and jointly solve problems encountered. Such collaboration in specific Japanese learning tasks enables students to master methods of listening, expressing, and negotiating, and their independent learning ability and collaborative ability will mutually promote each other in project practice.

3. Difficulties in the Application of Project-Based Learning in College Japanese Teaching

3.1. Difficulty in Aligning Project Task Design with Curriculum Objectives

Targeted guidance in language practice sessions places high demands on teachers' teaching control capabilities. However, some teachers lack systematic preparation for project-based teaching and are unable to form an adaptive guidance logic. During project implementation, students are divided into different task groups, so teachers need to follow up on multiple practice processes simultaneously, leading to scattered energy allocation

and difficulty in real-time identification of each student's language expression problems. When faced with students' confusion in Japanese application, some teachers often replace heuristic guidance with direct prompts, failing to help students independently sort out the root causes of problems, and thus the guidance remains superficial. In this case, students' linguistic omissions cannot be corrected in a targeted manner, and the actual effect of practical training is also affected.

3.2. Insufficient Targeted Guidance in Language Practice Sessions

The construction and implementation of a diversified evaluation system are often restricted by both evaluation standards and implementation conditions. In Japanese project-based learning, there is a lack of clear and operable quantitative criteria for students' practical performance, such as the fluency of language expression and the depth of cultural understanding. Some teachers' scoring is easily influenced by subjective perceptions, making it difficult to form a unified evaluation standard. Meanwhile, diversified evaluation needs to integrate information from multiple aspects, including project participation and group collaboration performance. Some colleges and universities lack convenient tools for process-based recording, forcing teachers to invest substantial extra energy in sorting out relevant materials. In practical operation, the process is likely to be simplified, with only the final results being emphasized in evaluation. Consequently, the diversity of the evaluation system cannot be fully reflected, and its implementation effect is compromised.

3.3. Obstacles in the Construction and Implementation of a Diversified Evaluation System

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3.4. Inadequate Integration of Internal and External Resources and Platform Support

The integration of internal and external resources and the construction of supporting platforms often face dual problems of supply and utilization. The types of on-campus Japanese Teaching resources in some colleges and universities are relatively single, with a low matching degree to the real-scenario materials required for project-based learning, which cannot meet practical needs. In terms of off-campus resources, due to regional or cooperation channel restrictions, the cooperation between some colleges and universities and Japanese-related enterprises and institutions remains superficial and cannot be transformed into implementable practical resources. At the same time, the operation of practical support platforms requires technical and management guarantees. Some teachers are not proficient in using relevant digital tools, and the functions of some platforms have not been optimized according to teaching needs. As a result, the supporting role of

resources and platforms cannot be fully exerted.

3.5. Lagging Strategies for Addressing Individual Differences and Providing Support

Addressing students' individual differences in project-based learning requires accurate demand identification and flexible support strategies, but this process is often inadequate. Some teachers' understanding of students' differences mostly relies on superficial information such as classroom interaction and homework feedback, making it difficult to fully grasp the Japanese foundation, learning habits, and potential needs of different students, and individual students' personalized problems are likely to be ignored. Meanwhile, existing support strategies often lack a dynamic adjustment mechanism and are mostly preset fixed schemes, which cannot match new situations arising during project advancement. For students with weak foundations or slow learning paces, the supply of relevant support resources is not timely enough, and the support measures are disconnected from students' actual needs, failing to effectively resolve learning barriers caused by individual differences.

4. Application Strategies of Project-Based Learning in College Japanese Teaching

4.1. Anchoring Curriculum Objectives and Designing Hierarchical Project Tasks

Curriculum objectives provide directional guidance for project design, ensuring that task design does not deviate from the core requirement of language competence cultivation and enabling students to focus on key curriculum points when completing projects. Hierarchical design is based on differences in students' vocabulary reserves, grammar proficiency, and expression abilities, avoiding participation barriers caused by a "one-size-fits-all" approach to task difficulty^[4]. Tasks at different levels are carried out around the same curriculum objective, which not only provides a feasible practical path for students with weak foundations but also reserves room for improvement for students with stronger abilities. This allows students to accumulate language practice experience in adaptive task challenges and gradually approach the competence objectives set by the curriculum. This design concept transforms the macro requirements of curriculum objectives into specific and operable tasks, forming a synergy between project-based learning and curriculum teaching.

When designing a project themed "Investigation of Japanese Regional Culture", teachers should first clarify the corresponding curriculum objectives of the project, namely strengthening students' Japanese information integration ability and cultural expression ability, and then split task levels based on students' actual proficiency. For students at the basic level, teachers should provide structured research outlines, clearly requiring them to record basic information about 3–5 regional cultural symbols in Japanese, such as Kiyomizu-dera Temple in Kyoto and the food culture in Osaka, while providing references for common descriptive vocabulary and sentence patterns to help them build an expression framework. For students at the improvement level, teachers need to guide them to independently determine research entry points, such as "the connection between Hokkaido's natural landscapes and folk customs", instruct them to screen authoritative materials through Japanese academic databases, and require them to write a research abstract of about 800 words, specifying information sources and core viewpoints. For advanced students with stronger abilities, teachers can put forward comparative analysis requirements, allowing them to conduct research on "differences between similar regional cultures in China and Japan", encourage them to collect information through diverse methods such as Japanese interviews and video material sorting, and finally complete a 1,500-word discussion report with attached research process records. Throughout the process, teachers should clearly inform students of the

completion milestones and achievement forms of tasks at each level, ensuring that every student can advance the project within their own ability range while accumulating language application experience in line with curriculum objectives.

4.2. Focusing on Language Practice and Implementing Targeted Teaching Guidance

Implementing targeted teaching guidance requires teachers to provide necessary support and instruction based on students' actual language application needs during teaching^[5]. Language practice in Project-Based Learning (PBL) is not limited to skill demonstration; instead, it requires students to use language to express their demands in an appropriate scenario in a standardized and logically coherent manner. In this process, students are prone to problems such as awkward vocabulary collocations, improper sentence structure usage, or deviations in cultural expressions. If teachers fail to provide timely guidance, these issues will hinder students' subsequent learning. Therefore, teachers should keep pace with the project progress, intervene at key nodes when students apply language, shift the focus of teaching to guiding students to master methods for solving practical problems, help them establish connections between linguistic forms and usage scenarios, and promote the transformation of language practice into competence improvement.

In the project themed "Investigation of Japanese Regional Culture", teachers need to carry out targeted guidance based on the language practice performance of students at different levels. For students at the basic level, if errors in noun-particle collocations and redundant stacking of simple sentences are found in their initial Japanese research drafts, teachers should mark the types of errors sentence by sentence, provide examples of common collocations for core vocabulary, demonstrate how to use particles to clarify the relationship between sentence components, and require students to revise the drafts with annotations explaining the reasons for each revision. For students at the improvement level, when observing that they misuse honorifics while introducing research content in group discussions, teachers should organize small-scale targeted lectures, clarify the boundaries of honorific usage in terms of speaker-listener identities and scenarios in the context of research, provide appropriate expressions, and ask students to reorganize their speeches. For advanced students at the deepening level, if logical discontinuities appear in their comparative analysis papers, teachers should guide them to use appropriate cohesive devices to sort out the argumentative context, point out the "conclusion-first" feature of Japanese expression, suggest adjusting the paragraph structure to place the core viewpoints on regional cultural differences at the beginning of paragraphs before elaborating on specific details, and mark sentences that need strengthened logical connections with annotations to help them improve the coherence of their expressions.

4.3. Basing on the Learning Process and Constructing a Diversified Evaluation System

Constructing an evaluation system based on students' learning process aims to break the result-oriented assessment model, integrate evaluation into all links of project advancement, and capture the details of students' competence changes and growth through multi-subject participation and multi-dimensional consideration. In Project-Based Learning (PBL), students' progress is reflected not only in the final outcomes but also in processes such as data screening, language polishing, and team negotiation. A single evaluation method tends to ignore such implicit growth, while diversified evaluation, by integrating different perspectives, can not only focus on the accuracy of Japanese expression but also take into account the initiative of task participation and the flexibility of problem-solving. This transforms evaluation from a simple judgment of superiority or

inferiority into an effective basis for supporting students' continuous improvement, which is consistent with the educational goals of PBL.

In the project themed “Investigation of Japanese Regional Culture”, teachers need to design evaluation links around the learning process and strengthen their guiding role. First, at the project initiation stage, teachers should jointly clarify evaluation dimensions with students, including Japanese data processing ability, expression completeness, and collaboration participation. Each dimension is decomposed into specific and verifiable key points; for example, “data processing” is refined into “accuracy of Japanese information extraction” and “relevance of content screening”, making the evaluation criteria clear and actionable. During project implementation, teachers should regularly review the process files of each group: for basic-level students, focus on marking grammatical errors in their Japanese abstracts and annotating revision directions; for improvement-level students, concentrate on the Japanese logicality of their research outlines and give brief comments such as “clarify regional characteristics first, then link to cultural phenomena” as prompts. In the peer evaluation phase, teachers need to provide structured evaluation forms, guiding group members to score from three aspects—“balance of task allocation”, “timeliness of communication response”, and “standardization of Japanese expression”—in Japanese, and requiring them to attach 1–2 specific reasons for the evaluation. Before the project concludes, teachers should design guided reflection forms with questions such as “What was the biggest problem you solved using Japanese in this investigation?” and “Which part of cooperation with peers went most smoothly?” to help students sort out the learning process. Finally, teachers integrate all evaluation information and conduct one-on-one communication with students, using specific examples to illustrate their progress and deficiencies, ensuring that the evaluation results truly serve their subsequent learning.

4.4. Integrating Internal and External Resources and Building a Practical Support Platform

On-campus resources serve as the foundation for project implementation, including library materials, language equipment, and other facilities, which can meet students' needs for acquiring basic information. Off-campus resources, on the other hand, cover real-language scenarios, professional guidance, and so on, which can make up for the limitations of on-campus practical environments. The integration of the two can break resource barriers, transform project tasks from paper-based designs into real-world practices, and enable students to gain more practical language application experiences in the process of accessing diverse resources. This provides continuous resource supply for project advancement and helps achieve learning objectives.

In the project themed “Investigation of Japanese Regional Culture”, teachers need to take the initiative to act as resource integrators and guides, ensuring that resources serve the entire research process. At the on-campus level, teachers can sort out Japanese original books and database resources in the university library in advance, compile book lists and database links classified by “regional history”, “folk customs”, and “contemporary culture”—such as the NHK News Database and the Digital Collections of the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan—mark the research directions for which each resource is applicable, and distribute them to each group for targeted consultation. Meanwhile, teachers can contact Japanese native teachers in the Japanese department and invite them to deliver 1–2 themed lectures focusing on the unique expression habits of different regional cultures. Teachers need to collect students' cultural questions encountered during the research in advance, sort them into a list and submit it to the foreign teachers, ensuring that the lecture content accurately addresses students' needs. At the off-campus level, relying on the university's International Exchange Center,

teachers can contact Japanese international students on campus and organize “face-to-face regional culture exchange” activities. They should communicate with international students in advance to determine exchange themes and guide students to ask questions in Japanese based on their research content. Teachers can also connect with local Japanese-funded enterprises or Japanese cultural exchange institutions to obtain regional culture brochures, activity videos, and other materials compiled by them, and share the screened materials with students as research references. In addition, teachers can collate online resources such as official websites of Japanese local governments and official WeChat accounts of folk cultural groups, mark the core paths for information acquisition, and help students distinguish the credibility of resources to ensure the authenticity and richness of research content. Throughout the process, teachers need to establish a resource sharing group to supplement new resources in real time and answer students’ questions about resource usage.

4.5. Focusing on Individual Differences and Providing Targeted Support Strategies

Focusing on individual differences emphasizes providing adaptive learning assistance and guidance based on college Japanese students’ varied characteristics in learning motivation, ability shortcomings, and cognitive styles. In Japanese learning, students’ differences manifest in multiple aspects: some have prominent integrative motivation but insufficient vocabulary reserves, while others have clear instrumental motivation yet lack confidence in expression. These differences directly affect the effectiveness of project participation. A one-size-fits-all support method tends to leave some students stranded or prevent them from leveraging their strengths. In contrast, targeted support requires accurately identifying these differences and matching support content to individual student needs. This not only helps students with learning difficulties overcome obstacles but also expands room for growth for high-potential students, ensuring that project-based learning caters to the development needs of a broader range of students.

In the project themed “Investigation of Japanese Regional Culture”, teachers need to design support plans based on students’ individual characteristics. First, through pre-class communication and initial task performance, teachers sort out each student’s distinctive traits and establish a simple profile marking their core needs, such as “weak in vocabulary but proficient in visual presentation”, “fluent in oral Japanese but lacking in written logic”, or “introverted and unwilling to speak in public”. For students who struggle with vocabulary but excel at design, teachers should prepare a basic vocabulary list related to the research theme in advance, with parts of speech and collocation examples annotated, and guide them to take charge of the graphic layout of research outcomes, using visual presentation to alleviate the pressure of language expression. For students with strong oral skills but poor logical thinking, teachers can conduct one-on-one discussions to sort out the argumentative framework before they draft their papers, helping them build a structure of “regional cultural symbols—core characteristics—social impacts”, while encouraging them to participate in oral sharing during the mid-term stage of the project to leverage their expressive strengths. For introverted students, teachers first arrange their participation in online group discussions, sending them discussion topics and common expressions in advance; after they adapt, teachers then guide them to join offline sharing sessions, allowing them to use pre-prepared graphic materials to support their expressions during presentations. In addition, teachers should hold individual communication sessions with 3–4 students each week to assess the suitability of support measures—for example, asking questions like “Can the current vocabulary list meet your research needs?” or “Are there any unresolved issues when participating in group discussions?”—and adjust support content based on feedback to ensure every student can advance the project with appropriate support.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the application of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in senior high school Japanese Teaching can effectively promote the transformation of students' linguistic knowledge into practical competence, strengthen their intercultural cognition and communicative literacy, and cultivate their independent learning and collaborative abilities. This paper proposes a series of application strategies, which can provide support for the integration of PBL into Japanese Teaching and help shift the focus of teaching from knowledge transmission to competence cultivation. In the future, teachers should continuously optimize these teaching strategies in combination with the development of the times and students' actual needs, and while cultivating students' pragmatic competence, lay a solid foundation for their future development.

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