



## A Comparative Analysis of English Education Between Chinese and Japanese Universities

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### Abstract

With the strengthening of the trend of global integration, the world needs more and more bilingual talents. English, as the first common language in the world, is undoubtedly important. Both China and Japan are in Asia, so there are many similarities in education that can be borrowed from each other. This article makes a comparative analysis in Chinese and Japanese college English education from the following three perspectives: educator, educatee and educational influence. In this paper, documentation method, comparison analytic method and logic reasoning are used to study Chinese and Japanese college English education which includes faculty, student source, students' attitude, instructional objectives and educational evaluation. The result makes a reference to the college English education reform in the future. It also helps to improve the English teaching method and the quality of teaching.

**Key words:** China and Japan; College English education; Educator; Educatee; Educational influence

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### INTRODUCTION

With the development of globalization, English education has attracted the attention of all countries. In China, English skills are a kind of cultural capital, and have a

high exchange value. The desire for English learning is accompanied by a phenomenon in the development of economic globalization. English education is conducive to social development and to providing bilingual talents for the development of globalization. With the implementation of China's "One Belt and One Road" (Liang, 2016), and the implementation of globalization strategy, to achieve the "five links", which are, policy communication, road Unicom, trade flow, currency circulation and popular understanding of each other, the premise must be the language link. The popularity of English has become a manifestation of a national global status and social fashion signs. The cultivation of English professionals has become a key factor affecting the success of non-English speaking countries' diplomatic, trade and cultural exchanges.

Nowadays, English occupies a huge share of international exchanges because of the British early colonial rule and because the United States is a superpower country. Therefore, the master of English can help a nation stand in the world of national forest.

Japan is a neighbor of China. Its cultural background is similar to China. English is a second language both in China and Japan. Under the historical background of economic globalization, they are facing the same language exchange problem, which lays the foundation for the paper. This paper analyzes the English education of Chinese and Japanese universities from three aspects: Educator, Educatee and Educational Influence, to provide reference for the reform and development of Chinese college English education in the future.

### 1. EDUCATOR---FACULTY

An educator is a person "who can promote individual socialization and social individuality in a social background."(The twelve national normal universities, 2008, p.118)

## 1.1 Current Situation

In Japan, college English teachers are mainly composed of local English teachers and foreign teachers who are hired from foreign countries (Gu, 2016). The local English teachers who are trained in the native country occupy a major part, supplemented by foreign teachers who are native speakers of English. So the level of teachers is various. Most of English teachers who are cultivated by domestic training are lack of innovation. They just follow the textbooks, and inherit their teacher's teaching model.

In China, the composition of college English teachers is similar to that of Japan. At present, the proportion of male and female college English teachers in China is imbalance, and the ratio of male to female is 1:3 (Gu, 2016). Because English is mainly taught for the college entrance examination, it is lack of systematic study. Teachers are lack of innovation in the process of teaching. On one hand, university students' English foundation is weak. On the other hand, non English major students are not paying attention to learn English. They even refuse to learn it, which presents many challenges for the teachers. Therefore, the demands for College English teachers are very high, and not all the English teachers can meet the requirements.

In a word, the current situation of faculty is not every optimistic both in China and Japan. There is a shortage of faculty. Especially, there is a lack of professors. Teachers have difficulty in teaching tasks because of the students' negative attitude towards English.

## 1.2 Qualification Problems

Both in Japan and China, the quality of teachers is a common problem for College English teaching bodies. English teachers', especially young teachers' teaching ability is limited. The majority of College English teachers, without special training, do not pay attention to improve their own teaching ability. They are still muddling along in the long-term teaching, and there is no innovation. In China and Japan, the education level of College English teaching bodies is uneven. The proportion of doctoral degree is low, and the level of scientific research is limited (Gu, 2016). Scientific research is a kind of exploratory work, but most of the teachers' scientific research consciousness is low, and the long-term teaching process causes a sense of job burnout. They are not intentionally learning and reading the relevant literature, and their theoretical basis is weak.

Due to funding reasons, there is a ubiquitous problem about teacher education in Chinese and Japanese universities. College English teachers have less opportunity to go abroad for further study. Especially in non- key university, there is little attention be pay to the in-service training of English teachers. And English teachers' own condition is limited. China and Japan are non-native English speaking countries. Local English teachers' spoken English are influenced by their mother

tongue, and they are not familiar with western culture. On the other hand, in Japan or China most of the foreign teachers are not familiar with Chinese or Japanese. They can not use the local language as an auxiliary language.

In a word, English level of college English teachers is uneven. Male female ratio is imbalance. Teachers' scientific research consciousness is weak. School authorities' and teachers' consciousness which improving the quality of teaching method and teachers' advanced studies is also weak. This is a stumbling block of the development of English teachers in China and Japanese universities.

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## 2. EDUCATEE---STUDENT

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An educatee is a person "who engages in a variety of educational activities, including children, adolescents, and young people in the school" (The twelve national normal universities, 2008, p.136). In school, educatee mainly refers to students. As an independent body, students have their own needs and subject consciousness in education.

### 2.1 Student Source

#### 2.1.1 Source Condition of Japanese Undergraduates

At present, the number of Japanese full-time university has grown from 1995 increased to 778 by now ("The situation in Japanese universities is not very optimistic," 2017). But the Japanese Ministry of education minister Tanaka Kiko believes that Japanese Universities are overflow, the student source is shortage. Some of the universities can only rely on foreign students to maintain operations ("The situation in Japanese universities is not very optimistic," 2017). They are mainly absorbed students from China. Many private universities, in order to attract students, take the initiative to lower the admission criteria to encourage the enrollment of talented students with low academic achievements ("The situation in Japanese universities is not very optimistic," 2017). Thus, the student source of Japan is uneven.

The famous Japanese school "Kawai Sook" once made a survey, it shown that, in University, there are 1/3 universities emphasize the quantity of student, but do not pay attention to the quality ("The situation in Japanese universities is not very optimistic," 2017). Therefore, Japanese college students' cultural quality lower than before, which means that the shortage of student makes the University lower admission threshold to ensure the number of students. It can lead to a low overall English level of Japanese college students. It is also a great challenge for professors. University teachers should change the teaching mode, and explore new teaching methods actively, and teach students according to aptitude.

#### 2.1.2 Source Condition of Chinese Undergraduates

In China, most of the college students are directly admitted by the college entrance examination and a

small number of students through special admissions to enter the University. The students selected by college entrance examination are divided into Liberal art and Science. Liberal art students' English level is better than the students of science. As we known, special enrollment are generally designed for talented students, such as the students who are good at martial arts, music or sports and so on. These students are generally poor in English basis and cultural course. In general, their English level is lower than the ordinary students. Therefore, from the perspective of students, the freshman's English level is uneven, that increasing the difficulty of College English teaching.

In 2017, China reformed the college entrance examination in English, with a full test score 150. English can be tested twice, so there are two scores. But the higher one is included in the college entrance examination, except for an oral test. The project 985 universities have higher requirements on the students' performance of English to the minimum score is 135. Students have the entrance ticket of the project 211 universities whose scores are more than 120 points. Students are required to achieve 105 points have the qualification to enter the normal key universities. The ordinary universities' requirement is more than 90 points. Junior colleges' requirement is 80 points (Ministry of education of the people's republic of China [MOC of PRC], 2017). With the advent of the English reform, English is not unimportant, but becomes more and more important. It once only emphasized on scores, but now it requires students to use English. At the same time, college entrance English examination reform improves key universities' English threshold. Freshmen are divided into different grades through the college entrance examination. Therefore, the same school students' English level uneven situation has mitigated.

All in all, student source condition of Chinese and Japanese undergraduates is uneven. The proliferation of Japanese universities has led to a shortage of students. This also results in a mixed level of student's English. Chinese college entrance English examination has helped ease the uneven English level of college students.

## 2.2 Students' Attitude Toward English

### 2.2.1 Students' Attitude in Japanese University

In general, students hold a negative attitude towards English in Japan ("The sixty percent undergraduates do not like learning English especially are not good at spoken," 2017). As we known, English is an assessment factor into the academic field of high-end. The English proficiency also has become an essential factor into the postgraduate, doctoral study, abroad study or other thresholds. Japanese undergraduates have a weak English foundation on the whole (Gu, 2016). Some of them are positive about English learning; some of them hold a negative attitude towards English learning. The former likes and enjoys English. Those students are mostly English lovers or English major students. Students who have their own life

plans and hope to enter a better platform are more willing to spend their time and energy to learn English. The latter learns English just for employment, an admission letter of graduate student, overseas studying and so on. As we all know, the overall level of English in Japan is poor, especially their spoken English influenced by the Japanese pronunciation. This objective factor is also a major reason for Japanese students who do not like English language.

### 2.2.2 Students' Attitude in Chinese University

Lin and Zhan (2016) revealed the cognitive attitude and emotional attitude of college students toward English. The survey found that college students have a strong recognition about the development of English. It enriches the individual and the whole country. On the one hand, they hold a positive attitude to the practical function of English in China. On the other hand, they refused to give the symbolic meaning of English. The symbolic meaning is the saying "Mastering English is handing the world" (Lin & Zhan, 2016). Thus it can be seen that their negative attitude towards symbolic meaning of English makes a contrast to the positive attitude towards the practical functions.

Students hold a positive attitude towards English learning in China. It is because English proficiency has become an important indicator of talent requirements in different fields. Under the "One Belt and One Road" construction (Liang, 2016), there are more and more colleges and universities in China pay attention to the development of students' English learning. And the large investment of English learning in university and government also makes more and more students realize the urgency of English learning. For English major students, choosing English as their major means they are interested in English. English has significance for their survival and self-worth, so they learning English with great enthusiasm and regardless of the practice function or symbolic meaning. For the students who have a weak foundation of English, they keep a love-hate relationship with English.

In short, China and Japan is across the sea, English is not their native language. What is more, Chinese nation and Japanese Yamato have strong national sense of belonging, and they are paying attention to their own traditional culture and native language. For foreign language and culture, they hold an attitude that discard the dross and keep the finer part to learning. And student source condition in China and Japan are similar, Students' overall level of English is low. In Japan, college students' emotional attitude towards English learning is relatively negative. However, college students hold a relatively positive attitude towards English learning in China.

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## 3. EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE

The influence of education is "the sum of every intermediary between the educator and the educatee,

including the influence on the educatee and the methods of using this kind of influence” (Join East, 2017, p.33). Especially including the educational purpose, instructional objectives, education evaluation and so on. The following article just talks about instructional objectives and education evaluation.

### 3.1 Instructional Objectives

#### 3.1.1 Instructional Objectives in Japanese University

In July 14, 2002, the Japanese Ministry of education published “cultivate Japanese who can use English” strategic conception. It means that the instructional objective of College English is to cultivate the student who can use English (Liang & Wang, 2016). They also raised that undergraduates’ learning target should shift from the “learning English” to “use English to learn” (Cai, 2016). It is focusing on the training of English and communication skills in their professional field. The Japanese University emphasized on college students’ ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing. And after learning and training, all the college students can reach the level of daily conversation and communication. For college students who enter the society, these are not enough. Job seekers also need more qualifications to prove their outstanding ability in the field of English.

#### 3.1.2 Instructional Objectives in Chinese University

In 2007, the new system of “College English curriculum requirements” mentioned the instructional objectives of College English teaching is to cultivate students’ comprehensive abilities and operational capability of using English, especially listening and speaking ability (Gu, 2016). The purpose is to make students are able to use English effectively both in written and communication in their future work and social interaction. At the same time, the instructional objectives can enhance students’ autonomous learning ability and improving the aesthetic judgment. It not only meets our social development but also satisfies the international communication needs. Key university students can see the simple English books before enter college. Then, they are able to use English in a real academic research and international communication when they graduate (Xu, 1978). In a word, the goal of College English teaching is mainly to train the talents in all walks of life. They not only understand the professional knowledge but also mast English.

In conclusion, both in Japan and China, instructional objective of College English is cultivating the practical ability. Education, as a social activity to cultivate talents, not only satisfied social needs but also restricted by the social constraints. Therefore, education is the characteristics and requirements of the society and the time. In modern society, in order to satisfy the needs of building a prosperous, democratic, civilized and harmonious society, college English becoming an integral component of higher Education, it is a compulsory course of college students in China and Japanese universities (M. Kawamura, 2016).

### 3.2 Education Evaluation

“The evaluation system of modern education can be divided into three aspects: 1, Self evaluation and others appraise; 2, Absolute evaluation and relative evaluation; 3, Diagnostic evaluation, formative evaluation and summative evaluation” (Join, 2017, p.34). The following content is mainly talking about the third aspect.

#### 3.2.1 Education Evaluation in Japanese University

Formative evaluation, diagnostic evaluation and summative evaluation are the three kinds of evaluation methods prevailing in Japan. These three kinds of evaluation method were put forward by the American educational psychologist Bloom (Bruce & Neville, 1979).

Diagnostic evaluation is “generally carried on before education, teaching or the implementation of teaching task” (The twelve national normal universities, 2008, p.216). It can help teachers to make a reasonable evaluation of students’ knowledge, ability and emotion development which had formed before. It can also provide a reliable source of students’ information for the effective implementation of the teaching task. University teachers can check the students’ anterior records and make a preliminary judgment. If teachers cannot find effective information from the anterior records, they can prepare some diagnostic tests to make a preliminary judgment. Such as, quizzes, entrance examination, individual conversations and so on.

Formative evaluation is “mainly carrying out in the process of teaching and learning. A unit of learning content is used as the evaluation point” (The twelve national normal universities, 2008, p.217). Teachers can accept timely feedback and make rectification accord to student’s individual differences. In a college English class, teachers have more opportunities to evaluate the students’ learning process by observing the classroom performance. They can also gain crucial information by analyzing the homework. Teachers find the problems in the teaching process and take the corresponding measures to implement instructional objectives effectively.

Summative evaluation is “mainly making an evaluation according to the result of teaching and learning” (The twelve national normal universities, 2008, p.217). Its main form is an examination of the whole process about teaching and learning. For example, according to students’ usual attendance, classroom performance, completion of the work, small test and final examination, teachers can evaluate students. Nowadays, in Japan, the most authoritative English test is the Japanese college English ability verification test. It is also named practical English ability test, which was established in 1963 (Gu, 2016). The importance of this test is similar to the importance of CET-4(college English test brand 4) and CET-6 (college English test brand 6) in China. In Japan, another main summative evaluation of English is TOEFL which is for studying abroad, and TOELC which is a high proof of

English proficiency to obtain employment and do social contact.

### 3.2.2 Education evaluation in Chinese University

Bloom's education evaluation method not only affects the way of evaluation in Japan, but also influences the way of education evaluation in China (Bruce & Neville, 1979). Therefore, at present, the common evaluation methods in China are diagnostic evaluation, formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Chinese diagnostic evaluation is almost the same as Japanese diagnostic evaluation, but the formative evaluation and summative evaluation are somewhat different.

Formative evaluation is "a comprehensive evaluation about the feelings, attitudes, teaching strategies and other aspects" (The twelve national normal universities, 2008, p.216). These aspects are reflected by the learning performance, academic achievement and students' problems in China. The purpose of formative evaluation is to draw a peer assessment and teachers' evaluation by observing students' performance in peacetime, such as classroom quiz, discussion, course discipline, mid-term and final exams. It not only take teachers' teaching and students' learning process to make an observation evaluation, but also make an evaluation according to teachers' teaching and students' learning results. It is a way to kill two hawks with one arrow, and this is the different point from Japan.

In China, summative evaluation is "mainly applied to the college entrance examination and English language proficiency test, which is an evaluation of students' comprehensive abilities" (The twelve national normal universities, 2008, p.217). For non English major students, the authoritative English test is CET-4(college English test brand 4) and CET-6(college English test brand 6). It is making an assessment about English reading, writing, translating, listening and speaking, which is a fair evaluation of students' English level. For English major students, the most important test is TEM-4(test for English majors-4) and TEM-8(test for English majors-8). Today, in Chinese talent market, the certificate of TEM-8 is equivalent to the TOEFL and IELTS test certificates.

In conclusion, educational evaluation is an essential factor in the teaching process. Teachers are able to adjust the state of their teaching and shift students' learning strategies according to the information feedback in the teaching process. They can improve the teaching management models to make their teaching efficiency. All in all, educational evaluation methods in China and Japan are constantly changing, but their core theory is coming from Bloom's education evaluation, so education evaluation roughly similar both in China and Japan.

## CONCLUSION

From the "Reform and Open" (Zhu, 2016) to the "One Belt and One Road" construction (Liang, 2016), China continues to tie with the world. At the same time, as the main link of diplomacy, English is becoming more and more important. As the main force of the construction in motherland, college students' English level and intercultural communicative competence have been paid more and more attention.

In recent years, Japan is increasing attention on college English education. In 2003, the Japanese government proposed a new program, called "Immersion Program". They have invested 180 million yen to English teacher training since July 2007 (Gong & Bai, 2015). Chinese and Japanese college teachers' English level is uneven, and there is an imbalance in sex ratio. Their scientific research consciences are also weak. In China and Japan, the situation of student source is similar. They do not have a solid base in English. In general, college students' emotional attitude of English learning is negative. But both China and Japan are paying attention to the cultivation of students' English practical ability.

As is known to all, this topic "a comparative analysis of English education between Chinese and Japanese universities" is fairly broad. The information this paper collects is not very comprehensive. And the content is limited. Therefore, this paper cannot fully analyze the relationship of college English education in China and Japan. It just analyzes that from three aspects: Educator, Educatee and Educational Influence. There would be further researches about English education between Chinese and Japanese universities. The analysis results of this paper can offer a reference to Chinese English educational reform.

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