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An Analysis of Japanese Majors' Cognition on Academic Paper Writing Courses and Academic Ability Cultivation

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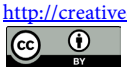

Abstract

Against the background of the need for the transformation of Japanese majors under the construction of "New Liberal Arts", this paper addresses the gap in research on academic paper writing in Japanese majors within foreign language disciplines. Taking 93 undergraduates majoring in Japanese from a comprehensive university in Zhejiang Province as the research object, it explores their cognition of academic paper writing courses and academic research ability cultivation. Using a questionnaire survey, the study employs SPSS 26.0 for descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis, focusing on course cognition, academic ability cultivation cognition, and their correlation. The results show that students recognize the value of academic paper courses in cultivating academic thinking and writing norms, but have insufficient understanding of the connection between courses and professional goals, with a gap between actual and expected gains. Students generally consider it necessary to cultivate academic research abilities, among which the ability to identify research problems is most valued, yet they are dissatisfied with the current cultivation status. There is a significant positive correlation between course cognition and academic ability cultivation cognition, especially the mutual promotion between the improvement of logical reasoning ability and data analysis ability. This study aims to provide empirical evidence for optimizing the academic paper course system for Japanese undergraduates and facilitate the transformation of Japanese majors towards a "research-innovative" model.

Keywords

Japanese Major, Academic Paper Writing, Academic Ability Cultivation, Cognitive Research, Curriculum Optimization

1. Introduction

In 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued China's Education Modernization 2035, clearly emphasizing the core requirement of cultivating students' innovative spirit and practical ability. In 2021, the Ministry of Education of China proposed for the first time to comprehensively promote the construction of "New Liberal Arts" and build a system for cultivating liberal arts talents with Chinese characteristics. Driven by the construction of New Liberal Arts, the transformation of university Japanese majors has become imminent. Currently, the traditional training model of Japanese majors faces multiple challenges: on the one hand, excessive emphasis on language skill training has led to students' weaknesses in regional and country studies, cross-cultural communication, and digital technology application, making it difficult for them to meet the needs of in-depth Sino-Japanese economic and cultural exchanges under the "Belt and Road" initiative; on the other hand, research on Japanese society and culture has long remained at the level of phenomenological description, lacking theoretical construction from a local perspective, thus failing to meet the needs of expanding regional and country studies.

Implementing the concept of "New Liberal Arts" is a key path for Japanese majors to break through development bottlenecks. From the perspective of disciplinary development, the integration of Japanese studies with interdisciplinary fields can build a three-dimensional training system of "language ability + academic literacy + technical empowerment", enhancing students' core competitiveness in the era of artificial intelligence. The training model of foreign language disciplines also urgently needs to shift from "language skill-oriented" to "research-innovative". In this context, academic paper writing courses, as a primary platform for scientific research training, can effectively cultivate students' critical thinking, problem awareness, academic norms, and innovative awareness through paper writing training, meeting the needs of innovative practice in talent training systems.

2. Problem Awareness

The academic community has accumulated certain research results on the educational role of paper writing and the cultivation of scientific research abilities. These studies mainly focus on three levels: first, identifying problems at the student level; second, revealing problems at the educational management level; and third, exploring practical countermeasures. Zhang et al. (2025) pointed out that junior graduate students face major challenges in literature review, research methods, data analysis, and topic selection, with key support needs including supervisor guidance, knowledge resources, tools, and self-assessment. The quality of supervisor support and the connection between teaching and research have a positive impact on self-efficacy. These findings highlight the importance of providing targeted support and cultivating intrinsic motivation to improve junior graduate students' writing skills and self-efficacy.

Surveys on students majoring in finance and economics (Chi, 2022) and law

(Guan & He, 2015) show that students generally have problems in academic year paper writing, such as insufficient preparation for topic selection, improper application of research methods, inadequate literature reading ability, and lack of awareness of academic norms. These problems reflect students' deficiencies in extracting research questions, data collection and analysis techniques, and ethical reasoning ability. At the educational management level, Fan (2019) and Dong & Li (2018) noted that the decline in the quality of academic year papers is due to an imperfect guidance system, disjointed curriculum systems, and vague evaluation standards, which are regarded as major factors hindering the cultivation of students' innovative abilities. In terms of practical countermeasures, Mo & Yang (2017) and Ai et al. (2015) proposed effective improvement strategies such as enhancing the qualifications of instructors, strengthening methodological education, and utilizing technical tools.

Although existing studies have achieved some results, there are still shortcomings. For example, most studies are limited to disciplines such as economics and law, while research on academic paper writing in foreign language disciplines, especially in Japanese studies, remains blank. Based on the above situation, this study takes Japanese majors from a comprehensive university in Zhejiang Province as the research object, and through questionnaire analysis, investigates their cognition of academic paper writing courses and academic ability cultivation, aiming to provide multi-dimensional evidence for optimizing the academic year paper writing curriculum system for Japanese undergraduates.

3. Research Design and Analysis

3.1. Research Design and Analytical Methods

The research objects are undergraduate students majoring in Japanese at a comprehensive university in City S, Zhejiang Province. Questionnaire data were collected from 2021-2024 grade undergraduates (N = 93). The sample was selected because students from this university have participated in training lectures on scientific research papers and student project applications organized by the college or university since their first year, ensuring that even freshmen have a basic understanding of paper writing and project application. Therefore, the sample covers all students from the first to the fourth year of the Japanese department, with certain representativeness. The questionnaire analysis focuses on Japanese majors' cognition of academic paper writing courses and academic research ability cultivation, which is helpful for optimizing teaching arrangements and improving teaching quality.

The study uses SPSS 26 to conduct descriptive analysis and correlation analysis on the questionnaire data. The research variables are divided into three aspects: 1) Cognitive variables of academic year paper courses, including cognition of course objectives, connection with professional training goals, expected ability improvement, and evaluation of various aspects of the course; 2) Cognitive variables of academic research ability cultivation, including cognition of the necessity

of cultivation, ability composition, current cultivation status, improvement pathways, relationship with professional skills, and concerns about future development; 3) Cognitive variables of paper writing links, involving pre-writing preparation and topic selection, literature organization and research methods, academic norms, and instructor guidance. Descriptive statistical analysis calculates mean, standard deviation, variance, and other statistics for each research variable to understand the overall level and dispersion of students' cognition. Correlation analysis uses Pearson correlation coefficient to analyze the correlation between variables.

The corresponding relationships between the three types of research variables and the questionnaire items are shown in Table 1 below, which clearly reflects the logic of data collection:

Table 1. Analysis table of the correspondence between three types of variables and questionnaire items.

Research Variable Category	Core Questionnaire Items Included	Corresponding Table/Data Source
1. Cognitive Variables Related to Academic Paper Course	1) Course objectives (e.g., "cultivate academic thinking", "master writing norms"); 2) Connection with professional goals; 3) Expected ability improvement (e.g., logical argumentation, Japanese academic writing); 4) Course evaluation (e.g., rationality of credits, actual benefits)	Table 3 (Descriptive Stats of Students' Awareness of the Academic Paper Writing Course)
2. Cognitive Variables Related to Academic Research Ability Cultivation	1) Necessity of cultivation; 2) Composition of abilities (e.g., problem identification, data analysis); 3) Current status evaluation (e.g., "weak cultivation"); 4) Relationship with professional skills; 5) Concerns about future development	Table 4 (Descriptive Analysis of Students' Awareness of Academic Research Capacity-building)
3. Cognitive Variables Related to the Paper Writing Process	1) Topic selection and pre-writing preparation; 2) Literature review and application of research methods; 3) Awareness of academic norms; 4) Need for teacher guidance	Original questionnaire data (not listed separately, corresponding to descriptions in Section 3.1 "pre-writing preparation and topic selection", etc.)

To ensure the reliability and validity of the student questionnaire used in this study, the statistical software SPSS 26 was employed to conduct reliability and validity analyses on the scale items in 93 student questionnaires.

In this study, checking the measurement results of the scale is an important prerequisite for ensuring the validity of subsequent analyses. The internal consistency of each dimension was analyzed using Cronbach's coefficient test method. As shown in Table 2, the average coefficient of each dimension is 0.861, which is

greater than 0.8. This indicates that the data have a high level of reliability and can be used for further statistical analysis.

In addition to reliability, the data also need to have sufficient validity. In this study, the software SPSS 25 was used to analyze the validity of the data, as presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Reliability statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
0.861	0.884	76

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's test.

		Value
KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.819
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. chi-square	155.384
	df	10
	Sig.	<0.001

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy for the current data is 0.819. Since the KMO value is greater than 0.8, the data are highly suitable for factor analysis, suggesting a strong correlation among variables. In Bartlett's test of sphericity, the approximate chi-square value of 155.384 is much higher than the KMO measure of sampling adequacy value of 0.819 and the degrees of freedom of 10. The significance level, represented as <0.001, highlights a high level of significance. This helps researchers quickly grasp the key information regarding the applicability of factor analysis and gain a more intuitive understanding of whether the data are suitable for factor analysis.

Combining the results of the KMO measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity, the data are highly suitable for factor analysis. The KMO value indicates a strong correlation among variables, and the significant result of Bartlett's test of sphericity further confirms the existence of a significant correlation among variables.

3.2. Students' Cognition of Academic Paper Writing Courses

Students have a clear understanding of the purpose of offering academic paper courses. They believe the main purposes are mastering paper writing norms (mean = 0.83), laying a foundation for graduation theses (mean = 0.78), cultivating academic research thinking (mean = 0.71), and improving Japanese academic expression ability (mean = 0.75). The proportion of those who think it is to meet teaching task requirements is relatively low (mean = 0.44), and almost no one chooses other purposes. This indicates that students generally recognize the role of academic year paper courses in cultivating professional abilities (see Table 4).

Table 4. Descriptive stats of students' awareness of the academic paper writing course.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	STD. Deviation	Variance
What do you think are the main purposes of offering the academic paper writing course? (multiple choices allowed) 1 Cultivating academic research thinking	0	1	0.71	0.456	0.208
1 Mastering paper writing norms	0	1	0.83	0.379	0.144
1 Improving Japanese academic expression ability	0	1	0.75	0.434	0.188
1 Laying a foundation for graduation thesis	0	1	0.78	0.413	0.171
1 Meeting teaching task requirements	0	1	0.44	0.499	0.249
1 Others	0	0	0	0	0
Do you understand the connection between the academic paper writing course and the professional training objectives?	1	5	2.39	0.86	0.74
What abilities do you most want to improve in the academic paper writing course? (multiple choices allowed) 3 Literature retrieval and analysis	0	1	0.65	0.481	0.231
3 Refining research questions	0	1	0.65	0.481	0.231
3 Logical argumentation ability	0	1	0.7	0.461	0.213
3 Japanese academic writing	0	1	0.71	0.456	0.208
3 Abiding by academic norms	0	1	0.52	0.502	0.252
3 Application of research methods	0	1	0.42	0.496	0.246
Do you think the credit setting for the academic paper course is reasonable?	1	4	2.1	0.738	0.545
Is the expected gain from the academic paper course consistent with the actual gain?	1	4	1.96	0.641	0.411
Do you think the content of the academic paper course needs to add practical links (such as literature writing, research plan formulation)?	1	4	2.18	0.908	0.825
Have you attended special lectures related to academic papers (such as lectures on academic norms and research methods)?	1	4	2.31	0.859	0.739
How do you think the academic paper course helps with future further study/employment?	1	5	1.99	0.651	0.424

Source: Compiled by the author based on questionnaire data.

Students' understanding of the connection between academic paper courses and professional training goals is moderate, with a mean of 2.39 (on a 1 - 5 scale). This may imply that the elaboration of the connection between courses and professional training goals in teaching needs to be strengthened.

In academic paper courses, students most want to improve logical reasoning ability (mean = 0.70), Japanese academic writing (mean = 0.71), and literature retrieval and analysis, as well as research question refinement abilities (both mean = 0.65). This reflects students' awareness of their academic ability shortcomings

and their demand for improvement.

Regarding course evaluation: First, on the rationality of credit setting, students consider the credit setting for academic papers unreasonable, with a mean of 2.10 (on a 1 - 4 scale). Schools may need to re-evaluate credit allocation to better reflect the course's value and workload. Second, on the consistency between expected and actual gains, students generally feel that actual gains do not meet expectations, with a mean of 1.96 (on a 1 - 4 scale), suggesting room for improvement in teaching content, methods, or guidance.

Third, regarding the demand for practical links, most students believe it is necessary to add practical links such as literature writing and research plan formulation, with a mean of 2.18 (on a 1 - 4 scale). Adding practical links helps improve students' practical operation ability and course satisfaction. Fourth, on participation in special lectures, students' participation in lectures related to academic year papers is moderate, with a mean of 2.31 (on a 1 - 4 scale). Schools can optimize lecture content and forms to enhance attractiveness and increase student participation.

Finally, regarding help with future further study/employment, students believe the academic paper course has limited help, with a mean of 1.99 (on a 1 - 5 scale). The course should further strengthen integration with practical needs to improve its practicality.

Overall, students have a positive cognition of the purpose of academic paper courses but have some dissatisfaction or demands in understanding the connection with professional training goals, actual gains, credit setting, and practical links. Meanwhile, students have clear expectations for improving their academic abilities.

3.3. Students' Cognition of Academic Research Ability Cultivation

Students generally believe it is necessary to cultivate academic research abilities at the undergraduate level, with a mean of 2.03 (on a 1 - 4 scale). This indicates that students have a positive understanding of the importance of academic research abilities in undergraduate studies and recognize their potential value for personal development.

Students have a comprehensive cognition of the composition of academic research abilities. Among them, the ability to identify research problems is considered the most important (mean = 0.87), followed by academic writing and expression ability (mean = 0.76), data analysis and argumentation ability (mean = 0.75), and research plan design ability (mean = 0.74). The mean for literature review and academic criticism ability is relatively low (0.62), and almost no one chooses other unlisted abilities. This reflects students' emphasis on abilities in the front-end and result presentation stages of the academic research process (see **Table 5**).

Undergraduate students majoring in Japanese believe that the cultivation of their academic research capabilities is relatively weak, with a mean score of 2.67 (on a 1 - 5 scale). This indicates that the current training system may have deficiencies in aspects such as teaching content, methodologies, or resource investment,

Table 5. Descriptive analysis of students' awareness of academic research capacity-building.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	STD. Deviation	Variance
Do you think it is necessary to cultivate academic research ability at the undergraduate stage?	1	4	2.03	0.84	0.705
What do you understand by academic research ability? (multiple choices allowed) 10 Ability to identify research problems	0	1	0.87	0.337	0.114
10 Ability to design research plans	0	1	0.74	0.44	0.194
10 Data analysis and argumentation ability	0	1	0.75	0.434	0.188
10 Academic writing and expression ability	0	1	0.76	0.427	0.183
10 Literature review and academic criticism ability	0	1	0.62	0.487	0.237
10 Others	0	0	0	0	0
Do you think the cultivation of academic research ability for Japanese majors at the undergraduate level is weak?	1	5	2.67	0.825	0.681
Through which channels do you hope to improve your academic research ability? (multiple choices allowed) 12 Professional course learning	0	1	0.74	0.44	0.194
12 Academic/graduation thesis writing	0	1	0.69	0.466	0.217
12 Research training programs	0	1	0.63	0.484	0.234
12 Academic lectures and workshops	0	1	0.57	0.498	0.248
12 One-on-one guidance from teachers	0	1	0.57	0.498	0.248
12 Independent reading and practice	0	1	0.48	0.502	0.252
12 Others	0	0	0	0	0
What do you think is the relationship between academic research ability and Japanese professional skills (such as listening, speaking, reading, writing)? 13 Complementary to each other	0	1	0.83	0.379	0.144
13 Academic ability is more important	0	1	0.25	0.434	0.188
13 Professional skills are more important	0	1	0.28	0.451	0.204
13 No direct relationship	0	1	0.09	0.282	0.079
13 Not sure	0	1	0.03	0.178	0.032
Are you worried that the lack of academic training at the undergraduate stage will affect your future development?	1	5	2.46	0.815	0.664

Source: Compiled by the author based on questionnaire data.

failing to meet students' expectations for the cultivation of academic research capabilities.

Students expect to enhance their academic research capabilities through various channels. Among these, professional course learning is regarded as the primary, with a mean score of 0.74; annual/graduation thesis writing (mean score 0.69) and scientific research training programs (mean score 0.63) also receive high attention. The mean scores for channels such as academic lectures and workshops, one-

on-one guidance from teachers, and independent reading and practice are relatively lower, but they are still recognized by some students. This suggests that schools and teachers should optimize the setup of professional courses, strengthen guidance for graduation theses, and enrich activities such as scientific research training programs and academic lectures.

Most students (with a mean score of 0.83) believe that academic research capabilities and Japanese professional skills complement each other, while only a few students think that academic capabilities are more important (mean score 0.25), professional skills are more important (mean score 0.28), there is no direct relationship between the two (mean score 0.09), or they are unsure (mean score 0.03). This indicates that students can recognize the mutually reinforcing relationship between academic research capabilities and professional skills, providing a solid cognitive foundation for the integration of the two in teaching. Students have certain concerns that the lack of academic training during the undergraduate stage will affect their future development, with a mean score of 2.46 (on a 1-5 scale). This reflects students' attention to their own future development and also reminds educators to attach importance to the cultivation of academic research capabilities to alleviate such concerns.

Overall, undergraduate students majoring in Japanese at the university level have relatively positive perceptions and demands regarding the cultivation of academic research capabilities, but their satisfaction with the current training model is low. Students have clarified the key components of academic research capabilities and expect to improve such capabilities through multiple channels. Meanwhile, students generally believe that academic research capabilities and Japanese professional skills complement each other, and they are concerned that the lack of academic training during the undergraduate stage will affect their future development.

3.4. Analysis of the Correlation between Cognition of Academic Paper Writing Courses and Cognition of Academic Ability Cultivation

To verify the correlation between cognition of academic paper writing courses and cognition of academic research ability cultivation, this study selected, from cognition of the courses, "the necessity of cultivating academic research ability" and "the expected improvement of logical reasoning ability", and from cognition of academic research ability cultivation, "whether the lack of academic training will affect future development" and "cognition of the importance of data analysis and reasoning ability", to conduct a Pearson correlation analysis.

Two sets of variables, respectively from curriculum cognition and cognition of academic ability cultivation, were selected for analysis based on dual considerations of the core research objectives and data characteristics.

Research objective orientation: This study aims to explore the correlation between "curriculum cognition" and "cognition of academic ability cultivation" (Section 3.1 Research Design). The first set of variables, namely "perceived neces-

sity of cultivation" (curriculum cognition) and "concerns about future development" (cognition of academic ability), directly reflect students' judgments on the correlation between "curriculum value" and "importance of abilities" and serve as the core dimension for exploring the significance of courses. The second set of variables, "expectations for logical reasoning ability" (curriculum cognition) and "perception of data analysis ability" (cognition of academic ability), echo the finding in Section 3.3 that "problem identification ability is most valued" (mean = 0.87). They focus on "mutual promotion in ability cultivation" and provide specific directions for curriculum optimization.

Support from data characteristics: Descriptive analysis shows that both sets of variables are "dimensions of high concern" in students' cognition. "Perceived necessity of cultivation" (mean = 2.03) and "concerns about future development" (mean = 2.46) reflect students' core attitudes towards academic abilities; "logical reasoning" (mean = 0.70) and "data analysis" (mean = 0.75) are the abilities that students most expect to improve (Sections 3.2 and 3.3). In contrast, other potential combinations (e.g., "rationality of course credits" and "approaches to ability improvement") were not included in the core analysis due to weak correlation (preliminary analysis showed a Pearson coefficient < 0.2). The results are listed in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlation between course-based academic research ability cultivation necessity and impact of inadequate academic training on future development.

		Do you think it is necessary to cultivate academic research ability at the undergraduate stage?	Are you worried that the lack of academic training at the undergraduate stage will affect your future development?
Do you think it is necessary to cultivate academic research ability at the undergraduate stage?	Pearson Correlation	1	0.327**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.001
	N	93	93
Are you worried that the lack of academic training at the undergraduate stage will affect your future development?	Pearson Correlation	0.327**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	
	N	93	93

Source: Compiled by the author based on questionnaire data. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In terms of the Pearson correlation coefficient, the correlation coefficient between a variable and itself is 1, so it is reasonable that the Pearson correlation coefficient for the first question is 1. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the two different questions is 0.327, indicating that there is a certain positive cor-

relation between them. That is to say, those who consider it necessary to cultivate academic research abilities through academic writing courses at the undergraduate level are, to a certain extent, more worried that the lack of academic training during the undergraduate stage will affect their future development. However, the correlation coefficient of 0.327 suggests that this relationship is not very strong.

In terms of the significance level (Sig. (2-tailed)), the two-tailed significance level for the correlation between the two questions is 0.001. In statistics, it is generally considered that a correlation is significant when the significance level is less than 0.05. Here, 0.001 is much less than 0.05, which means we can be highly confident that the positive correlation between these two questions is not accidental.

Overall, there is a significant but not very strong positive correlation between the cognition of the necessity of cultivating academic research abilities at the undergraduate level and the concern that the lack of academic training during the undergraduate stage will affect future development. This reflects that most people can, to a certain extent, recognize the importance of cultivating academic research abilities and are worried about the consequences of insufficient academic training.

Table 7. Correlation between expectations for enhancing logical argumentation ability and the importance of data analysis and argumentation ability.

		Logical argumentation ability	Data analysis and argumentation ability
Logical argumentation ability	Pearson Correlation	1	0.384**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	93	93
Data analysis and argumentation ability	Pearson Correlation	0.384**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	93	93

Source: Compiled by the author based on questionnaire data. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In terms of the Pearson correlation coefficient, the Pearson correlation coefficient between logical reasoning ability and data analysis and reasoning ability is 0.384, and it is significant at the 0.01 significance level (see Table 7). This indicates a moderate positive correlation between the two. In other words, when logical reasoning ability improves, data analysis and reasoning ability are also likely to increase to a considerable extent, and vice versa. From this result, we can infer that in the process of ability cultivation, the development of these two abilities may have a mutually reinforcing relationship. For instance, strong logical reasoning ability may facilitate a better understanding and application of data analysis and reasoning methods, while the improvement of data analysis and reasoning ability may, in turn, strengthen logical thinking.

In terms of the significance level (Sig. (2-tailed)), the significance level of the

two-tailed test is 0, which is lower than the 0.01 significance threshold. This further confirms the reliability of the aforementioned correlation coefficient, meaning we can be highly confident that the positive correlation between logical reasoning ability and data analysis and reasoning ability is not accidental but genuinely exists. For educators or trainers, this suggests that when designing curriculum systems, they may consider integrating the cultivation of these two abilities to achieve better teaching outcomes.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Summary

Students' cognition of academic paper writing courses is mainly reflected in three aspects: First, in terms of course objectives, they value the practical improvement of their academic and professional abilities, with high recognition of cultivating academic thinking and mastering writing norms (mean scores of 0.71 - 0.83), but low recognition of fulfilling teaching tasks (mean score of 0.44). Second, regarding curriculum relevance and expected abilities, they have a certain understanding of the connection between the courses and professional training objectives (mean score of 2.39), and have high expectations for improving abilities such as logical reasoning and academic writing in Japanese (mean scores of approximately 0.7), but low expectations for the application of research methods (mean score of 0.42), with some needs for improving practical application abilities not fully reflected. Third, in course evaluation, there is a gap between students' expectations and actual experiences in aspects such as the rationality of credit allocation (mean score of 2.1), the consistency between expectations and actual gains (mean score of 1.96), and the course's help for further studies/employment (mean score of 1.99). Additionally, they hope to increase practical components (mean score of 2.18) and recognize the role of thematic lectures (mean score of 2.31).

Students' cognition of the cultivation of academic research abilities focuses on three aspects: First, in terms of necessity and composition, most consider it necessary to cultivate such abilities at the undergraduate stage (mean score of 2.03), among which the ability to identify research problems is the most important (mean score of 0.87), followed by abilities in designing plans, data analysis and reasoning, etc. Second, regarding the current status of cultivation and improvement approaches, it is generally believed that the cultivation of academic research abilities among undergraduate Japanese majors is weak (mean score of 2.67), and they expect to improve through the study of professional courses (mean score of 0.74), with few choosing other approaches. Third, concerning the relationship between abilities and professional skills, as well as concerns, most believe that the two are mutually reinforcing (mean score of 0.83), and many students worry that insufficient academic training at the undergraduate stage will affect their future development (mean score of 2.46).

The results of the correlation study between the two show that there is a significant but not very strong positive correlation between the cognition of the neces-

sity of cultivating academic research abilities at the undergraduate stage and the concern that insufficient academic training at this stage will affect future development. This reflects that most students can, to a certain extent, recognize the importance of cultivating academic research abilities and are worried about the consequences of insufficient academic training. It also verifies that when students' logical reasoning ability is improved through course cultivation, their data analysis and reasoning ability, as part of academic abilities, are likely to improve accordingly, and vice versa. In the process of ability cultivation, the development of these two abilities may have a mutually reinforcing relationship. No significant positive correlation was verified for other variables.

4.2. Recommendations

The dialogue between the conclusions of this study and existing literature can be unfolded from three dimensions, which not only confirms interdisciplinary common issues but also highlights the particularities of Japanese majors, providing a differentiated perspective for the cultivation of academic abilities in foreign language disciplines.

Commonality and Differences in the Cognition of Academic Abilities

This study finds that Japanese majors attach the greatest importance to the "ability to identify research problems" (mean = 0.87), which echoes Zhang et al. (2025)'s observation of "difficulties in topic selection" among graduate students, indicating that the cultivation of "problem awareness" is a core challenge spanning both undergraduate and graduate stages. However, a notable difference exists: Japanese majors show low demand for "application of research methods" (mean = 0.42), whereas Chi (2022) and Guan & He (2015) note that students in finance/economics and law majors commonly face "improper application of research methods." This discrepancy may stem from the long-term emphasis on language skill training in foreign language disciplines, leading to students' vague perception of "academic research methods."

The low demand for the application of research methods (mean = 0.42) is a result of the combined effects of cognitive biases and career orientation:

At the cognitive level, there exists a sense of separation between research methods and "language learning." For a long time, Japanese language programs have centered on training in the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) (as mentioned in the Introduction, the traditional model focuses on language skills). Consequently, students tend to equate "academic research" with "advanced language application," leading to vague perceptions of "research methods" (e.g., questionnaire surveys, content analysis). For instance, Section 3.2 shows that students pay more attention to "academic expression in Japanese" (mean = 0.71) than to "method application," reflecting their tendency to equate "writing standard Japanese papers" with "completing research" and their failure to recognize that methods form the foundation of argumentation.

At the career orientation level, there is a weak correlation with expectations for

future development. Data in Section 3.2 indicate that students perceive academic paper courses as providing limited assistance for "future employment/advanced studies" (mean = 1.99). Most students plan to pursue careers in translation, education, etc., and subjectively believe that "research methods" have no direct value for such occupations. Furthermore, the lack of case-based teaching in courses addressing "how research methods can serve career development" (e.g., "optimizing topic selection for Japanese textbooks using content analysis" and "investigating students' learning needs through interview methods") has further reinforced the perception of "the uselessness of methods."

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen method education in the curriculum. Integrating the characteristics of Japanese language programs and the needs of academic ability cultivation, the "research-innovative" model should focus on developing the following cross-dimensional skills: academic language application ability, which differs from traditional language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and emphasizes "the precision and standardization of academic expression in Japanese." This includes: format specifications for Japanese academic papers (e.g., standards for Japanese expressions of abstracts, keywords, and references); logical expression of academic controversial issues (e.g., argumentative sentence patterns for writing critical book reviews and research proposals in Japanese); and academic communication skills in cross-cultural contexts (e.g., corresponding conversion of Sino-Japanese academic terms and Japanese speaking skills in international academic conferences).

Interdisciplinary Common Issues in Curriculum Systems

This study reveals that students have low evaluations of the "rationality of credit allocation" (mean = 2.1) and "consistency between expected and actual gains" (mean = 1.96), which highly aligns with Fan (2019) and Dong & Li (2018)'s identification of "disjointed curriculum systems" and "vague evaluation standards." This confirms common deficiencies in curriculum design across disciplines. However, the particularity of Japanese majors lies in their high demand for "Japanese academic expression ability" (mean = 0.71), which is not fully met by current courses. This complements Mo & Yang (2017)'s universal proposal of "strengthening methodological education"—foreign language disciplines should, on the basis of general academic training, Introduce a dedicated module on norms of Japanese academic writing to break down the barrier of "pure language skills" and develop "Japanese + X" comprehensive research capabilities: the integration of Japanese with social science methods (e.g., analyzing class differences in the use of Japanese honorifics through sociological theories); and the application of digital technology tools in Japanese contexts (e.g., using Python to crawl Japanese online corpora for sentiment analysis, and using Nvivo to code Japanese interview texts).

Discussion on the Adaptability of Ability Cultivation Paths

This study identifies "professional course learning" as the most expected channel for ability improvement among students (mean = 0.74), which is consistent

with Ai et al. (2015) et al.'s emphasis on "integration of courses and scientific research." Unlike other disciplines, however, Japanese majors perceive a "complementary relationship" between academic research ability and language skills (mean = 0.83), offering a unique perspective for curriculum integration: through specialized courses such as "Japanese cultural studies" and "Sino-Japanese comparative society," language skills (e.g., Japanese literature reading) and academic abilities (e.g., literature review) can be trained in an integrated manner. This not only addresses the lack of academic orientation in traditional language teaching but also resolves language barriers in purely research-oriented courses.

Teachers can achieve the integration of capabilities through the following specific teaching designs in existing language courses:

In the "Advanced Japanese" course, cultivating problem awareness: Select hot-topic texts from Japanese society (such as reports on "low birthrate" in Asahi Shimbun) and design a three-stage task of "phenomenon observation → problem decomposition → academic inquiry." For example, first, students are asked to summarize the core viewpoints of the report in Japanese (language skills); then, they are guided to raise critical questions such as "Is the data source in the report reliable?" and "What are the unmentioned influencing factors of the low birthrate?" (problem awareness); finally, they are required to write a 150-character research hypothesis in Japanese (e.g., What is the relationship between Japan's declining birthrate and the decline of local economies?), so as to strengthen the transition from language input to academic inquiry.

In the "Introduction to Japanese Culture" course, integrating question chain design: Centering on themes such as "cherry blossom culture," teachers put forward progressive questions in Japanese: What are the specific expressions of "mono no aware" in relation to cherry blossoms? (phenomenon description) → Why did cherry blossoms become a national symbol in Japan? (cause exploration) → Is modern cherry blossom tourism diluting traditional culture? (critical thinking). Students are required to conduct group discussions in Japanese, record arguments, and finally produce a 300-character problem analysis report, which not only trains their Japanese expression skills but also strengthens their problem awareness.

In summary, while confirming interdisciplinary common issues, this study reveals the particularities of Japanese majors in "perception of research methods" and "integration of language and academics." Future curriculum optimization should balance universality (e.g., strengthening problem awareness, improving evaluation systems) and disciplinary characteristics (e.g., Japanese academic norms, cross-cultural research methods) to promote the transformation of foreign language majors from a "skill-oriented" model to a "research-innovative" model.

This study has certain limitations at the current stage, such as sample limitations: the survey questions mainly focus on students' subjective opinions and evaluations, lacking in-depth and detailed understanding of specific teaching processes and course content. The study is only a cross-sectional survey, failing to track students' views on annual thesis courses and academic research ability cultivation at

different learning stages, and thus is unable to capture dynamic changes and development trends. In the future, building on this research, efforts will be made to increase the sample size to include students from different grades and professional orientations, thereby improving the representativeness and universality of the research results. Multiple research methods, such as interviews and classroom observations, will be adopted to gain an in-depth understanding of the actual situation in teaching processes and analyze specific factors affecting students' views on courses and ability cultivation. Long-term follow-up surveys of students will be conducted to study changes in their needs and views on annual thesis courses and academic research ability cultivation at different learning stages, providing a more comprehensive basis for teaching reform.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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