[1] **Chen Xu**

[1] **Zhijian Wei**

[1, *] **Panpan Wei**

Research on the Path of Digital Technology Empowering Teaching Reform in Japanese Majors in Chinese Universities--- A Case Study of ZYU

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Abstract: - With the rapid development of information technology, the application of digital technology in foreign language teaching is becoming increasingly widespread. Driven by the Chinese government's policies on education digitalization, Japanese majors at Chinese higher education institutions are actively embracing digital technology to drive teaching reform. This paper, taking Zhejiang Yuexiu University (ZYU) as an example, discusses how digital technology can empower teaching reform in Japanese majors, analyzes the attempts and shortcomings of the current digitalization reform of Japanese majors, and proposes specific reform paths in conjunction with China's national policies and the trend of educational digitalization development.

Keywords: Digital Technology; Foreign Language Teaching; Japanese Major; Chinese Universities.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's global information technology wave, digital technology has been gradually permeating all areas of society with its unique advantages. Education is no exception. "Digital empowerment of education" primarily refers to the use of internet technology and artificial intelligence to improve the quality and effectiveness of education, thereby providing students with more digital resources and opportunities for development (Zhang Baike & Yiming, 2023). The digitalization of Chinese education has gone through several stages. Initially, it focused on educational technology and online education, with modern mediums such as television and radio being introduced after the reform and opening-up, and computer technology later used to assist teaching and administration.

Entering the 21st century, with the rapid development of information technology, the process of educational digitalization has further accelerated. The Chinese government has introduced a series of key policies: For instance, the "Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)," issued in 2010, prioritized the rapid digitalization process in the national educational development agenda; the "Education Informationization 2.0 Action Plan" released in 2018 profoundly pushed the digitalization process of Chinese education, steering it towards a new era of openness, sharing, collaboration, and intelligence; and in 2019, the "Education Modernization 2035" indicated that China should accelerate the transformation of education in the information age, using modern technology to drive the reform of talent training models and achieve the organic combination of mass education and personalized education.

Since 2020, with the rapid development of cloud computing, big data, artificial intelligence, and other new technologies, educational digitalization has entered a new stage. In January 2022, the National Education Work Conference proposed to launch the educational digitalization strategic action; for the first time, the Communist Party of China's 20th National Congress included "educational digitalization" in its report, stating the need to "advance educational digitalization and build a learning society for all, and a learning nation for lifelong learning." In March 2023, the "2023 Work Points of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education" explicitly required "deepening the implementation of digitalization strategic actions," and "accelerating the digital transformation of higher education to create a new form of higher education teaching."

From the above, it can be seen that China's process of promoting the transformation of higher education is gradually speeding up. Against this backdrop, domestic learners in China have begun increasingly in-depth studies on the digitalization of higher education. A search on CNKI with "digitalization" and "higher education" as keywords yields more than 1,240 papers, focusing on the overall path and top-level architecture of higher education digitalization reform.

For example, Yang Zongkai, in "Exploring the Path of Digital Transformation of Higher Education" in 2023, pointed out that the digitalization of education is an era response to the development of the digital age and an

[1] Zhejiang Yuexiu University (ZYU), Shaoxing, Zhejiang 312000, China
*Corresponding author: Panpan Wei

inevitable choice for achieving the modernization of education. With the deep promotion and application of information technology in the field of education, the role of technological innovation in driving the transformation of educational forms, the expansion of educational opportunities, the reconstruction of school space, and the renewal of learning modes has become increasingly prominent. In 2022, Xu Xiaofei and Zhang Ce in "The Essentials and Approaches of Higher Education Digitalization Reformation in China" described the eight elements related to the digitalization of higher education: concepts and culture, resources and infrastructure, content and carriers, platforms and tools, standards and norms, evaluation and certification, personnel literacy and competence, management and policies. They analyzed the five levels of higher education digitalization reform, including courses, majors, schools, government educational departments, and education ecology, and proposed pathways to advance the digitalization reform of higher education.

A CNKI search with "Japanese digitalization" as keyword resulted in only 6 papers, which clearly does not match its status in the foreign language community in China. Furthermore, related studies only touched on digital environments, digital resources, and digital means and lags far behind English majors in both depth and breadth of research. Therefore, this paper takes ZYU as an example to research the integration of digital technology with Japanese language teaching and its deficiencies, with the aim of providing new directions for the teaching reform of Japanese majors at Chinese higher education institutions under the backdrop of digital transformation.

II. THE NECESSITY OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY EMPOWERING FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The necessity of digital technology in empowering foreign language teaching is particularly evident in the current information society. This necessity lies not only in adapting to social development trends but also in enhancing teaching quality and efficiency, promoting comprehensive student development, and strengthening international exchanges and cooperation.

Firstly, with the rapid development of the information society, digital technology has permeated every aspect of social life. As an important part of social development, foreign language education also needs to keep pace with the times. Traditional foreign language teaching methods can no longer meet the needs of modern society, and digital technology provides a new solution for foreign language education. By using digital technology, foreign language education can more efficiently acquire and integrate teaching resources, innovate teaching methods, and thus enhance teaching effectiveness. This not only helps cultivate foreign language talents with information literacy and digital skills but also enables foreign language education to better adapt to the trends of the information society and meet the societal demand for talents.

Secondly, digital technology can significantly improve the quality and efficiency of foreign language teaching. Traditional foreign language teaching is challenged by limited resources, singular methods, and low student participation. Digital technology effectively addresses these issues. Traditional foreign language teaching resources primarily depend on textbooks and teachers' personal experiences, whereas digital technology breaks this limitation. Teachers can use internet, multimedia, and other digital platforms to access massive teaching resources, enrich teaching content and forms, stimulate student interest, and help students better understand foreign language knowledge and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, digital technologies like network technology, multimedia technology, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality provide essential educational tools for achieving the training goals of foreign language majors, especially in enhancing students' listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating abilities. The integration of digital technology in teaching also makes foreign language learning more vivid and interesting, facilitating repetition and reproduction of class processes, and thus cultivating students with an international vision and cross-cultural literacy.

Moreover, digital technology aids personalized teaching. Each student has a unique learning style and pace, and digital technology can provide personalized learning resources and tutoring based on individual students' learning situations and needs. Through intelligent teaching systems, teachers can monitor and analyze students' learning progress and performance data in real-time, formulate more practical teaching plans, meet different student needs, and enhance motivation and interest in learning.

Lastly, digital technology strengthens international exchanges and cooperation. Foreign language education is not only about language knowledge transmission but also about fostering cross-cultural communication and understanding. Digital technology enables students to more conveniently exchange and cooperate with foreign students and teachers, understand different ways of thinking and lifestyles under various cultural backgrounds, and improve their cross-cultural communication skills. At the same time, digital technology facilitates the sharing and exchange of foreign language educational resources at home and abroad, driving the international development of foreign language education.

These are the contexts for our development of digital technology-powered foreign language teaching, which are also the purposes and directions of foreign language majors in teaching reform.

III. ATTEMPTS AND DEFICIENCIES IN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY EMPOWERMENT OF JAPANESE TEACHING REFORM

Under the sweeping tide of digitalization, the field of Japanese language teaching is experiencing a profound transformation. The widespread application of digital technology has not only completely changed traditional teaching methods but has also brought unprecedented opportunities and challenges to Japanese language teaching. To more vividly analyze the current situation and existing issues of integration between digital technology and Japanese language teaching, this paper selects ZYU for an in-depth analysis.

A. ZYU's Measures for Digital Reform

ZYU, a private foreign language institution established in 1981 and upgraded to an undergraduate college in 2008, has actively responded to the call for digital reform in recent years, taken a series of innovative measures, achieved significant results, and was honored with the "Advanced Unit for Information Construction in Zhejiang Universities" award in 2018.

Firstly, ZYU emphasizes nurturing advantages, vigorously promoting the construction of online courses.

ZYU attaches great importance to the construction and development of online courses, regarding them as key to enhancing teaching quality and driving teaching reform. As early as 2017, the school set the ambitious goal of constructing 100 online premium courses and introducing another 100. Online courses not only cover traditional language foundation courses but also widely involve culture, literature, translation, and other fields, forming a rich and diverse curriculum system, fully meeting students' diversified learning needs. Additionally, by introducing online general education courses from platforms like Zhihuishu, students' knowledge horizons and learning options have been further expanded. After unremitting efforts, by 2024, the school has successfully started over 160 school-level online premium courses, more than 130 municipal-level online courses, over 60 provincial-level online courses, and even 2 courses have won national-level online premium course accolades.

Secondly, ZYU focuses on the construction of digital platforms to innovate teaching models.

By carefully creating Youmu Class online teaching platforms, IPTV online TV broadcasting systems, and multimedia resource libraries, the school has actively promoted the integration of information technology with education and teaching. There are more than 1,700 courses available on the Youmu Class online teaching platform, where students can study anytime and anywhere, participate in online discussions and interactions, effectively expanding the time and space for learning and making learning unrestricted by fixed classrooms and schedules; the IPTV online TV broadcasting system provides nearly 20 international channels, offering rich resources for foreign language learning and aiding students in improving listening, speaking, and cross-cultural communication skills; the multimedia resource library contains nearly 60,000 audio and video resources, such as master lectures, academic reports, etc., all enabling students to access more cutting-edge knowledge and information. Teachers can also use these platforms to carry out online teaching, blended learning, and other teaching modes, achieving online and offline integration and enhancing teaching quality and effectiveness.

Thirdly, ZYU improves network infrastructure to build a digital teaching environment.

ZYU has accelerated the renovation of multimedia equipment in ordinary classrooms and implemented a campus network upgrade project to ensure teaching locations are equipped with a blended teaching environment and technical support. The school has also achieved wireless coverage of indoor teaching areas across two campuses, providing faculty and students with stable and high-speed internet connections. Furthermore, the school has strengthened the construction of the "Digital Campus" platform. Through the construction of nine major modules, the school has realized digitalization and intelligentization of school management, effectively increasing administrative efficiency and service quality. Teachers and students can easily complete course registration, grade inquiries, leave applications, and other transactions through the platform, enjoying more convenient and efficient services.

Fourthly, ZYU strengthens digital literacy training for teachers to promote digital teaching applications.

Recognizing the key role of teachers in digital teaching reform, the school has held more than 20 training events related to "digital reform" in recent years, with training content that is extensive and in-depth, covering not only the basic knowledge and operational skills of information technology applications but also cutting-edge concepts and methods such as teaching design and data analysis. At the same time, the school has established an incentive mechanism, encouraging teachers to actively participate in the digital teaching reform and practice through reward systems and promotional opportunities. It is worth mentioning that some teachers have been

promoted to professors due to their outstanding achievements in the field of digital reform, which fully demonstrates the school's determination and effectiveness in digital teaching reform.

B. Measures and Deficiencies in the Digital Reform of the Japanese Major

The Japanese major, as one of the three founding majors of the school since 1981, was honored as a first-class major in Zhejiang Province in 2020 and further identified as a national-level first-class major construction point in 2021. In the wave of digital reform in the school, the Japanese major has also been actively engaged in digital teaching practice.

Firstly, revising the talent training program to emphasize the cultivation of students' digital capabilities. The 2024 talent training program for the Japanese major explicitly requires students to possess digital capabilities. Graduates are required to have excellent information technology application skills, capable of adeptly using modern technology to collect and process information. Additionally, graduates need to master the ability to use information technology for data analysis and management to meet the development needs of the digital age.

Secondly, supporting the construction of online courses and actively promoting blended online and offline teaching. Through online pre-study, review, and discussion, students can effectively grasp knowledge points and improve learning efficiency; the in-person offline courses provide a more in-depth and systematic learning experience. Not only does this blended teaching method improve teaching quality, but it also stimulates students' interest in autonomous learning. After years of careful cultivation and in-depth development, the major has achieved certain results in online course construction. Currently, this major already has 2 school-level online premium courses, 3 municipal-level courses, and 4 provincial-level courses.

Thirdly, reforming the traditional teaching evaluation methods, incorporating online learning into formative assessment. In the past, teaching evaluation mainly focused on classroom and homework, but the importance of online learning has become increasingly prominent. Therefore, some courses in this major have started to use digital tools to track and record students' online learning activities, such as watching videos, participating in discussions, and completing tests, to provide richer data for evaluation. As an example, for the "Japanese Conversations 1" course, the performance of online learning has become an important part of the course's grade evaluation, accounting for 15% of the total grade. This evaluation method not only reflects our emphasis on online learning but also more comprehensively reflects students' overall abilities and learning outcomes.

Although the Japanese major has achieved certain effects in digital reform, such as the optimization of talent training programs, significant results in online course construction, and innovative teaching evaluation methods, there are still obvious shortcomings.

First, the mismatch between teaching objectives and teaching content exists.

The Japanese major is committed to shaping students' solid professional foundation and diverse capability structure. In terms of professional knowledge, students not only need to master the language knowledge of both China and Japan, delve into the narrative art of Japanese, but also deeply understand the connotations and extensions of Chinese and Japanese culture, grasp the developmental trajectory and distinctive differences between the two cultures. In terms of ability training, students are required not only to have excellent Chinese expression, English application, Japanese communication skills, and Chinese-Japanese translation skills but also to emphasize the development of information technology application capabilities. However, regrettably, although digital capabilities are mentioned in the teaching objectives, there has not been a timely update and adjustment in areas like course settings. Currently, the existing curriculum system lacks courses specifically targeting the use of digital tools, and systematic guidance and training have not been provided to students on how to effectively use digital technology for information retrieval, online communication, and the use of digital resources in Japanese language learning.

Second, there is insufficient integration of digital technology with courses.

The course settings of the Japanese major include general education courses, professional education courses, and practical teaching sessions, among others. However, the integration of digital technology into these courses remains limited. Although college English courses in general education have started to experiment with digital technology-assisted teaching, the application is shallow, lacking in-depth interaction and personalized learning experiences. Among the professional education courses of the Japanese major, which offers more than 80 courses, online courses include only a few, such as "Overview of Japan," "Japanese Communicative Spoken Language," "Basic Japanese 1," "Japanese Listening 3," and "Second Foreign Language Japanese 1." For most courses, the use of information technology remains at the simple level of PPT teaching, lacking optimization and innovation targeted at digital environments. The application of advanced technologies such as deep learning and

big data analysis is even more lacking. In the practical teaching sessions, traditional methods remain dominant, and novel practices like simulation training and online collaboration based on digital technology are limited in their application.

Third, a clear deficiency appears in teachers' digital literacy.

In "Empowering the Modernization of Higher Education with Digitalization," Liu Baocun and Shang Runze (2023) also pointed out that, "Teachers in our higher education institutions lack proper recognition of the significant value of digital technology in driving educational teaching innovation, resist the digitalization transformation of classroom teaching, and face issues such as a lack of professional knowledge in digital technology, the formalization of digital technology applications, and weak ability to innovate teaching with digital technology aid. Furthermore, in terms of digital literacy training for teachers, some higher education institutions in our country tend to have single and superficial training forms, short duration, limited content, and focus mostly on the instruction of relevant theoretical knowledge, without integrating teacher digital literacy training into the entire process of teacher development." Teachers in the Japanese major also have the problem of low levels of digital application, with many still relying on traditional teaching methods such as multimedia presentation of courseware and audiovisual materials, and the adoption of advanced digital teaching methods such as interactive teaching and online collaboration remains low. Some teachers have relatively outdated information technology application concepts, viewing technology more as an aiding tool for "teaching" rather than a driving engine for students' "learning", thus not fully realizing the potential and advantages of digital technology in teaching. At the same time, their self-development models tend to be somewhat closed, lacking the motivation to actively seek self-growth and innovation and relying too heavily on externally driven professional development approaches.

Fourth, there's inadequate support from digital technology for teaching method improvement.

In current Japanese language teaching, teacher-centered, lecturing methodologies continue to dominate, where teachers unilaterally deliver information, and students are in a passive receiving state. This lack of interactive and participative teaching methods is not conducive to effectively stirring students' enthusiasm and initiative for learning. Although some courses have attempted blended online and offline teaching, student participation remains limited, lacking in-depth thinking and active exploration. Moreover, current teaching methods have not fully taken into account students' individual differences and learning needs, which hinders the effective realization of personalized talent cultivation, thereby affecting the optimization of teaching effectiveness.

Fifth, there's an imperfect construction of the intelligent teaching environment.

Although multimedia classrooms and smart classrooms have to some extent increased the technological content in teaching, in terms of quantity and quality, these facilities are far from meeting future teaching needs. This often causes teachers to be constrained by hardware facilities during the teaching process, preventing the full utilization of the advantages of digital technology, thus affecting the enhancement of teaching effectiveness. Additionally, digital teaching resources for the Japanese major are relatively scarce, lacking diversity and richness, which to a large extent limits students' depth and breadth of learning, impeding their potential for comprehensive development.

Sixth, there is an urgent need to accelerate the development of virtual research and teaching offices.

Virtual research and teaching offices, as excellent representatives of modern educational technology, have significant advantages such as breaking through the limitations of time and space, promoting resource sharing, and enhancing communication between teachers. However, in practical applications, these potential functions are often ignored or not effectively utilized, leading to waste of educational resources and certain limitations in the improvement of teaching quality. The Japanese major also faces the problem of inadequate emphasis on the construction of virtual research and teaching offices, with the currently established four research and teaching offices being traditional in nature, mainly focusing on routine teaching management, and failing to fully explore and utilize the innovations and efficiency improvements brought by virtual research and teaching offices.

IV. Pathways for Digital Technology Empowerment of Japanese Teaching Reform

Teaching reform encompasses comprehensive, full-process changes including teaching objectives, teaching concepts, teaching methods, and teaching content. It should combine student learning analysis with teaching design, and strengthen the in-depth application of digital technology innovation in teaching objectives, concepts, methods, and content. The impact of information technology, especially intelligent technology, on education and teaching is no longer limited to infrastructure construction and functional application. It has now become more

integrated with the educational ecosystem in combination with the intelligent features of new-generation intelligent technology, leading to a coexistence of information technology with education, thus reforming the ecological system of education and teaching (Xue Eryong, 2020). This signifies that the connotation of "digital technology" is continually deepening, meaning that when it contemplate and explore the empowerment of digital technology for teaching reform, it's a must to have a broader view and perspective.

A. Optimize Courses to Match the Needs for Digital Capability Training

In the context of digital transformation, digital technology opens up more avenues and possibilities for higher-level training in the Japanese major. Schools and Japanese majors should develop specialized courses for digital capability training according to their teaching objectives. These courses should include basic knowledge, application skills, and practical operations of digital skills to ensure that students systematically learn and master the relevant abilities. For instance, Shanghai International Studies University offers interdisciplinary courses that integrate digital technology such as "Media Information Processing" and "Database Fundamentals and Dynamic Web Page Production." This course arrangement not only reflects the trend of modern digital technology integration but also the trend of diversification and characteristic orientation in the cultivation model of Japanese majors under the background of digital transformation.

B. Strengthen the Integration of Digital Technology with Teaching Content.

To avoid the fragmentation of online course construction, Japanese majors should conduct systematic planning, presenting core foundation courses like Japanese phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary in an online cohesive manner, and establish a distinctive group of top-tier online and offline blended courses. Moreover, select high-quality courses for careful cultivation, aiming to build national-level top undergraduate courses to provide students with a higher quality learning experience. At the same time, use excellent Japanese language teaching platforms and well-known learning websites from abroad to provide students with richer learning materials. These resources not only include basic knowledge such as Japanese phonetics, grammar, and vocabulary but also real conversational scenes and cultural background introductions, helping students better understand Japanese culture and society.

C. Deepen the Training of Digital Literacy for Japanese Language Teachers

Currently, China's digital education reform is in full swing, both in basic and higher education, with an increasing determination for digital reform in basic education. This trend indicates that students undergoing digital reform in basic education will have higher expectations for the level of digitalization in higher education in the future, especially for teachers' digital teaching capabilities. Therefore, One should actively take measures to deeply demonstrate the significant advantages and urgency of digital teaching to Japanese teachers through lectures and case analyses, stimulating their enthusiasm for learning and inner motivation. At the same time, introduce professional talents with high-level digital teaching capabilities and promote the overall enhancement of digital literacy across the teaching team through mentorship and assistance. Considering the relative shortage of native Japanese teachers in the major, one can also consider introducing foreign teachers with high digitalization standards to learn from and refer to the advanced experiences of educational digitalization reform in Japan. In addition, one should carry out systematic and continuous digital teaching training to help teachers achieve a transformation and upgrade in digital literacy, cultivate digital cognition, and enhance the application skills of digital technology and knowledge, creating a variety of digital teaching activities and enhancing digital social responsibility, thus providing strong support for higher-level teaching and student growth.

D. Change the Traditional Didactic Approach to Talent Cultivation

By designing teaching activities and tasks that are interactive and participatory, guide students to actively participate in classroom discussions, group cooperation, and practical operations, thus fostering their active and collaborative learning skills. At the same time, teachers can use digital technology to record and track students' learning progress and performance, and adjust teaching strategies in a timely manner to improve teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, people should unleash the potential of course data by using big data and artificial intelligence to conduct in-depth analysis of students' learning behaviors, interests, and needs, thereby providing them with more personalized and differentiated learning resources and guidance. By respecting individual differences and implementing a personalized approach to talent cultivation, The university can better meet students' individual needs and promote their comprehensive development. Looking to the future, as China's birthrate declines, educational resources will gradually become more abundant, providing ample space for small-

scale, personalized, differentiated, and elitist approaches to talent cultivation. The university should seize this opportunity to actively explore and practice a talent cultivation model more in line with the demands of the times, contributing to the cultivation of high-quality, high-level Japanese language talent.

E. Construct a Transcendent and Intelligent Learning Environment

The university should rely on digital technology to construct a dimensional and intelligent learning environment that transcends time and space. Specifically, The university should increase investment in hardware infrastructure and upgrade equipment in multimedia and smart classrooms, such as introducing high-definition projectors and interactive smartboards, to enhance the teaching experience. Simultaneously, develop a more intelligent online learning platform that integrates high-quality educational resources, offers personalized learning path recommendations, and smart Q&A functions to meet students' diverse learning needs; In creating Japanese learning scenarios, The university should use digital technology, such as virtual reality and augmented reality, to simulate realistic Japanese communication scenes, allowing students to practice language in an immersive environment. Additionally, develop interactive Japanese learning apps that utilize gamified learning mechanisms to stimulate students' interest in learning and improve their language proficiency. Moreover, to enrich teaching resources, the university should actively introduce advanced teaching resources and platforms. This paper suggests establishing cooperative relationships with internationally renowned Japanese educational institutions to introduce high-quality teaching materials and video tutorials, providing students with an international learning perspective. Also, utilize open educational resource platforms to integrate high-quality Japanese learning resources available online, forming a resource-sharing community that allows students to access learning materials anytime, anywhere.

F. Strengthen the Development and Management of Virtual Research and Teaching Offices

Specifically, universities can regularly organize online teaching demonstrations, allowing teachers to showcase their teaching styles in virtual research and teaching offices and invite peers to observe and exchange. At the same time, virtual research and teaching offices should be used to conduct cross-school and cross-regional research discussions, enabling teachers from different schools to discuss teaching methods and strategies and share successful teaching cases. To promote the sharing of teaching resources and complement advantages, the university can establish a virtual research and teaching office resource sharing platform to upload and share excellent teaching materials, videos, etc., allowing teachers to conveniently access required teaching resources; Furthermore, the university should strengthen technical support and training for virtual research and teaching offices. Invite professional technicians to train teachers on how to better utilize virtual research and teaching office platforms for online teaching, how to operate related functions of virtual research and teaching offices, etc.

V. CONCLUSION

In summary, with the strong support of the Chinese government, ZYU and its Japanese major have achieved significant results in digitalization reform. However, they still face a series of challenges and issues, which are not unique to the institution but are common throughout China's foreign language majors and the entire higher education sector. Universities are confident that, as China's education digitalization reform deepens, these issues will be effectively addressed. During this process, schools and professional departments must have a long-term vision and grand pattern, scientifically plan the future path of digital development, to ensure steady progress amidst the digital wave, and realize a higher level of educational modernization.

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AUTHOR INTRODUCTION

XU Chen, female, born in Sept. 1992, from Daqing, Heilongjiang Province; a lecturer with an MA degree. Research interests include Japanese language teaching, international communication, and Northeast Asia research. Email: 20172007@zyufl.edu.com.

WEI Zhijiang, male, born in August 1962, from Huaiyin City, Jiangsu Province; a professor with a Ph.D. degree. Research interest: Northeast Asia Studies. Email: gmswzhj@mail.sysu.edu.cn.

WEI Panpan (the corresponding author), male, born in Oct. 1986, from Heze, Shandong province; a professor with a Ph.D. degree. Research interests include international communication, Northeast Asia research, and Korean language teaching. Email: weipan1003@126.com.

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