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TEACHING REFORM OF JAPANESE COURSES FOR NON-JAPANESE MAJORS IN UNIVERSITIES BASED ON OBE CONCEPT: A CASE STUDY OF ABA TEACHERS COLLEGE

Zheng Qian

Lecturer in Japanese Language Teaching Research, School of Foreign Languages,
Aba Teachers College, Sichuan, China
Email: zheng@student.usm.my

Abstract

Taking Aba Teachers College as an example, this study explores the teaching reform of Japanese courses for Non-Japanese Majors in universities based on the concept of Outcome-Based Education (OBE). Through literature review, questionnaire survey and teaching experiment, this study aims to analyze the current problems in university Japanese teaching, propose targeted reform methods based on the OBE concept, and evaluate its implementation effect. The research results show that based on the OBE concept, students' learning autonomy, comprehensive language ability and cross-cultural communication ability have been significantly improved by clarifying learning outcomes, optimizing course content, innovating teaching methods and strategies, and implementing diversified evaluation. This study provides a new perspective and practical path for the reform of Japanese language teaching for non-Japanese majors in universities.

Keywords: Japanese courses for non-Japanese majors in universities, Outcome-based education (OBE), Teaching reform

Introduction

Outcome-based education, referred to as OBE, can also be translated as competency-based education, goal-based education or demand-based education. Spady (1994) defined OBE as clearly focusing on and organizing every link in the education system to ensure that all students have everything they need for academic success. In addition, Spady (1994) pointed out that the key to an outcome-based education system is to develop a set of clear learning outcomes so that all components of the system revolve around these goals; and to create conditions and opportunities within the system so that students can achieve their learning outcomes. The OBE concept emphasizes the transformation of educational paradigms. It is a new student-centered educational model that can effectively enhance students' learning motivation, sense of participation, and practical ability (Zhang, 2022).

Aba Teachers College is located in Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. It is an undergraduate institution with distinct regional characteristics. The Japanese courses offered to all freshman and sophomore non-Japanese major students in the college, are aimed to improve students' comprehensive Japanese language application ability and cross-cultural communication skills. However, in actual teaching, these courses face the dilemma of traditional teaching mode: focusing on the inculcation of language knowledge such as grammar and vocabulary, students often passively accept knowledge and lack the motivation for active exploration and independent learning, making it difficult to truly achieve the goal of applying what they have learned and improving cross-cultural communication skills. Therefore, how to reform the Japanese courses for non-Japanese majors in universities and improve students' learning autonomy, language knowledge level and cross-cultural communication ability has become an urgent problem to be solved in the field of Japanese education in universities, represented by Aba Teachers College.

The application of OBE concept in foreign language teaching can effectively improve students' language ability and learning enthusiasm (Bai, 2017). In China, more and more colleges and universities are beginning to explore the application of OBE concept in college English curriculum reform. According to CNKI search, there are 500 related papers¹. However, there is a lack of research on the application of OBE concept in Japanese teaching in universities. According to CNKI search, there are only 11 related papers, most of which focus on university Japanese courses for Japanese majors. Among them, only 3 papers are about the application of OBE concept in Japanese teaching for non-Japanese majors.

For example, Yu (2022) pointed out the problems existing in the Japanese courses for non-Japanese major students in universities, and proposed teaching reform strategies, such as implementing small-class differentiated teaching, adopting "online" + "offline" hybrid teaching based on multimedia, and adopting task-driven collaborative learning. Wang (2024) took Chuzhou University as an example, summarized the problems existing in the Japanese courses for non-Japanese majors of the university, and proposed countermeasures such as graded teaching, implementation of OBE teaching concepts, and integration of "online and offline" hybrid teaching. Although both scholars advocated the application of the OBE teaching model in Japanese teaching for non-Japanese majors in universities, Yu and Wang did not specifically build an OBE teaching model, nor did they evaluate the effectiveness of the model in teaching practice.

In summary, represented by Aba Teachers College, there are several problems in Japanese teaching for non-Japanese majors in universities. Existing studies have shown that the application of the OBE concept can effectively improve students' foreign language learning outcomes, but the current research on the teaching of Japanese for non-Japanese majors in universities based on the OBE concept is still insufficient. Therefore, this study is necessary and urgent. This study aims to provide new perspectives and practical experience for the development of foreign language education by exploring the teaching reform and effects of the Japanese language course for non-Japanese majors in Aba Teachers College from the perspective of OBE concept.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze existing teaching problems: Through a questionnaire survey, understand the current status of the Japanese language courses for non-Japanese majors in Aba Teachers College, and summarize the main problems affecting students' learning outcomes, including course objectives, course content, teaching methods, and course evaluation system.
2. To design a teaching reform plan based on the OBE concept: Based on the analysis of existing problems, formulate a practical Japanese teaching reform plan based on the OBE concept. The plan will include clarifying learning outcomes, optimizing course content, reforming teaching methods, and implementing diversified evaluation.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of reform implementation: After implementing the teaching reform plan, use quantitative evaluation methods to analyze the impact of the reform on students' learning autonomy, language ability, and cross-cultural communication ability.

Scope of the Research

1. Population Scope: The subjects of this study are non-Japanese major students who take Japanese courses at Aba Teachers College. Specifically, a total of 50 students are randomly selected from freshmen and sophomores, 36 and 14 respectively, for a questionnaire survey. This college was chosen because its teaching of Japanese courses faces the challenge of

¹ The search date is October 28, 2024.

improving teaching quality and is representative; in addition, student feedback is the key to evaluating teaching effectiveness.

2. Time Scope: The time scope of this study is one semester, that is, the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Including the design, implementation, and effect evaluation of the curriculum reform plan, this time cope can capture the changes before and after the reform and its impact on student learning.

Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology: This study uses quantitative analysis method.

2. Research Steps: Research design, sample selection, pre-reform data collection and analysis, reform implementation, post-reform data collection and analysis, effect evaluation

3. Data Collection: Before the teaching reform, the Wenjuanxing² is used to collect learners' views on the course in four aspects: course objectives, course content, teaching methods, and course evaluation system. After the implementation of the teaching reform, another questionnaire survey is to conducted using Wenjuanxing to collect learners' opinions on their learning outcomes from three aspects: learning autonomy, language knowledge level, and cross-cultural communication ability. In addition, the questionnaire also counts the factors that learners believed improved the teaching outcomes.

4. Data Analysis: Analyze the questionnaire data before the reform and summarize the problems of the course in terms of course objectives, course content, teaching methods, and course evaluation system. Considering these problems, a teaching reform plan is designed based on the OBE concept. The data after the teaching reform is analyzed to evaluate the impact of the teaching model based on the OBE concept on learners' learning outcomes from three aspects: learning autonomy, language ability, and cross-cultural communication ability.

Research Results

1. Through questionnaire survey, analyze the existing problems in the teaching of Japanese language courses for non-Japanese majors in Aba Teachers College before the teaching reform.

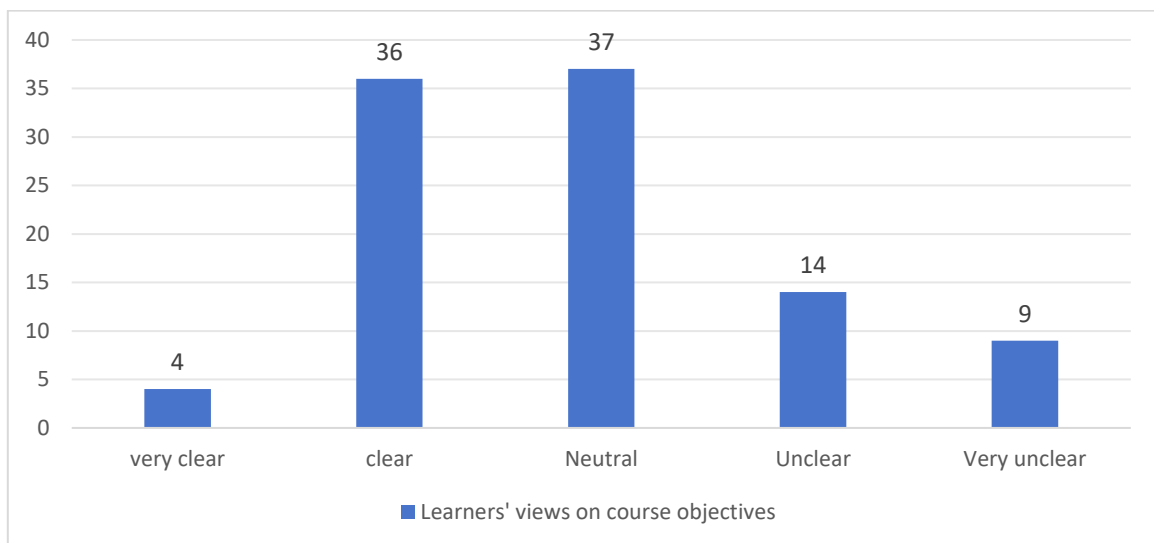


Figure 1: Learners' views on course objectives

² It is an online questionnaire survey platform in mainland China.

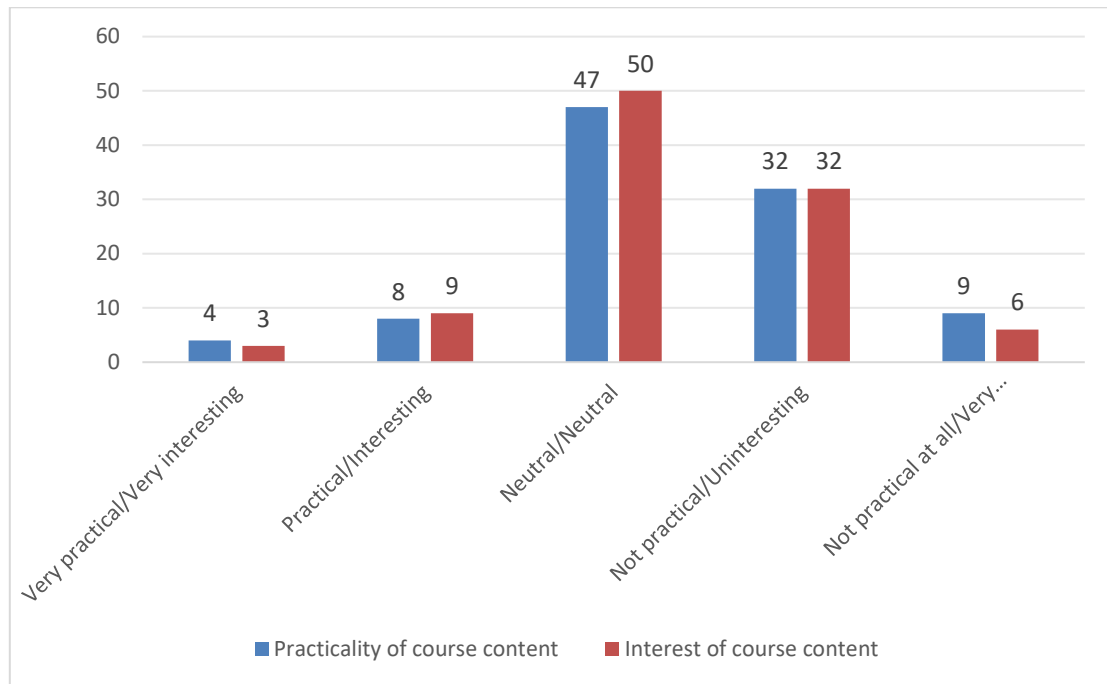


Figure 2: Learners' views on practicality and interest of course content

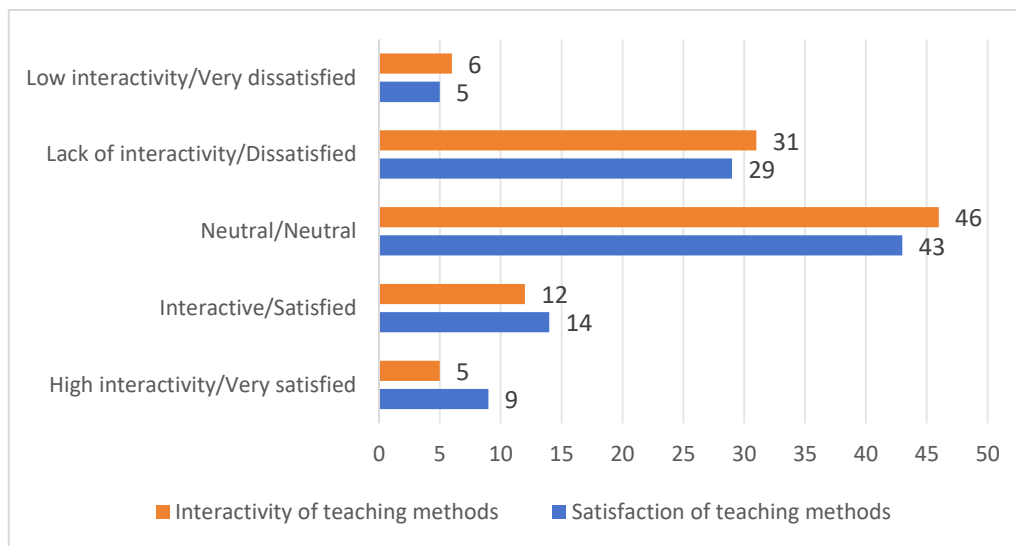


Figure 3: Learners' views on interactivity and satisfaction of teaching methods

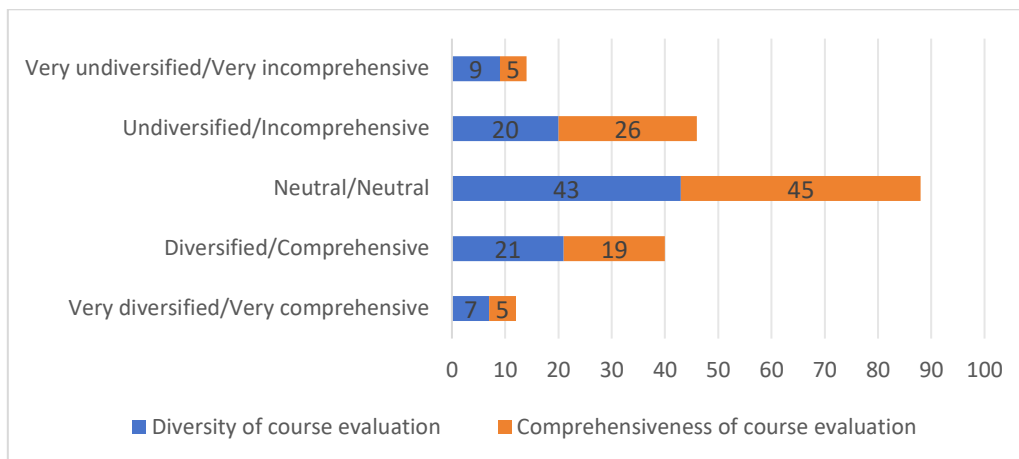


Figure 4: Learners' views on the diversity and comprehensiveness of course evaluation

Figure 1 shows that only 40% of students think the course objectives are clear. Figure 2 shows that only 12% of students think the course content is practical and interesting. In Figure 3, 37% and 34% of learners believe that the teaching method is not interactive and are dissatisfied with the teaching method respectively. As shown in Figure 4, 28% of learners claim that the course evaluation is not diverse, 24% of learners claim that the course evaluation is not comprehensive, and 43% and 45% of learners hold a neutral attitude respectively. According to these data, regarding the Japanese courses for non-Japanese major at Aba Teachers College, it is concluded that the clarity of course objectives needs to be improved; the course content lacks practicality and interest; the teaching methods of teachers need to be improved, and interactivity needs to be improved; and the course evaluation lacks diversity and comprehensiveness.

2. Based on the existing problems, a teaching reform plan based on the OBE concept is designed.

The questionnaire survey before the curriculum reform shows that the Japanese courses for non-Japanese major at Aba Teachers College need to be reformed in many aspects, including course objectives, course content, teaching methods and evaluation methods. This is, teaching needs to be student-centered, starting from clear learning outcomes, through modular and thematic course content design, combined with modern teaching methods such as flipped classrooms, situational simulations, and technology integration, supplemented by an evaluation system that combines formative evaluation, summative evaluation, and student self-reflection reports, in order to improve students' independent learning ability, Japanese language ability, and cross-cultural communication ability. Figure 5 is the teaching model about Japanese courses for non-Japanese major at Aba Teachers College, designed based on the OBE concept.

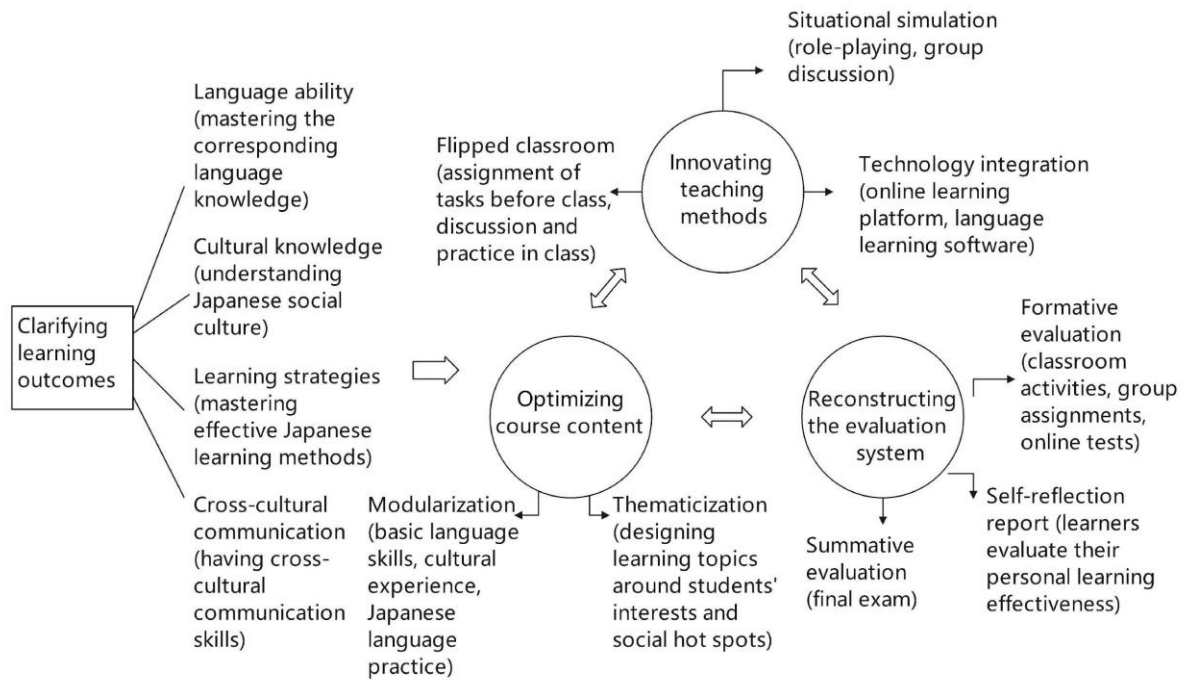


Figure 5: Teaching model designed based on the OBE concept

3. The questionnaire survey after the reform is conducted with learners to compare the differences before and after the reform and to evaluate the impact of the teaching model based on the OBE concept on learners' learning outcomes.

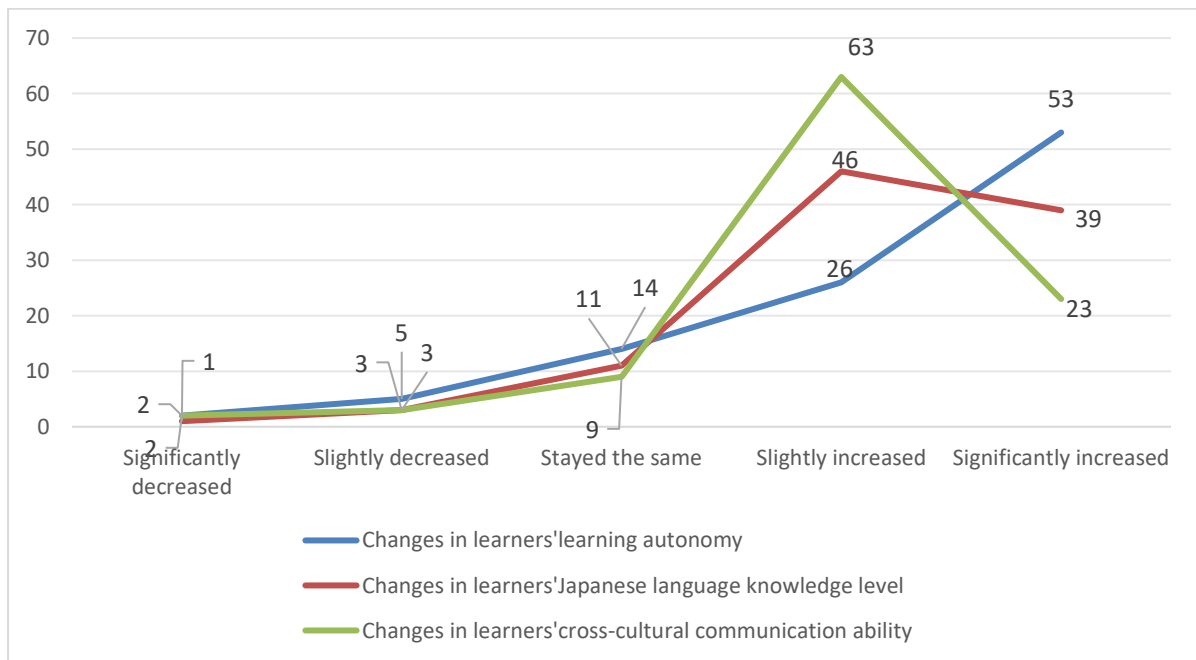


Figure 6: Learners' views on changes in their learning autonomy, Japanese language knowledge level, and cross-cultural communication ability after the OBE teaching reform

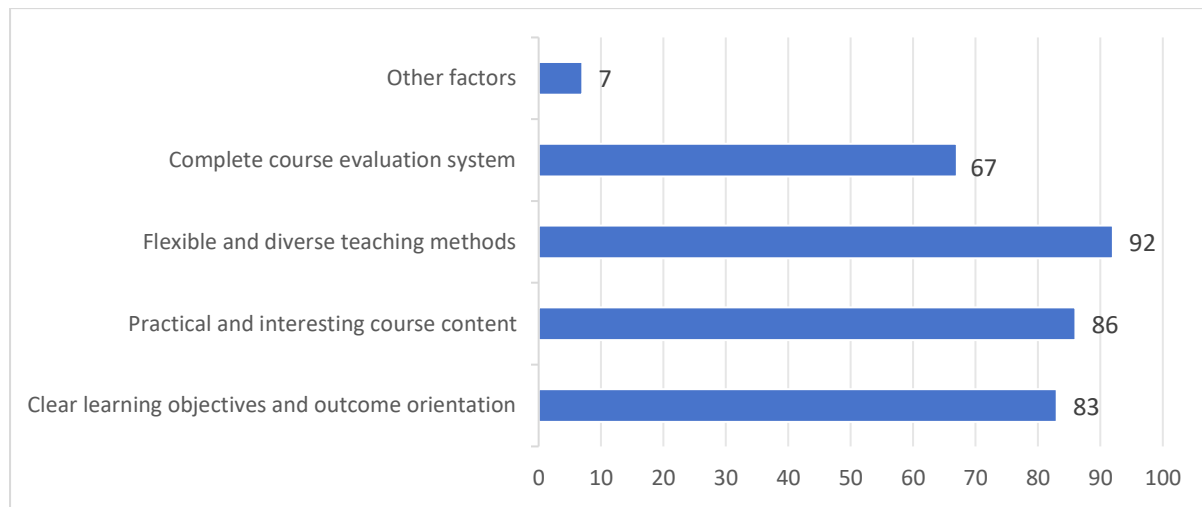


Figure 7: Learners' views on factors that improve their learning outcomes (multiple choices)

Figure 6 shows that the proportion of learners who believe that their learning autonomy, Japanese language knowledge level, and cross-cultural communication ability have slightly improved and significantly improved are 79%, 85%, and 86%, respectively. As for the factors that improve learning outcomes, as shown in Figure 7, 83%, 86%, 92% and 67% of learners attributed them to clear learning goals and outcome orientation, practical and interesting course content, flexible and diverse teaching methods, and systematic course evaluation, respectively. It can be concluded that the teaching reform of the Japanese language courses for non-Japanese majors at Aba Teachers College is effective.

Discussion

The survey data before the teaching reform showed that the Japanese language courses for non-Japanese majors at Aba Teachers College needed to be reformed in terms of teaching objectives, teaching content, teaching methods and course evaluation methods. Based on the OBE concept, this study reformed the courses by clarifying learning objectives, optimizing course content, reforming teaching methods, and reconstructing the course evaluation system. The data after the teaching reform indicated that through the teaching reform, learners' learning autonomy, Japanese language knowledge level, and cross-cultural communication ability have been slightly or significantly improved, which verifies that the OBE teaching method can effectively improve students' learning outcomes. However, compared with the proportion of students whose learning autonomy has significantly improved, the proportion of students whose Japanese language knowledge level and cross-cultural communication ability have significantly improved is slightly lower. Future research can explore how to continuously adjust the teaching model based on the OBE concept with students at the center to achieve continuous improvement of students' language knowledge level and cross-cultural communication ability.

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