

The Analysis of Student's Writing Abilities of *Kanji* at Japanese Education Study Program of UNP

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Abstract—The background of this research is the importance of mastering *Kanji* in learning Japanese since most Japanese transcriptions use it. However, the large number of *Kanji* characters makes it difficult for the students to understand it. This research is done due to the importance of mastering *Kanji* for Japanese language learners since almost all writings in Japanese use it. *Kanji* is one of the most difficult aspects for Japanese language learners especially for those who do not have a cultural background about it. This happens since they are targeted to be able to master 1945 *Kanji* characters. In addition, one *Kanji* character has more than one pronunciation. Thus, they find it difficult to memorize and use those characters. A big number of characters and the various ways of writing as well as pronouncing them make the students difficult in mastering *Kanji*. The objective of this research is to find out the *Kanji* mastery level of the 5th semester students who are majoring the Japanese Education in the academic year of 2015/2016. This quantitative research applied the descriptive method. The subject was 19 students of the study program. To select this sample, the purposive sampling technique was used. Data were taken from the scores of the students' *Kanji* test. The instrument of the research was an essay test which measures the students' abilities in writing the *Kanji* characters. Based on the research results, it is found that the students' mastery was in the "satisfactory" classification with score of 63,33.

Keywords— *Kanji*, students' writing abilities

I. INTRODUCTION

Characters in Japanese are called *moji* (文字). There are two types of *moji* (文字): *Hyoui Moji* (表意文字) and *Hyouon Moji* (表音). *Hyoui Moji* expresses content and meanings as well as states pronunciation. One type of *Hyoui Moji* is *Kanji* (漢字). Meanwhile, *Hyouon Moji* states forms of pronunciation which are meaningless (Zalman, 2014: 1). *Hiragana* (平仮名), *Katakana* (片仮名) and *Romaji* (ローマ字) or Latin characters are included in *Hyouon Moji*. It is inferred that Japanese characters consist of *Kanji*, *Hiragana*, *Katakana*, and *Romaji* which are later divided into two groups based on their use.

Sudjianto (2009: 71) states that Kana characters (*Hiragana* and *Katakana*) are included in *Honsetsu Moji* (本節文字) since the characters denote a meaningless syllable. However, there are several Japanese words consisting of only one syllable like particles and nouns such as え (e: picture), き (ki: tree), け (ke: feather), and て (te: hand). Those nouns also have their own *Kanji* like え (絵), き (木), け (毛), and て (手). It is said that *Kana* states a syllable which forms the pronunciation in Japanese.

Kanji contains meanings and forms of pronunciation. It derives from Chinese characters which are adapted into Japanese. Sudana (Zalman, 2014: 14) explains that from its first entry into Japan (5th century) to the 9th century, *Kanji* is used in various ways such as translating and writing even though there are still problems in terms of sentence patterns as well as its pronunciation. The pronunciation of *Kanji* in Japanese *Kokkun* (国訓) and Chinese *Kasha* (仮借) or using only *Kanji* produces the same sound (*Kasha*).

In 1981, a list of *Touyou Kanji Hyo* (当用漢字表) was published and it contained 1945 *Kanji* consisting of 1850 characters in *Touyou Kanji* and 95 *Kanji* related to legislation, documents, newspapers, magazines, and everyday life. The list contains Chinese or *on yomi* (音読み) and Japanese or *kunyomi* (訓読み) fonts and pronunciation forms. Since the number of *Kanji* is various and one character has more than one pronunciation, there have been some difficulties in memorizing and using it.

Japanese students are targeted to be able to master the 1945 *Kanji* listed in the *Touyou Kanji* based on their conditions and needs (Zalman; 2014: 15). In addition, foreign students are also expected to master 14 *Kanji* characters related to names of places, 17 *Kanji* characters used for writing names, and 24 other *Kanji* characters. Thus, there are 2000 *Kanji* characters that have to be mastered by them. Akihiko (Sudjianto, 2009: 58) divides several levels and time allocations in teaching *Kanji*. The first is the basic level in which 400-500 *Kanji* characters are learned within 13 weeks. The second is the intermediate level in which 700–

800 *Kanji* characters are learned within 18 weeks. The last is the advanced level in which 300-400 *Kanji* characters are learned within 9 weeks. To sum up, according to Akihiko, the total number of *Kanji* characters that has to be mastered by foreign students is 1400 to 1700.

Kanji is assumed to be one of the most difficult aspects for Japanese learners especially for those who have no cultural background related to the characters themselves. Surprisingly, Sudjianto (2009: 56) mentions that it is not only those who do not have the cultural background that find it difficult to learn *Kanji*. Even, students who possess such background such as Chinese, Korean and Taiwanese, still find it difficult to comprehend the *Kanji* characters. Although the *Kanji* characters that they use have the same forms and meanings, the way of pronouncing them is different. Therefore, pronunciation is one of the difficulties for the two types of students who learn about the *Kanji* characters.

Another difficulty faced by the students in the mastery of *Kanji* is the forms and manners of writing in *Kanji*. The result of a preliminary interview done by the researcher to the students of Japanese Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang shows that it is difficult for them to memorize the forms and write the *Kanji* characters themselves. The large number of characters as well as the rules in writing *Kanji* are two factors which cause the difficulties.

The elements of forming *Kanji* are as follows.

a) *Bushu*

Kanji is written out of several lines or streaks. The lines or streaks form parts of *Kanji* and later form a complete one (Sudjianto, 2009: 59). Those lines or streaks are called *Bushu*. Sudana (Zalman, 2014: 15) states that *Kanji* contains *Bushu* which forms the *Kanji* itself. Thus, *Kanji* consists of characters that form a letter out of lines. There are seven types of *Bushu Kanji*. They are:

- (a) Hen 偏, which is a *Bushu* located on the left side of a *Kanji*.
- (b) Tsukuri 旁, which is a *Bushu* that is on the right side of a *Kanji*.
- (c) Kanmuri 冠, which is the *Bushu* located at the top of a *Kanji*.
- (d) Ashi 脚, which is the *Bushu* located at the bottom of a *Kanji*.
- (e) Tare 垂, which is a *Bushu* shaped like a 90-degree angle from the top right to the top left.
- (f) Nyoo 饒, which is a *Bushu* shaped like a 90-degree angle from the left to the right.
- (g) Kamae 構, which is a *Bushu* that looks as if it surrounds other parts of *Kanji*.

Kanji is grouped based on *Bushu* in order to find out the meaning of it. However, there are some of them that cannot be classified into those *Bushu* since the forms are intact and they already have certain meanings. The examples are 心, 手, 生, 長, 飛, and so on. Therefore, not all *Kanji* can be put into the seven *Bushu*.

b) *Kakusuu*

The lines or streaks that make up *Kanji* are usually counted. That number is called the *Kakusuu* (Sudjianto, 2009: 63). The number of lines varies. Some *Kanji* are formed from small lines while others are formed out of many complicated lines or streaks. Similar to *Bushu*, *Kakusuu* is also used to search for a *Kanji* in a dictionary, Kokugo Jiten, and so on. Therefore, each *Kanji* dictionary will be equipped with *Bushu* and *Kakusuu* to help the students. There are various numbers of *Kakusuu Kanji*. At least, one *Kanji* has one streak. Meanwhile, the complicated one may have a large number of streaks.

The followings are the examples of *Kakusuu* on a *Kanji*:

- 一 (1 streak)
- 二, 人 (2 streaks)
- 土, 夕 (3 streaks)
- 今, 五 (4 streaks)
- 兄, 北 (5 streaks)
- 交, 合 (6 streaks)
- 位, 体 (7 streaks)
- 京, 参 (8 streaks)
- 乘, 前 (9 streaks)
- 俺, 座 (10 streaks)
- 動, 問 (11 streaks)
- 傘, 喜 (12 streaks)
- 塩, 夢 (13 streaks)
- 聞, 語 (14 streaks)
- 箏, 駒 (15 streaks)
- 頭, 親 (16 streaks)

Not only *Bushu*, *Kanji* also has *Kakusuu*. Each *Kanji* has a various number of streaks. To find out the number of streaks on a *Kanji*, the first step is to figure out the basics or steps in writing *Kanji*. If someone does not know the basic steps of writing *Kanji*, it will be difficult for him/her to calculate the number of streaks in it. Errors in calculating the *Kakusuu* will cause problems in determining a *Kanji*. As an example, *Kanji* 月 (*tsuki*) has four streaks. However, without knowing the steps of writing, it seems like it has five streaks or more.

c) *Hitsujun*

The step or sequence in writing *Kanji* is called *Hitsujun*. The writing of *Kanji* has to be in order according to the correct writing step. Writing in *Kanji* cannot be done arbitrarily. It has its own writing procedure. As an example, in writing 三 "*san*", it starts from the top part and is continued to the middle part then the bottom part. Thus, Writing *Kanji* cannot be done randomly. It has to be in order based on the example above. In addition, *Hitsujun* is not only applied in writing *Kanji* but also in *Hiragana* and *Katakana*.

Iwabuchi (Sudjianto, 2009: 66) explains that to unify the *Hitsujun* on *Kanji* especially in the field of education, Mambusho proposed the *Hitsujun Shidou no Tebiki* in 1985. It is the sequence principles of writing in *Kanji*. The principles are as follows.

- a) *Kanji* is written from the top to the bottom, e.g. 三, 喜.
- b) *Kanji* is written from the left to the right, e.g. 川, 例.
- c) *Yokokaku* (horizontal straight lines) on *Kanji* that has the cross-like form is written first, e.g. 十, 大. However, *Yokokaku* on *Kanji* 田, 王 is written later.
- d) Lines or streaks which are the center of the *Kanji*, e.g. 水, 小 are written first, except for streaks in *Kanji* 火 and 性.
- e) The outer line of *Kanji* is written first, e.g. 国, 同じ, 司
- f) The streak of *Hidariharai* (the left streak) is written first, e.g. 人, 文.
- g) The streak of *Tatekaku* (the perpendicular line) which divides the other part of *Kanji* is written in the final sequence e.g. 車, 中. Letters such as 里, 重, and those which divide the top part or the bottom part of the *Kanji* are written from the top part of the *Kanji* then *Tatekaku* and finally the bottom part of the *Kanji*.
- h) The streak of *Yookaku* which splits the rest of the *Kanji* is written in the last sequence, e.g. 女, 子, 母.

Based on the previous explanation, it is analyzed that *Kanji* has certain rules in its writing. The rules are written in the *Hitsujun Shidou no Tebiki* as a reference in learning *Kanji* as well as a unification of the *Kanji* writing steps. *Hitsujun* is not only used in writing *Kanji* but also *Hiragana* and *Katakana*.

II. METHOD

This quantitative research used numbers as its data. This is in line with the explanation proposed by Sugiyono (2013: 7) who states that a quantitative research is a research that uses numbers as data and analyzes them by using statistics. The numbers in this study were scores of the 5th semester Japanese Education Study Program students' mastery.

This descriptive research applied the survey and case study design. The population was the students of Japanese Education Study Program of UNP. 25 of them were chosen as the sample of the research. They were divided into 6 instrument test samples and 19 research samples. The sampling technique used was the purposive sampling in which "the samples are determined by using certain consideration" (Sutedi; 2009: 181). This is in accordance with the opinion of Sugiyono (2013: 81) who states that when the population is large and it is impossible for the researcher to do research to all of them due to limited fund, energy and time, then she/he is allowed to take samples from the total number of the population. What is learned from the sample will be generalized to the population. Thus, the samples taken have to be representative.

Data analysis was aimed at determining the mastery level of students' *Kanji* writing based on the research questions in the formulation of the problem in this study. The obtained data were analyzed in these following steps.

First, students' *Kanji* writing mastery was assessed by using a test. Their scores were analyzed by using indicators seen in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Students' Score

No.	Sample	Question Number						Total score
		1	2	10	
1.								
2.								

Notes:

The range of scores are from 0 to 2.

Score 2: both writing steps and forms are correct.

Score 1: the writing steps are incorrect while the forms are correct.

Score 0: both writing steps and forms are incorrect.

Second, the students' final scores were calculated using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{(\sum \text{correct score}) \times 100}{(\sum \text{score})} \text{ (Sukestiyarno, 2009: 64)}$$

Third, their mean score were calculated using the following formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum F_x}{N} \text{ (Abdurahman and Ratna (2003: 270))}$$

Notes:

M: mean

F_x : the total number of students' scores

N: the total number of samples

Fourth, the students' mastery was classified based on the table 2 below:

Table II. Table of Conversion List

No.	Mastery Level	Scale	Conversion
1	96% - 100%	10	Excellent
2	86% - 95%	9	Very Good
3	76% - 85%	8	Good
4	66% - 75%	7	Fairly Good
5	56% - 65%	6	Satisfactory
6	46% - 55%	5	Quite Satisfactory
7	36% - 45%	4	Poor
8	26% - 35%	3	Very Poor
9	16% - 25%	2	Extremely Poor
10	0% - 15%	1	Fail

(Abdurahman and Ratna, 2003:265)

Fifth, a histogram of the students' *Kanji* writing mastery was made. Finally, the results of data analysis were discussed and conclusions were drawn.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The following table described the scores of the 5th semester students' *Kanji* writing mastery at Japanese Education Study Program of UNP.

Table III. Students' Scores

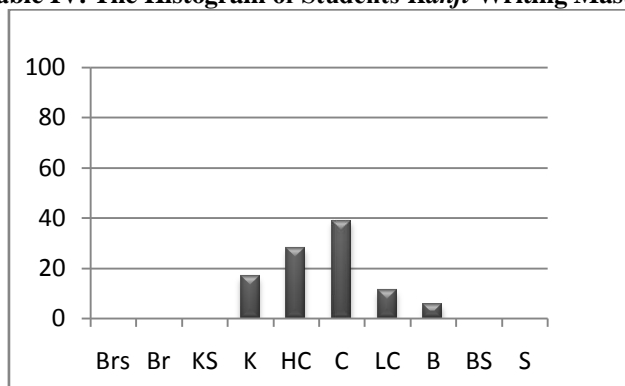
No.	Score (X)	Classification	Frequency(F)	FX
1.	85	Good	1	85
2.	75	Fairly Good	1	75
3.	74	Fairly Good	1	74
4.	65	Satisfactory	2	130
5.	64	Satisfactory	1	64
6.	63	Satisfactory	3	189
7.	59	Satisfactory	2	118
8.	55	Quite Satisfactory	2	110
9.	54	Quite Satisfactory	2	108
10.	53	Quite Satisfactory	1	53
11.	45	Poor	2	90
12.	44	Poor	1	44
Total			19	1140

The students' *Kanji* writing mastery was described as follows. First, there was only one student who got a "good" grade. Second, there were two of them who got the "fairly good" grade. Third, 8 of them were classified into the "satisfactory" classification. Fourth, 5 students got the "quite satisfactory" grade. Finally, 3 of them were categorized as "poor".

The students' meanscore was analyzed by using the formula of $M = \frac{\sum F_x}{N}$, in which $M = \frac{1140}{19} = 60.0$.

To sum up, from the mean score, it is found that the students' *Kanji* writing mastery was classified into the "satisfactory" classification.

Table IV. The Histogram of Students' *Kanji* Writing Mastery



Notes:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Brs : Fail | C : Satisfactory |
| Br : Extremely Poor | LC : Fairly Good |
| KS : Very Poor | B : Good |
| K : Poor | BS : Very Good |
| HC : Quite Satisfactory | S : Excellent |

From the histogram, it is analyzed that the students' *Kanji* mastery was divided into 5 classifications. First, the "good" classification was 5.56%. Second, the "fairly good" classification was 11.11%. Third, the "satisfactory" classification was 38.89%. Fourth, the "quite satisfactory" was 27.78%. Finally, the "poor" classification was 16.66%. The "satisfactory" classification was at the highest frequency with the percentage of 38.89% while the "good" classification was at the lowest frequency with the percentage of 5.56%.

Based on the results of the test and data analysis of the students' *Kanji* writing mastery, it is found that the mean score of the students' mastery was 63.33 which was in the "satisfactory" classification. Errors made by the students need to be observed carefully. Most of them made errors in determining the *Hitsujun*, *Bushu* and *Kakusu* based on the rules set in the *Touyou Kanji*. Since the errors are not complied with the *Hitsujun* and *Kakusu*, it will be difficult for the students to find out the use of *Kanji* in the *Kanji* dictionary. When the *Kanji* forms are correct and the *Hitsujun* and *Kakusu* of the *Kanji* writing are incorrect, then the *Kanji* characters that want to be written will not be found since they are not in accordance with the rules set on the *Touyou Kanji*.

Unfortunately, those errors were not only made by the 5th semester students of Japanese Education Study Program of UNP but also by other Japanese learners. It happens since there are many characters in *Kanji* and each of them has distinctive *Bushu*, *Hitsujun* and *Kakusu* which make it difficult for the Japanese learners to memorize them. Sudjianto (2009: 57) mentions that one problem faced by the Japanese learners in learning *Kanji* is the numbers of *Kanji* that have to be mastered. Thus, it is difficult for them to memorize the forms and their pronunciation.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Some conclusions can be drawn based on the research results. The students' *Kanji* writing mastery was in the "satisfactory" classification with the mean score of 63.33. The problems faced by them in the mastery of *Kanji* writing are related to the determination of *Bushu*, *Hitsujun* and *Kakusu* so that the writing of *Kanji* is not based on the rules set on the *Touyou Kanji*. The errors are caused by the large numbers of *Kanji* that have to be mastered. Each of the characters has different *Bushu*, *Hitsujun* and *Kakusu* so that it is difficult for the students to memorize them. Those difficulties do not only occur for learners who do not have a cultural background about *Kanji*. They also happen for those who have the cultural background about *Kanji* such as China, Korea, and Taiwan. Although they use the same characters and meanings, the way of pronouncing them is different. Therefore, pronunciation is one of the difficulties for the learners who have the background as well as those who do not have it.

Based on the conclusions, it is expected that there will be a good learning method that can help the students in improving their writing mastery especially the writing of *Bushu*, *Hitsujun* and *Kakusu*.

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