The role of Kanji in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test and ways to improve test results much better

Huynh Tan Hoi

FacultyofJapaneselanguage, FPT University, Vietnam

Abstract

Itis no exaggeration to say that the JapaneseLanguageProficiencyTest, or JLPT, is the mostpopularJapaneselanguagetestforJapaneselanguagelearners. Japanesecompaniesandschools in Japanoftenrecruitandrecruitstudentsbasedon the resultsofhis JLPT. Therefore, therearemanyJapaneselearnerswhotake the JLPT twice a year. Itisnecessary to knowChinesecharacters in order to passthistest. Thisisbecause Chinese charactersplay an indispensablerole in Japanese. Kanjiknowledgefordifferentlevelsandproblemsisalsodifferent. However, whenstudyingJapanese, itisoftenseenthatitisdifficult to rememberChinesecharacters, andmanylearnerstry to do theirbestbutareworried.

Keywords: Kanji, ability, Japanese, characters

1. Introduction

While knowledge of Chinese characters is basically considered to be useful for learning Chinese characters, in reality, the most used method is "practicing writing Chinese characters many times". A study conducted in 2018 showed that repeated writing was effective in memorizing vocabulary. That said, for his JLPT exam, which doesn't require writing Chinese characters, this practice method probably doesn't require much practice. Moreover, studies have shown that repeated writing is only effective for a short period of time [1]. Instead of the method of writing repeatedly, I would like to propose a more effective method for reviewing the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, in which the same vocabulary is accidentally encountered many times. Specifically, learners read many Japanese documents and encounter the same word many times, making it easier to remember the word. This method was evaluated as useful for vocabulary learning in a research treatise by Stuart Webb [2]. Not only that, the more sentences the learner can read, the less familiar and unknown the number of Chinese characters will be, which will improve reading speed. This method has an interval effect that assumes that the learner will remember the knowledge longer if he / she repeatedly learns the knowledge after a certain period of time without studying the words all at once [3].
There is also a scientific basis for (spacing effect) [2]. By reading multiple texts and reuniting with a word, the learner can not only remember the meaning of the word, but also understand and deepen how to use the word. Knowing how to use words can be very helpful when doing vocabulary problems.

Most Chinese characters in Japanese are traditional. On the other hand, there are cases where Japanese uses simplified Chinese and Chinese uses traditional Chinese, such as Chinese "country" and Japanese "country".

2. Methodology

First, study the history of Japanese Kanji and the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test, analyze the test questions of the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test to understand Chinese characters according to different levels and problems, and finally for Vietnamese Japanese learners. This research is conducted for the purpose of proposing countermeasures. Through this study, Japanese learners will be able to receive not only knowledge of Chinese characters but also methods to achieve good results in her JLPT, which will help her to pass the JLPT. Therefore, there is a high possibility that they will be recruited to Japanese companies or schools in Japan.

3. Previous research

In recent years, Vietnam has been constantly engaged in activities such as economic exchange and cultural exchange with Japan, so many people are interested in Japanese culture, want to work for Japanese companies, and want to study abroad in Japan, so they take the Japanese language proficiency test [4]. The number of people seems to be increasing year by year. However, it is considered that learning Japanese is not as easy as learning English. According to many studies, learning Chinese characters is the most difficult thing in learning Japanese [1]. Therefore, it can be said that Chinese characters are an essential part of studying Japanese and preparing for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. The following treatises have been studied in detail on the subject of difficulty in learning Chinese characters.

In order to solve three research problems, this paper analyzed Japanese textbooks and found that the order of Chinese characters affects the acquisition of Chinese characters. However, he failed to propose the best way to learn Chinese characters in what order [2].

Matsumoto (2013) said that Japanese learners who have a first language belonging to the alphabet are not good at face recognition of Chinese characters, so their grades are worse than those who have a first language belonging to logograms. I believe [3]. Most of the documents are Vietnamese and Han-Vietnamese is fast, and he seems to account for 60-70%. Previously, Vietnam used Chinese language derived from China and belonged to the Chinese character cultural sphere like Japan and Korea, but now it is a non-Kanji cultural sphere because it uses the script of the national language belonging to the Latin script [5]. There are Japanese language education institutions in Vietnam that use their knowledge of Han Yue to learn Japanese Chinese characters, but in order to understand the question of how advantageous these learning methods are, the following research is conducted.

As a result of research, it can be said that knowledge of Han-Vietnamese can be advantageous in recognizing the meaning of Kanji words. Although it is said that you can learn the meaning recognition of Kanji words by using your knowledge of Han-Vietnamese, it is basically only for intermediate learners and above, so it cannot be said that Vietnamese learners at the beginner level are advantageous [6]. Since this study was conducted based on the old Japanese Language Proficiency Test questioning criteria, which divide the levels according to grade, it has the disadvantage that it is not very suitable for the current Japanese Language Proficiency Test that has been changed.

4. Overview of Japanese Kanji

Countries influenced by Chinese culture in Asia are called Kanji cultural spheres, and the representative countries of the Kanji cultural sphere are Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. These countries have learned the philosophy, beliefs, religions, political structures, social systems, laws, rituals, literature, arts and architecture of Chinese origin. Among them, the Chinese character Kanji was also accepted by Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. However, contrary to her Nam, who switched to a script that belongs to Latin, Japan still uses Chinese characters [5].

Since Japanese originally has no characters, the Japanese used Chinese characters to describe the sounds of Japanese. Kanji is a character that originates from hieroglyphs created by observing the surroundings of Chinese people. It is believed that the Japanese first learned the Chinese characters through the "King of Na gold seal," that is, the King of Na gold seal, which was engraved on the gold seal given to the Asaga messenger by Emperor Guangwu in 1957 [6].

In 478, Emperor Yuryaku sent a letter written in Chinese characters to King Song, and it was found that Japan had already used Chinese characters in diplomatic relations with China since the 5th century[6]. Since Japan is an island country, Chinese culture and technology were brought to Japan through Koreans. As the ship manufacturing technology developed, the Japanese went to China by sea and became able to directly acquire the knowledge of the Chinese, and Buddhism and other Chinese cultures were increasingly introduced to Japan. On top of that, Prince Shotoku, a Buddhist patron, is in Chinese characters along with Buddhism [4].He brought the written Buddhist texts to Japan, built many monasteries, generalized Buddhism, and as writing Buddhist texts became more important, writing in Chinese was popular among aristocrats and Buddhist monks.

However, unlike Chinese, which is an isolated language, Japanese belongs to an agglutinative language, so it is very difficult to hear Japanese in Chinese characters. As already mentioned, Japanese voice appears in Chinese characters, and this writing style is called Man'yogana because it was used in the famous Japanese poetry collection called Manyoshu [7]. In Man'yogana, Chinese characters were selected and used because of their pronunciation similarity, rather than having a semantic relationship [8].

5. History and purpose of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test

The JLPT (Japanese-Language Proficiency Test) is a test for her to measure her Japanese proficiency for those who do not speak Japanese as her mother tongue. Since 1984, the old exam was co-sponsored by the Japan Foundation and the Japan International Education Association (currently the Japan International Education Support Association), and started as an annual exam (December). The Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students was abolished in 2001, and the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students was started in 2002. It was imposed with, but it was abolished. Since 2009, the number of exams has been increased from once a year to twice a year (July and December) [3].

According to the "Japanese Language Education Institution Survey" conducted by the Japan Foundation every three years, Japan overseas. The number of language learners increased from about 127,000 in 1979 to about 3.65 million in 2009 [7].

The number of test takers for the language proficiency test was about 7,000 in 1984, when the test began, but as the number of Japanese language learners continued to increase, it increased to about 770,000 in 2009. Along with this, the purpose of taking the Japanese Language Proficiency Test will be diversified not only for measuring ability but also for employment, salary increase / promotion, qualification certification, etc., and useful tests for such purposes are expected. Became [8].

Changed to 5 levels (representing "Nihongo" and "New"), and reorganized the exam subjects, exam time and passing score. As a general rule, the original purpose of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test is to measure and certify Japanese language proficiency for people who do not speak Japanese as their mother tongue. Since 2010, when the test was revised, the number of people has been around 600,000 per year, but in the latter half of the 2010s, it increased significantly again [6].

In 2017, with about 890,000 people a year, he broke the record for the first time in eight years, and in 2018, about about 890,000 a year.It recorded 1.01 million people, about 1.17 million people a year in 2019.There are several reasons for the revision of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. One is grade 3

Many people who passed the test said, "He can't pass the second grade or level 2." To handle this situation, he creates a new level, N3, between Level 2 of the old exam and Level 3 of him. Besides, the main reason is that the number of people learning Japanese has increased all over the world, and the purpose of taking the Japanese Language Proficiency Test has become more diverse.

The first point of the revision is that the test emphasizes verbal communication skills. In this new exam, I think it is important not only how much she knows about Japanese characters, vocabulary, and grammar, but also how much that knowledge can be used in actual communication [2].

It can be measured by the test subjects of "linguistic knowledge (characters, vocabulary, grammar)", "reading comprehension" and "listening comprehension". The new test is a combination of these tests that comprehensively measures Japanese communication skills. In addition, the level of the exam (old exam) up to 2009 was 4 grades (1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, 4th grade), but in the new exam, the level has increased to 5 grades (N1, N2, N3, N4, N5), and more.

6. The role of Chinese characters in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test

At the N1 level, the level of understanding of Japanese used in actual situations is measured, so it is the most difficult level and it is necessary to learn a lot of Chinese characters. The amount of kanji learned is about 2,000 and the maximum number of words is about 10,000. According to the survey, it takes about 900 hours to learn at this level, and the examinees need to have comprehensive Japanese proficiency [4].

Many of the Chinese characters that appear on the N1 level question paper are brushstrokes, and there are also specialized Chinese characters. Unless the examinee reads a large amount of reading material, he / she cannot know such Chinese characters. The difficult Chinese characters at the N1 level also include four-character idioms. Japanese Language Proficiency Test N1 Level In the second year of 2013, there is a four-character idiom "unnecessary and unurgent". If you separate each character in the phrase [3].

It's easy to understand, but there is also something called "horse ear eastern wind" that is difficult to understand when he combines the letters into one four-character idiom. However, the frequency of appearance of four-character idioms is not high.

Kanji is recognized by many as the most difficult barrier to overcome in learning Japanese, but little research has been done on learning Kanji in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. Currently, the number of applicants for the Japanese Language Proficiency Test is increasing, but it can be seen from the figure below that he mainly wants to take the N3, N2, and N1 levels [7].

7. Difficulty learning Chinese characters

As we approach this Chinese character, which is completely different from Latin, we face many difficulties and challenges in learning. Japanese is a new language and students have little to learn before entering high school or college, so it is not easy to add to adhering to basic handwriting when approaching the shape of hieroglyphs. To understand the rules, students need to be aware of the characteristics, stroke order, and typeface of Chinese characters. It's not enough to teach Chinese characters in the traditional way, explain the meaning of words, write them on a board, and write them in a notebook. In a school, life, or work environment, it can be difficult to learn and learn Chinese characters without regular contact. Japanese learners need to remember a large number of Chinese characters and words composed of those Chinese characters [1].

The next problem we face is how to read on-yomi and kun-yomi. Why do Japanese Kanji have so many readings? As mentioned in Chapter 1, Japanese has words but no characters, so I borrowed it as a Chinese character and used it. After borrowing Chinese characters from China, the Japanese read them in Japanese while looking at them, and became kun'yomi. On-yomi is a reading derived from the reading in Chinese by the Japanese. The Japanese imported Chinese characters many times throughout history, not in bulk, and imported Chinese characters from various parts of China [4]. The fact that some Chinese characters have different readings depending on the time or region led to the fact that one Chinese character has multiple on-yomi readings. The Japanese imported Chinese characters many times throughout history, not in bulk, and imported Chinese characters from various parts of China. The fact that some Chinese characters have different readings depending on the time or region led to the fact that one Chinese character has multiple on-yomi readings. In addition, many different meanings of Chinese characters have their own readings. Therefore, Japanese Kanji generally has two readings, on-yomi and kun-yomi [6].

There are many Chinese characters that have one or more on-yomi or kun-yomi readings. Learners seem confused because they read so much that they don't know exactly when to use on-yomi or kun-yomi. Especially for Vietnamese, it is easy to remember on-yomi because of its similarity to Han-Vietnamese, but it is difficult to remember kun-yomi [2].

8. Some implications

Learning a foreign language is by no means easy, as each language has its own characteristics and is difficult for learners. For Japanese learners, Kanji is the first and greatest obstacle. Kanji was borrowed from China by the Japanese and used long ago. The Japanese not only used Chinese characters for recording history, writing Buddhist texts, writing poetry, etc., but also modified the Chinese characters to create hiragana and katakana. Kanji goes beyond its role as a character and occupies an important position in Japanese culture and history. Despite playing such an important role, many Japanese have expressed their desire to reduce or eliminate Chinese characters. Not to mention foreigners, Japanese characters are difficult to remember and take time and effort. However, it is impossible to remove Kanji from the Japanese writing system because he also plays a huge role, but only to make a list of the most commonly used Kanji called "Jōyō Kanji Table". can. The "Common Kanji Table" contains 2136 characters. For foreign learners of Japanese, more than 2,000 characters seem to be too many, but this list of kanji is for understanding laws, official document knowledge, newspapers, magazines, broadcasts, etc. written in Japanese. A list that has been adjusted many times to get the minimum number of characters needed [3].

In order to convey important information such as disasters to foreigners who are not familiar with Japanese, Japanese people

I came up with "easy Japanese". "Easy Japanese" is composed of simple grammar, writing short sentences, and very few Chinese characters, but even if there are Chinese characters, only the most common Chinese characters are used, or furigana. Is to add [2]. In addition, NHK has some sites that post "easy Japanese" news. Therefore, it seems that many people think that learning "easy Japanese" is enough. However, those who want to blend in with life in Japan, who want to enjoy Japanese culture, especially those who want to measure and certify their Japanese proficiency through her JLPT, understand that it is better to learn Japanese properly. Among them, learning Chinese characters is indispensable. At N4 level or his N5 level, the Chinese characters that appear on the question paper are easy and can be given furigana, but after N3 level, the Chinese characters that are given on the exam become more difficult, the number of Chinese characters increases, and the knowledge of Chinese characters is mastered. The higher the level, the more difficult, specialized, or kanji idioms that consist of two or more kanji appear, and most kanji do not have furigana [5].

There are main problems in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test including vocabulary / grammar, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension.Knowledge is useful for doing two problems: vocabulary / grammar and reading comprehension. For vocabulary and grammar questions, how to read Chinese characters [4].

The Chinese characters in the grammar also help the test taker more easily determine the meaning and usage of the grammar. For reading comprehension problems, it is sufficient to know only the meaning of Chinese characters without knowing how to read them, but having many Chinese characters has both advantages and disadvantages for the examinee. Without knowing many Chinese characters, candidates may be very blunted in reading comprehension questions and may not be able to understand the main ideas of the text. Also, if you continue to read many Chinese characters, the test taker may feel very difficult and lose concentration, which may affect your reading comprehension and the pace at which you will have problems later [6].

On the other hand, candidates who know a lot of Chinese characters have a big advantage. Japanese learners at basic levels are unfamiliar with Chinese characters, so seeing a lot of Chinese characters can easily disappoint you. However, once you get used to Chinese characters, sentences with few Chinese characters are difficult to read after all. There are many homonyms in Japanese, and since "ha", "ga", "ni", etc. are confused as to whether they are words or particles, it is difficult to distinguish them if there are few Chinese characters, and it takes time to read. People who know a lot of Chinese characters can understand the meaning just by looking at the Chinese characters and can read comprehension smoothly. However, in the listening comprehension problem, the examinee cannot see the Chinese characters, and if he is not accustomed to the speaking speed of the Japanese, it is easy to make a mistake. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to long vowels and homonyms when doing listening comprehension problems.

It seems that even Japanese people find it difficult to learn Chinese characters, so it is natural for foreigners to find it difficult to learn Chinese characters [1]. As a result of the questionnaire survey, it is found that the biggest obstacle to learning Chinese characters for Vietnamese learners of Japanese is the large number of Chinese characters. The majority of survey participants aim to pass her N3, N2, and N1 levels in her JLPT, where the number of Chinese characters and the difficulty increase. In order to get good results in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, he pointed out the shortcomings of two popular Chinese character learning methods and proposed three alternative methods. Commonly used Chinese character learning methods are a method of learning Chinese characters with Hanetsu sound and a method of practicing writing Chinese characters repeatedly. The method of learning Chinese characters with Han Yue sound utilizes a certain knowledge of Han Yue language in Vietnamese, and is very effective when doing reading comprehension problems. However, this method can be counterproductive for questions about kun'yomi in vocabulary and grammar problems, as it only helps learners learn the meaning and on-yomi of Chinese characters. And the technique of repeatedly writing Chinese characters helps the learner to memorize the shape of the Chinese characters, but only for a short time [7].

Instead of the two methods above, he proposes three methods. The first method is to read multiple Japanese sentences so that you can encounter the same Chinese characters many times. Compared to learners learning Chinese characters all at once, the spacing effect of this method is more effective in memorizing vocabulary for a long time [4].

9. Conclusion

The method for memorizing the shape of Chinese characters is to compare Japanese and Chinese characters. The current Chinese and Japanese characters are different, but both are basically Chinese characters and have similarities. Once you have learned Japanese Kanji, you can recall the learned Kanji by looking at the corresponding Chinese Kanji. This is a method for learners to compare Japanese and Chinese characters, but as soon as they learn Japanese characters, they do not compare them with Chinese characters. In order to take advantage of the spacing effect, it is better to compare it with Chinese characters after a certain amount of time after learning Japanese characters. The method for memorizing the shape of Chinese characters is to compare Japanese and Chinese characters. The current Chinese and Japanese characters are different, but both are basically Chinese characters and have similarities. Once you have learned Japanese Kanji, you can recall the learned Kanji by looking at the corresponding Chinese Kanji. This is a method for learners to compare Japanese and Chinese characters, but as soon as they learn Japanese characters, they do not compare them with Chinese characters. In order to take advantage of the spacing effect, it is better to compare it with Chinese characters after a certain amount of time after learning Japanese characters. Then, in order to learn how to read Chinese characters, we propose a very simple method of inputting Chinese characters on a computer, personal computer or smartphone. Learners must learn how to read before the computer recommends the Chinese characters they want to enter. However, even if you make a mistake, the kanji you want to enter may be displayed, so be careful. Also, no matter how scientific or simple the learning method is, the learner must be patient. Patience can be said to be the most important factor in determining whether a method works. Also, no matter how scientific or simple the learning method is, the learner must be patient. Patience can be said to be a decisive factor in whether a method works.

References

[1].   Otsuka, S., &Murai, T. (2020). The multidimensionalityofJapanesekanjiabilities. *ScientificReports*, *10*(1), 1-9.
[2].   Van   Aacken,   S.   (1999).   Whatmotivates   L2   learners   in   acquisitionofKanjiusing   CALL: A casestudy. *Computerassistedlanguagelearning*, *12*(2), 113-136.
[3].   Mori, Y., Sato, K., &Shimizu, H. (2007). Japaneselanguagestudents' perceptionsonkanjilearningandtheirrelationship to novelkanjiwordlearningability. *LanguageLearning*, *57*(1), 57-85.
[4].   Inoue, T., Georgiou, G. K., &Parrila, R. (2022). Cross-scripteffectsofcognitive-linguisticskillsonJapaneseHiraganaandKanji: Evidencefrom a longitudinalstudy. *JournalofCulturalCognitiveScience*, 1-16.
[5].   Tanaka, M. (2013). Examiningkanjilearningmotivationusingself-determinationtheory. *System*, *41*(3), 804-816.
[6].   Mori, Y. (2003). The rolesofcontextandwordmorphology in learningnewkanjiwords. *The ModernLanguageJournal*, *87*(3), 404-420.
[7].   Kondo–Brown, K. (2005). Differences in languageskills: Heritagelanguagelearnersubgroupsandforeignlanguagelearners. *The ModernLanguageJournal*, *89*(4), 563-581.
[8].   Tamaoka,   K.,   &Kiyama,   S.   (2013).   The effectsofvisualcomplexityforJapanesekanjiprocessingwithhighandlowfrequencies. *ReadingandWriting*, *26*(2), 205-223.