An error analysis in the usage of Japanese Kanji characters

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Kanji are ideographs meaning that the whole character conveys a meaning rather than just a sound as in the case of Hiragana and katakana. Kanji were originally drawn as pictures from nature but gradually transformed to more generalized representations. There are 75,963 kanji currently encoded in Unicode available today. However, the Japanese government's list of recommended characters consists of 2136 characters which are commonly used in Japan. Kanji characters have become the main obstacle for Japanese learning students in Sri Lanka, because of there is a large number of Kanji characters to remember and the period of time is mostly too short to remember those characters, (for an example students have to remember around 2000 Kanji characters within the second and the third year students of Japanese language education) when compared with Japanese native students. Most of the students obtain better marks for Kanji character tests but their writing and reading ability of Kanji is very poor. Especially they make many errors when they write Kanji characters. So this study focuses on identifying errors in usage of Kanji characters. The data was collected by conducting an essay test guiding to use Kanji characters as much as possible for the second year students reading for Japanese language special degree at the University of Kelaniya. The findings highlight the fact that, Kanji characters which has few stroke numbers and which are based on pictures are in frequent usage, complicated Kanji characters which have a number of stocks are in less usage. Other than that missing some strokes of the character, Kanji characters which have lots of strokes become larger than other letters and some parts of Kanji characters are mixed up with similar shapes of other characters can often be seen as frequent errors made by Sri Lankan students.

Keywords: Kanji characters, Stroke order, Japanese, Error analysis