

An Analysis on Mnemonic Methods of Japanese Kanji Characters

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Kanji are ideographs which mean that the whole character conveys a meaning rather than just a sound as in the case of Hiragana and Katakana. Most of the Kanji characters 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. Kanji characters have become one of the main obstacles for students who learn Japanese in Sri Lanka, because there are 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 2, 3 years of their Japanese language education) when compared with Japanese native students. Most of the students receive much better marks for Kanji character tests but their writing and reading skills are very poor. They especially make many errors when they write Kanji characters. So this study focuses on identifying mnemonic methods of Japanese Kanji characters. The data was collected by conducting a questionnaire survey for 2nd year students reading for a Japanese Language Special Degree at the University of Kelaniya. The findings highlight the fact that most of the students tend to memorize full Kanji characters by the radicals of each Kanji character. For example, the 「氵」 sign usually comes with Kanji characters which indicate liquids. Also students use the Chinese reading method to memorize Kanji characters in their syllabus.

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