

THE ROLE OF THE ELEMENT-BASED APPROACH IN TEACHING JAPANESE WRITING

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ABSTRACT

The study of Japanese writing is mainly based on textbooks prepared on the basis of Japanese programs. The “frequency-based approach” causes difficulties in learning Japanese kanji writing in the process of direct and indirect transfer of topics taught in Japanese primary classes to students of higher education institutions of our country from Monbusho textbooks. It is this aspect that determines the relevance of this section. In this article, we aim to highlight the results of our experience with the “element-based approach” in groups, discussing some of the advantages of the “element-based approach” over the “frequency-based approach”.

Key words: *Monbusho, the order of kanji, Yookoso’s book, “frequency-based approach”, “important” kanji, “form of change”, mnemonic tools.*

INTRODUCTION

Consider whether the order in which kanji appear in textbooks is (a) chosen by society or (b) by its perceived fundamental importance in a particular textbook chapter. In this process, in the first case, kanji is entered in the table of reflection in education classes (教育漢字の学年別漢字配当表) (Monbusho) by the Ministry of Education. In general, Monbusho deals with placement according to the age of the student based on the importance of the kanji. Based on this, first graders are taught the meanings of 76 kanji that children can understand. for example: “flower” (花), “sky” (空), “school” (校), “left” (左), “ng” (正), “village” (村) and “city” (町) . We believe that Monbusho's predominance of kanji has a major influence on the way textbooks choose the order of kanji presentation. Therefore, students are taught kanji based on a system adapted for Japanese children.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Analyzing how the Monbusho list affects the presentation of kanji in textbooks and the class in Yookoso's book where students are taught kanji, "yen", "white", "blue", "red" and "flower" are in the first grade; "same", "far", "market", "place", "electric", "sell", "buy", "cut", "pull", "store", "color", "black" and "yellow" in the second grade; "main", "wear", "cheap", "staff", "clothing" and "return" are taught in the third grade.

Based on our analysis above, we can conclude that textbooks usually follow the example of Monbusho and do not dare to teach kanji that are not usually considered "important" at elementary levels.

I think this is fine for Japanese children, but not necessarily for our students. Unfortunately, the "frequency-based approach" is so common that very simple kanji that could serve as the basis for "important" kanji are often overlooked under the frequency-based approach.

The "element-based approach" emphasizes learning the building blocks of kanji. In this approach, all parts of the kanji are identified and made meaningful. As students become very familiar with the components of kanji, they will be able to create mnemonic tools to remember the kanji in its entirety. Heisig's "Remembering the Kanji" and Andreas Fuster and Naoko Tamura's "Kanji ABC" published by Tootle are books that reflect the "element-based approach".

As a result of our analysis, looking at three of the 76 kanji in the first grade of Monbusho shows a sharp difference between the "frequency-based approach" and the "element-based approach".

"Flower" (花) is taught in first grade under Monbusho, but its component "form of change" (化) is not taught until third grade.

It is taught "before" based on the "element-based approach". "Heaven" (空) is taught in the first grade, but its component "construction" (工) is taught in the second grade.

However, this order will never fall under the "elements-based approach". Similarly, "school" (校) is taught in the first grade, "sharing" (交) and "father"

(父) in the second grade. Similarly, under Monbusho, "pulling" (引) is taught in the second grade, but "bowing" (弓) in the sixth grade. As noted above, teaching (引) after (弓) is never allowed in the "element-based approach".

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First step: Know the curriculum. A teacher using the "element-based approach" must be familiar with all kanji from the first level to the last level of the curriculum. Most high school programs require students to read and write 300 to 500 kanji by the time they graduate from their fourth year, while college programs require 1,000 to 2,000.

For example, "bow" (弓) is not included in the school curriculum, but "stretching" (引) is, based on the interdependence of the words bow and stretching, in our opinion, the word "bow" (弓) should also be included in the program. However, if a kanji like "to ask" (乞) never appears in the curriculum, then is it necessary to have a "level two" lesson? The answer is that there is no need to teach the "second level", because it does not appear anywhere in the curriculum.

Second step: Discussion of open elements. The teacher can give students an understanding of the meanings of each open element as a class. This process may involve several classes. Therefore, if time is limited, the teacher should limit the class discussion of open elements.

Step Three: Teach Basic Kanji. Among the hieroglyphs, about 50 (such as "mouth" (口), "big" (大), "river" (川) and "full" (了) can participate in 2000 kanji, but the number of kanji decreases as the number of kanji in the program decreases. For this reason, the meaning of these 50 or more kanji should be introduced to students after the open elements and tested frequently so that the basic kanji is maintained.

Step Four: Mnemonic Story. Now that all forms of kanji have been taught (in the curriculum), students are ready to begin memorizing (reading and writing) the meanings of more complex kanji. Because each component of a kanji is identified, students will have no difficulty using the components to create a mental image that evokes the meaning of the kanji. Students can use their imaginations to build a whole network of stories in their minds.

As a result of our analysis, we found that this method was developed by Heysing, systematizer of mnemonic stories, and covered in detail in the above-mentioned book.

The great thing about Heysing's book in general is that he taught students to remember the components of kanji once they know them. Fuster and Tamura's book is flawed in this regard because their book only presents the components. Also,

although it introduced kanji in order based on its components, it did not teach students to remember kanji using components.

At this point, we consider it appropriate to dwell on the advantages of the element-based approach. In contrast to the “frequency-based approach”, the biggest advantage of using the “element-based approach” is that students can avoid the overwhelming feeling of being faced with many unfamiliar structures at the same time. We will try to highlight the advantages of the “element-based approach” through the following quotations.

The sequence in which the kanji is entered is very important. When graphically simple kanji are introduced first, they can be used as building blocks for more complex kanji. This cannot be introduced in a sequence based on the importance of kanji.

In our opinion, this factor is the most important in learning kanji, and the method appears as simplicity itself. Once a few more basic characters are learned, they can be used as primitives for other kanji.

Etymologically based schemas are a powerful memory tool. An abstract fighting combination suddenly becomes a combination of terms familiar to the student. An emotion can appear for each kanji. This method is similar to the natural process of remembering: new information comes to the surface in connection with existing impressions and feelings.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can say that adopting an “element-based approach” to learning kanji requires the teacher not only to change the way in which kanji is introduced to students, but also to revise many assumptions about kanji.

First, Monbusho’s kanji teaching strategy is not the most effective way to teach Uzbek students.

Second, the time spent on opening the elements and teaching the obscure kanji takes more time than teaching the “important” kanji in the beginning, but it gives a quick and efficient result.

In our opinion, using the “item-based approach” allows students to learn and retain more kanji than the “frequency-based approach”. Because it is very important to learn kanji from basic to advanced. Also, when trying to use the “element-based approach” in a two-group setting, our experience shows that students can easily learn the components, namely pure kanji and open elements. Memorizing more complex kanji with mnemonic stories is more difficult and takes more time. However, I have not seen this method fully incorporated into the curriculum of Japanese groups in these six years, and we can conclude that such a strategy has never been tried.

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