

Basic Kanji Learning Strategy of Japanese Language Education Program Faculty of Language and Arts Faculty of Manado State University

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Abstract: *Kanji serves as 'the most important element' in Japanese vocabulary. It can be synthesized from various opinions that all learners of Japanese language must master Kanji to communicate with the Japanese, particularly in the written. The number of Kanji non-native speakers who study Japanese language need to master depends on time allocation and their level. Kanji teaching is commonly considered as difficult because most Japanese learners use language which contains no Kanji "hikanjikei" 悲観字形. They find it difficult to memorize almost identical kanji characters with diverse types of scribbles. Besides, students must study thousands of kanji characters. Takebe (1998:2) explains that most students who study Japanese language as the foreign language admit that the most difficult aspects in learning Japanese language are auxiliaries, polite language, and kanji. Strategies in teaching learning process play as the crucial part in classroom activities because those help teachers to create learning atmosphere suitable for achieving teaching goals. In addition, strategies in teaching learning process which teachers have chosen and used encourage students' active participation during learning activities in the classroom. Strategy can be defined as one's internal ability to think, solve problems, and make decision. It means that learning process encourages learners to foster their unique ways to analyze and solve problems which might arise in decision making process. It enables students to solve problems during learning process in the classroom such as memorizing thousand complex kanji characters, and speaking in polite language of saonkeigo and kenjogo in Japanese language. These two problems are the examples of problems encountered by students who learn Japanese language. To solve the problems, students must find the most suitable and effective strategy for them. Learning strategy is personal, so every individual must find different strategies than others. Finding these strategies is the invisible mental process. Learning strategies can be identified from the students' behaviour manifestation. Therefore, a learning model which introduces the strategies of Japanese letters, especially kanji, is necessary for the beginner. This paper aims at proposing a learning model which is integrated with the courses of Goi Moji. The learning model introduces learning strategies in learning kanji which is appropriate with the students' needs and characteristics. The goal is to make the students know kanji learning strategies based on Strategy Inventory for Learning Kanji. In the end, the students will be able to decide and use the appropriate kanji learning strategy for them.*

Index Terms: *Keywords: Kanji, Learning, Strategy.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Kanji teaching is commonly considered as difficult because most Japanese learners use language which contains no Kanji "hikanjikei" 悲観字形. They find it difficult to memorize almost identical kanji characters with diverse types of scribbles. Besides, students must study thousands of kanji [4]. Takebe (1998:2) explains that most students who study Japanese language as the foreign language admit that the most difficult aspects in learning Japanese language are auxiliaries, polite language, and kanji. Teacher must acquire 3 competences. Cognitive and behaviour competences refer to performance competence. It means that a teacher must be able to master various skills such as teaching, giving assessment, using teaching aids/media, being able to get along or communicate with students, having good teaching preparation and others'.

An interesting teaching method prevents students from boredom in studying; thus, a teacher must be good at choosing the right teaching strategy. Learning strategy is crucial in teaching and learning activities which enable the teachers to create conducive learning environment to achieve learning objectives. In addition, learning strategies which teachers carefully choose and use can encourage learners to engage in learning activities in the classroom. Gagne in Iskandarwassid and Sunendar: 3) [5] states that strategy can be defined as one's internal ability to think, solve problems, and make decision. It means that learning process encourages learners to foster their unique ways to analyze and solve problems which might arise in decision making process. It enables students to solve problems during learning process in the classroom such as memorizing thousand complex kanji characters. In general, the word "strategy" implies a 'careful plan for activities to achieve specific goals (KBBI 1988). Related to language teaching and learning, the terms "strategy" and "technique" are often used interchangeably. To understand the meaning of "strategy" or "technique", one should relate them with the terms "approach" and "method". According to Edward in Tarigan (1993). those four concepts have been hierarchically arranged, which implies that techniques used to implement methods will be consistent with approach.

Edward (in Tarigan, 1993) further explains that an approach can be defined as a set of correlative assumption which underlines the nature of teaching and language learning. An approach is axiomatic and gives guidelines for the subjects taught in the classroom. Method, on the other hand, refers to an overall plan for the presentation of language teaching in an orderly and appropriate way; therefore, there will be no conflicting parts since these plans are carefully arranged based on the approach used. An approach is axiomatic while method is procedural; thus, one approach possible requires many methods.

Techniques used in the classroom are implementational elements which have actual function. A technique is a deceitful trick or effort which can be use to refine or achieve a direct goal. Techniques used in the classroom must be consistent with the method and also approach. Strategies in teaching learning process play as the crucial part in classroom activities because those help teachers to create learning atmosphere suitable for achieving teaching goals. In addition, strategies in teaching learning process which teachers have chosen and used encourage students' active participation during learning activities in the classroom. Gagne in Iskandarwassid and Sunendar (2008 : 3)[4] explains that strategy can be defined as one's internal ability to think, solve problems, and make decision. It means that learning process encourages learners to foster their unique ways to analyze and solve problems which might arise in decision making process. It enables students to solve problems during learning process in the classroom such as memorizing thousand complex kanji characters, and speaking in polite language of saonkeigo and kenjogo in Japanese language. These two problems are the examples of problems encountered by students who learn Japanese language. To solve the problems, students must find the most suitable and effective strategy for them. Learning strategy is personal, so every individual must find different strategies than others. Finding these strategies is the invisible mental process. Learning strategies can be identified from the students' behaviour manifestation.

Selection of teaching and learning strategies should be based on the consideration which places learners as learning subjects as the active subjects instead of passive students who simply accept what the teachers have explained. Teachers should treat learners as people who naturally have experience, knowledge, desires, and thoughts useful for learning process either individually or in groups. The strategy chosen by the teacher is a strategy that foster learners' confidence to learn. Teaching and learning strategies should provide advantage to explore the widest potential of learners. This strategy also provides a higher level of significance because learners have more understanding and enjoyment during the learning process. Significance level and enjoyment are the major elements in good learning, so teachers can promote a cooperative and interactive learning system between learners and teachers to accommodate the diversity of student learning modalities both audio, visual and kinesthetic. Further, the more effective and efficient presentation of learning material increases students' interest in learning especially learning kanji which is considered difficult.

One of the difficulties for learners from non-kanji

countries (non-kanji learners) such as Indonesia is how to learn kanji. The research of Ulambayar (2005)in Ariyanti 2013, highlights the difficulties of non-kanji learners when studying kanji. Ulambayar conducted a research on students of Mongolian University[11,18] of Science and Tehcnology who Japanese learners. These students speak Mongolian language as their mother tongue. From the findings of Ulambayar research (2005), the main difficulties of non-kanji learners are as follows: First, how to read kanji; second, the number of scribbles; third, how to write kanji (the sequence in writing kanji); fourth, how to recognize kanji with similar shapes; fifth, the students forget because they rarely use them; six, the difficulties in memorizing kanji; and how to memorize kanji due to the number of kanji, and so on. Indonesian people who learn Japanese language also face similar difficulties, particularly those who live in Indonesia such as students of the Japanese Language Education Program Faculty of Languages and Arts, State Manado

. One of the factors leading to difficulties in learning kanji is the choice of learning strategy. To enable teachers to train effective use of strategies, it is necessary to conduct a research focusing on the strategies used by Japanese language learners, both successful and unsuccessful strategies which kanji learners use. According to Oxford ([8]learning strategy is: concrete actions undertaken by learners to make learning easier, faster, more fun, more independent, more effective, and more quickly suitable to the new conditions. [9],10) (1990)[6][16,17,] argues that to develop communication competencies, learners use various language learning strategies which can be divided into two major groups, those direct strategies and indirect strategies. Direct strategies consist of: memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies consist of: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies. The six strategy groups are re-classified into 62 points of language learning strategy called Strategies Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Barbara Bourke [2](2006) adapted these 62 details of the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning to clarify the details of the kanji learning strategy. In other words, Strategy Inventory for Learning Kanji (SILK) is used to find effective strategies for non-kanji Japanese learners to master kanji.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Nature of Kanji Mastery

The root word of mastery is master which means able or comprehend and learn repetitively to understand.

Kanji mastery is completely important of Japanese learners because kanji is the core of Japanese language intellectualism. According to Takebe[12] Yoshiaki (1995: 13-108), the level of kanji mastery is as follows:

漢字は、左脳で覚えるよ



うな文字ではない。漢字は右脳で覚えるべき図形である。それも、意味を持った図形だから覚得やすく、単位の組み合わせだから構造が分かりやすい。ただし、それぞれの単位には筆順があり、単位の組み合わせにも筆順がある。漢字は無限に存在するけれども、それを構成する単位の数はられて入る。リタがって、漢字の学習というのは、それぞれの単位の意味と筆準とを覚えることである。以上が、この本の漢字教育野根幹である。そこで、まず、次のことを強調しておく

1. 漢字は、(ローマ字のような)文字ではないということ。
2. 漢字は、意味を表す図形だということ。
3. 漢字は、基礎となる少数の単位から成り立つということ。
4. 漢字は、目で覚えるのではなく、手で覚えるということ。
5. 漢字の読み方は語ことに決まっているということ。

From the above quotation, it can be concluded that the kanji mastery is the ability to know and remember the kanji characters based on their origin and can write correctly the sequence of each kanji. Kanji mastery also covers the ability to read kanji in kunyomi and onyomi ways and can apply the form of kanji / jukugo combination in a sentence.

B. STRATEGI OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

According to Oxford & Erman in Brown [2] the strategy of learning second language is "the specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students use to improve their own learning". Students use strategies to improve their learning and as a "combat skill" adapted to the context. These strategies may vary from time to time, from one circumstance to another, or even from one culture to another. Strategies may vary depending on an individual condition.

Teachers are expected to play roles as a role model, a parent, instructor, lead person, judge, leader, evaluator, controller, or even as a physician who is obliged to heal the learner with all the problems he faces. According to Oxford (1990: 10), the teacher has a role as a facilitator who helps learners study, advisor, coordinator, someone who has ideas, someone who identifies problems with learners, and as a communicator. Thus, a teacher is a profession which demands creativity and innovation to make learners understand the learning essence. When teachers make the language class effective for learning, it becomes clear that "teaching learners how to learn" is a crucial element. Wenden (1985) was the first person who stated that learning strategy is the key to autonomy learning, and one of the important goals of language teaching is to encourage such autonomy. Learning strategies are divided into direct learning strategies and indirect learning strategies.

C. Strategy Inventory For Learning Kanji (Silk)

[3] Barbara Bourke, a lecturer at the Queensland University in adapted 62 details of language learning strategies to develop a kanji learning strategy or Kanji Inventory for Learning Strategy (SILK). SILK is designed with the purpose of gathering information on the strategy

used by the Japanese language learners in learning kanji. The standardized identification on ways of learning kanji in [13] SILK is divided into 15 points: a. Association, b. Stories, c. Bushu (Radicals), d. Frequency, e. Experience, f. Visualisation, g. Self-monitoring, h. Compensation, i. Sequence, j. Physical/Emotional Response, k. Sound, l. Stroke Order, m. Planning Your Learning, n. Evaluating Your Learning, and o. Cooperating With Others. The following is the description of the strategy in learning kanji according to Bourke.

GROUP 1: Strategies for learning kanji These are "tools" that you can use to understand the way kanji are made up and to try to remember them in a way that they can be more easily remembered at a later date.

A. ASSOCIATION; Association in this sense is the learner's effort to learn kanji by associating the previous kanji they have learned, such as katakana, the alphabets or other symbols. They can also associate it with kanji from the same group with the same meaning or kanji with the opposite meaning, or kanji with the same ways of reading but has different meaning, or it can be similar kanji but different meaning. All of those strategies are related with connecting or associating new knowledge and the previous knowledge which can lead to effective learning.

A1 I create associations between the new kanji and other kanji I already know

A2 I create associations between the new kanji and katakana

A3 I create associations between the new kanji and other known symbols

A4 I create associations between new kanji and letters of the alphabet

A5 I associate kanji with other kanji from the same meaning group

A6 I associate kanji with kanji that mean the opposite

A7 I associate kanji with other kanji that look different but have the same reading

A8 I associate kanji with other kanji that look the same but have a different reading

A9 I compare and contrast kanji that look similar so as not to confuse them

B. STORIES; It is a strategy to develop a certain story about kanji. The story can be about the elements of kanji character, the meaning from the bushu (radical) in kanji, or other factors which can give meaning to the learned kanji to the learner.

B1 I make up my own stories according to what the kanji looks like to me

B2 I make up my own stories according to the component elements of the kanji

B3 I use stories told to me by my teacher

B4 I use stories I find in reference books on how to remember kanji

C. RADICALS; It is one of the ways to classify kanji based

on several elements which can be found in kanji. By using bushu as a strategy, it means that knowing the meaning from bushu and connect the meaning with meaning from kanji as a whole. d) Frequency It is a memorizing kanji strategy by writing kanji over and over again or memorize it by using it intensively.

C1 I group the kanji with other kanji containing the same radical

C2 I remember the radical first and it helps me remember the kanji

C3 I associate the kanji with the meaning of the radical

D. FREQUENCY; Frequency It is a memorizing kanji strategy by writing kanji over and over again or memorize it by using it intensively

D1 I remember kanji by writing them out numerous times until I know them

D2 I remember the kanji which I use often

E. EXPERIENCE; Experience It is a strategy which connects the meaning of the kanji with a personal experience which can make the learner remembers the experience and then connect it with the kanji

E1 I associate kanji with some personal experience the kanji reminds me of

E2 I learn a kanji if I think I'm going to need it in the future

F. VISUALISATION

The learner can visualize the kanji in his/her mind before writing it down on a piece of paper or when the learner can precisely remembers on what page where the kanji is written and the form on that page. It is almost like a photographic memory

F1 I visualise the kanji in my head and transfer the image to paper.

F2 I remember what it looked like on the page where I learned it from.

G. SELF MONITORING; Self-monitoring refers to a general self-evaluation test, a conscious reflection on the mistakes with the attention not to make the same mistakes again and the use of tools or materials which can help to remember the difficult or confusing kanji

G1 I test myself and relearn the kanji I didn't know

G2 I write the kani I have trouble with in a separate book for easy reference

G3 I practise more thoroughly kanji that are easily confused

H. COMPENSATION; Compensation It is a strategy of using other means when our knowledge is insufficient. For example, by asking other learners, teacher, dictionary, or a text book. Compensation can be categorized as a positive strategy because in the end the learner can absorb the knowledge which he/she has not acquired yet, especially if the leaner can make the list of the knowledge.

H1 If I don't know a kanji, I look it up in a dictionary

H2 If I'm not exactly sure of a kanji, I ask someone who knows

I. SEQUENCE; Sequence This strategy is related with remembering kanji in the context of a word or a sentence. For a certain learner, this strategy might not work directly if the kanji stands alone, but if it is in the form a word or a sentence the memory can be recalled.

I1 I associate the kanji with other kanji in the sequence it's often used in.

I2 I place the new kanji in a sentence and remember it in that context.

J. PHYSICAL/EMOTIONAL RESPONSE; Sometimes learner can remember kanji through ways which is very personal, such as a learner remembers kanji 弟('otouto', little brother) easily because he/she just has got a little brother. It can also because the kanji is very difficult to be written or other reasons.

J1 I remember the kanji by the way it feels to write it.

J2 I remember some kanji because I don't like them for some reason

J3 I remember some kanji because they are especially difficult

J4 I remember some kanji because I like them for some reason

K. SOUND; Sound Remembering kanji through how the kanji is pronounce in Bahasa Indonesia (the learner's native language), or through on or kun reading ways can become the trigger the memory to recall the kanji.

K1 I associate the Japanese sound with the meaning of an English word

K2 I associate the English sound with the meaning of the kanji

K3 I associate the Japanese sound with a letter of the alphabet

K4 I give names to the strokes or elements and use chants to remember kanji

L. STROKE ORDER; Stroke Order By knowing which stroke that has to be written first will help the learner remembers the order of writing the next kanji. The stroke order is related with a certain rhyme, pattern, and context which kanji is formed. By writing kanji carefully and repeatedly with the correct order can be used as a strategy to remember on how to write kanji.

L1 I remember kanji because I have committed the stroke order to memory

L2 If I remember the first stroke, the rest comes naturally

L3 I use rhythm to remember stroke order

GROUPII: Strategies for managing learning. These strategies are for planning and coordinating the overall kanji learning process.

M. PLANNING YOUR LEARNING; Learning will not be successful if the learner does not allocate special time in learning the subject. Planning learning is related with setting a specific amount time every week to learn kanji and decide on the appropriate and effective method in doing the task. The learner needs to choose the appropriate method that suits their learning style and make use of the time effectively.

M1 I have a set time each day/week which I spend learning kanji

M2 I use flashcards to repeatedly practise kanji

M3 I use a computer program to practise kanji

M4 I use kanji as often as I



can (e.g. in class notes, homework assignments etc.)

M5 I use a highlighter to organise the information in my kanji learning book

M6 I try to find better ways of learning kanji from books or by talking to others.

M7 I buy kanji learning resources additional to those required in my course.

M8 I borrow kanji learning resources from the library

M9 I set myself goals and objectives for what I wish to achieve each week

M10 I set myself a longterm goal on how many kanji I want to learn

N. EVALUATING YOUR LEARNING; This strategy is related with self-monitoring strategy, but the emphasis is more to the process learning kanji as a whole. One of the ways is by writing a diary as a means to record the improvement of learning kanji. By writing a diary the learner can also understand his/her learning pattern.

N1 I test myself regularly to check whether I know the kanji I have studied

N2 I keep a list of the number of kanji I know

N3 I write a language learning diary where I record my progress and my feelings.

O. COOPERATING WITH OTHERS; Cooperating with Others Learning other learners gives advantages of sharing the strategy in learning kanji and ways to remember it. By learning with others, the learner aware that he other learner also face difficulty in learning kanji and has a different strategy in learning kanji.

O1 I work with others on kanji learning, practising together

O2 I discuss my feelings about the kanji learning task with others

O3 I ask another person to test me on my kanji

III. RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA COLLECTING TECHNIQUE

This research is an action research in a cycle process which involves planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Learning from experiences is a learning process from students' personal experiences. Action research is one of research types conducted directly by the researchers to improve working performance without leaving the offices. Action research, according to Hopkins in Emzir[1]:233) is a process designed to empower participation of research subjects (students, teachers, and other participants). Its main objective is to refine educational experience. This research design refers to spiral model developed by Kemmis and Mc. Taggart. Data making through tests in any legal learning cycle and analytic taking appropriate from the distribution of SILK Questionnaire. The respondents of this research are the 2nd year students of the Japanese Language Education Program Faculty of Arts and Language Manado State University who learn Japanese (32 people). This research was conducted in January to April 2018. The main issues discussed in this research are: What strategies used by beginner / basic learners on learning Kanji? Questionnaire used in this research is Questionnaire with five choices (1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = sometimes, 4 = quite often, 5 = often). The stages in this research are as follows:

- Classifying respondents based on the result of pre-test into two groups, those are high beginner group
- (KT), low beginner group (Kr), high intermediate group (KR), and low intermediate group (KR).
- Distribute questionnaires consisting of SILK points for Indonesians referring to SILL
- Analyze data obtained from questionnaire by comparing statistical data from MKT and MKR groups by using software SPSS 19.0
- Discuss kanji learning strategies used by MKT and MKR groups based on statistical analysis

IV. THE RESULT OF ANALYSIS

The result of improving kanji mastery with Strategy Inventory For Learning Kanji (Silk) can be identified from several aspects as follows:

Kanji mastery consists of 4 aspects, (1) Reading, (2) Writing, (3) The Use of Kanji, (4) How to memorize

1. The result of aspect in reading method obtained during pre test / pre-test was 44,83%, and it increases to 52,59% or equal to 7,76% in cycle I; then, it increases to 56,90% or increases for 4,31% in cycle II; finally, it increases to 67,24% or equal to 10,34% in cycle III. The result increases 68,97% in the final test / Post-Test
2. The result of aspect in writing method obtained during pre test / pre-test was 52,59%, and it increases to 58,62% or equal to 6,03% in cycle I; then, it increases to 62,07% or increases for 3,45% in cycle II; finally, it increases to 70,69% % or equal to 8,62% in cycle III. The result increases 77,59% in the final test / Post-Test
3. The result of aspect in using kanji obtained during pre test / pre-test was 40,52%, and it increases to 55,17% or equal to 14,66% in cycle I; then, it increases to 70,69% or increases for 15,52% in cycle II; finally, it increases to 67,24% % or equal to -3,45% in cycle III. The result increases 81,03% in the final test / Post-Test.
4. The result of aspect in memorizing kanji obtained during pre test / pre-test was 46,55%, and it increases to 49,14% or equal to 2,59% in cycle I; then, it increases to 62,93% or increases for 13,79% in cycle II; finally, it increases to 68,10% % or equal to 5,17% in cycle III. The result increases 81,03% in the final test / Post-Test.

The beginner group consists of students who study kanji in the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018.. The results show that the frequency of Kanji learning strategies used for High Beginner Group is 10% higher than Low Beginner Group. This result is presented in Table 1.1 which shows that strategies used for High Beginner Group have few variations both in types and numbers. From the result, the researcher is unable to conclude the strategy classification because each category only consists of one strategy which does not represent certain group. Thus from the above results can not be concluded about the strategy group used, because each of the above strategies only consist of one type only so



cannot be representative of a particular group. However, the result shows that strategies I1 and A1 are frequently used for Beginner Group (KT). It can be concluded that Beginner Group (KT) put more efforts to learn kani because learning kanji must be associated with the context in which it uses. Further, Beginner Group (KT) try to associate kanji they are learning with the knowledge they have previously learned such as symbol. In Beginner Group (KR), the teachers do not use particular strategy.

In general, it can be said that the strategy used in the beginner group doesn't vary, either type or amount. The underlying reasons are:

1. Many new learners study about *Kanji* (a Japanese writing system) for the first time, so they have not find out strategies to study *Kanji*.
2. The lesson materials for the beginner level is a book entitled "*Minna No Nihongo*. It contains simple system and style of *Kanji* which focuses more on the components of *Kanji* forms than on the sentence contexts. For example, *kanji 見る(miru)* and *拝見する(haikensuru)*. Both of them have quite same meaning with 'melihat' (see). *Kanji 見る(miru)* is introduced to the beginner learner whereas *kanji 拝見する* is taught in intermediate level. *Kanji 見る(miru)* as a component which can stand alone in a sentence, so students cannot guess the meaning of *kanji* if they never study or forget the system, because *kanji 見る(miru)*, a fundamental *kanji* which has no component for meaning guess. However, students can guess the meaning of the word in *kanji 拝見する(haikensuru)*.
3. Another possibility is the teachers have not introduced to students the various learning strategies, so they do not comprehend them.

V. CONCLUSION

The research conclusion about the learning strategy to study *Kanji* for beginner and intermediate level in a study program of Japanese language in FBS UNIMA is explained in this following findings.

1. Sixty two (62) learning strategies to study *Kanji* found in SILK (strategy for inventory learning *kanji*) both for students who study *kanji* and for those who have no background studying *kanji*.
2. The use of each strategy is adjusted to the level of *kanji* learning materials. The more various strategies, the better. Therefore, all lecturers who teach *kanji* should introduce as many materials as possible. For example: to teach about things in universe like 月 (*tsuki / bulan*) – a moon、日 (*hi / matahari*) - a sun etc. Students should be introduced to the strategy of learning *kanji* with symbols of meaning, and teachers should have students make a mind mapping of *kanji* which relates to the things in universe for example with *kanji a 明日(ashita / besok)* – tomorrow.
3. For the beginner *Kanji* learner, there is not much variation of strategy by its type and its number, because:
 - 1). Most of learners are new learners in studying *kanji*, so they have not comprehended learning strategies to

study *kanji*, so they have not been motivated to study it.

- 2). In the beginner book entitled "*Minna No Nihongo*", it contains simple *kanji* which more focus on the components of forms than context in sentences.
- 3). Lecturers who teach *kanji* have not introduced various strategies in learning *kanji*, so students have not comprehended to use learning strategy to master *kanji*.

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