KANJI HANDWRITING ERRORS: IDENTIFYING THE TYPES AND APPLICABLE TEACHING METHODS

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The Kanji are a set of Chinese characters adopted in the Japanese writing system. These characters, which were originally based on the shapes of actual objects from the nature, have gradually transformed into their current shapes. Standard Kanji characters are 2136 in number and learning them is perceived to be a difficult task for foreign language learners. Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka is one of the state universities in Sri Lanka which offer Japanese language for undergraduate level. It has come to the attention of the researcher that Kanji writing skills of the students reading Japanese language at the university are far from the satisfactory level and that they make many errors, for example, in wrong stroke order and radicals. Accordingly, this study was focused on identifying Kanji handwriting errors made by the second year students reading Japanese Language at Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka. In addition, it was expected to suggest effective methods to teach Kanji, based on the identified errors. The data for the study were collected from the continuous assignments submitted by the students for JPN 212 course unit. The findings of the study showed that students find it difficult to write Kanji characters accurately, mainly due to lack of writing practice and revision work. In addition, the attribution of several meanings to a single character, with indistinguishable pronunciation is identified to be an issue faced by the students. Accordingly, teaching kanji from basic to advanced level, using illustrations and stories for teaching Kanji, using Kanji characters as much as possible in translating and writing essays, and providing more reading material are suggested as solutions.

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