SYLLABUS CREATION FOR BASIC KANJI TEACHING: CASE STUDY OF KANJI PROFICIENCY TEST OF JAPANESE MAJOR STUDENTS AT SUAN SUNANDHA RAJABHAT UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

In creating teaching lessons of Kanji course, one of the Japanese courses, it is necessary to have a tool to help planning in order to reach the objectives of the course. Kanji is considered a difficult course for Japanese learners due to its shape, pronunciation, meaning and usage, which require time to memorize. Therefore, the objectives of this research were to study the suitable topics for Kanji lessons and examples of activities enhancing the learners to effectively learn Japanese. The results were presented in form of course syllabus created based on the Kanji proficiency test results that showed the lack in Japanese skills of the learners before the syllabus was created.

Keywords- Syllabus, Kanji Proficiency Test, Kanji Learning Problems, Kanji learning topics

INTRODUCTION

In terms of Japanese education in Thailand, the learning of "Kanji" is considered one of the most challenging courses for Japanese learners of all levels. If the course syllabus is not based on a well-managed learning system, the learners will have difficulty recognizing the Kanji's shape, structure, pronunciation, meaning and usage. Kano (2001) indicated that foreign learners of Japanese who had no alphabetical background found it hard to recognize the Kanji's shape, structure, pronunciation, meaning and usage. They would also take a long time to better their skills. Moreover, Premvadee(2018) indicates that Kanji is also one of the important factor in Japanese Writing, which is considered to be difficult skill for those who study Japanese. Kanji needs to be applied in writing and usage in order to be used correctly and appropriately to the real situation.

Thus, if there is a tool that helps planning the lessons emphasizing on recognizing the Kanji's structure, understanding Kanji's pronunciation, and knowing how to use the right Kanji in the right context, it will be a good guideline for teachers to design teaching methods, exercises, and activities in order to enhance skills in the specific Kanji learning topics for Japanese major at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Syllabus, a tool that helps planning Kanji lessons for each week, is a table specifying the scope of teaching contents for each week including the amount of hours and learning topics as referred in a Japanese textbook called "MANABO NIHONGO KANJIRENSHUUCHOU SHOKYUU1". As the learners learn radicals and Kanji from the topics in the textbook, it could not be assumed that the topics could effectively improve the learners' skills in recognizing Kanji's shape, structure, pronunciation, meaning and usage.

Therefore, the researcher intended to study focusing on the syllabus for a better insight in basic Kanji teaching. The research was integrated with the Kanji proficiency test of Rudeemad (2018), which showed the overview of Kanji's skills of the learners in recognizing Kanji's shape, structure, pronunciation, meaning and usage as well as the problems in recognizing Kanji before creating a suitable learning topics and presenting them in form of syllabus.

LITERATURE & THEORY

This research was conducted to create a tool that could help planning Kanji lessons by focusing on the Kanji leaning topics and presenting them in form of syllabus. Takami (2004:41-43) defied the word "syllabus" in Japanese "kyoujukoumoku(教授項目) meaning teaching topics or a table showing teaching topics. Kano (1994:42) indicated that syllabus for Kanji teaching was a table of radicals and Kanji without information of Kanji structures or components. Thus, it caused difficulty in recognizing Kanji with great numbers of lines especially for foreign learners of Japanese who had no alphabetical background (非漢字圏学習者).

There are many research focusing on syllabus for basic Kanji learning including Sakai (1990), Kano (1994), Kaiser(2000), and Rudeemad (2015). Sakai (1990) conducted a survey using Kanji in the textbook "初級日本語 (SHOKYUUNIHONGO)" and Kano (1994) using Kanji in the textbook "基本漢字500 (KIHONKANJI500)" to study about syllabus. It was found that both research were conducted with the same pattern, which was an analysis of Kanji from a Japanese textbook, and presented in form of syllabus. The differences were that the syllabus of Sakai (1990) specified general information such as date, numbers of hour for Kanji learning in each week, lessons, teaching materials, and scopes of content (including tests), while the syllabus of Kano (1994) showed only units and topics that was adjudged based on the characteristic of Kanji of each unit. Nevertheless, these two research showed different ideas from the research of Kaiser (2000), which indicated that syllabus for basic Kanji should emphasize on bottom up style of learning. Bottom up style means the learning method where students learn simple Kanji along with Hiragana and Katakana such as "口・ハ・二・タ・千". Kaiser (2000) also saw the important of practicing recognizing Kanji components in the basic Kanji. Tollini(1992), Kano・Shimizu(1992), Kano(1994), Kano(2001), Butsaba and others (2010), Rudeemad (2015) and Rudeemad (2018) agreed with the framework of Kanji memorizing methods (漢字の見方) for foreign learners of Japanese who had no alphabetical background to be familiar with complex Kanji (複雑漢字) and improve their skills in recognizing the Kanji's shape.

Furthermore, Rudeemad (2015) also presented the syllabus to study the basic Kanji by integrating the data from the Kanji proficiency test of the high school students. The results showed that the syllabus specified the information about the learning topics and Kanji from "Akiko" Textbook (a Japanese textbook in more than 80% of high school). However, the numbers of hour, objectives, and related situations including activities for practicing for each topic were not specified. According to the school curriculum, Kanji course was not separated from general Japanese courses. With the limited of time, it is difficult for the students effectively learn Kanji. However, Kanji was separated from a general Japanese courses in the university, so that it is beneficial for the teachers to plan a suitable course that emphasize only on Kanji for students.

As the results, this research aimed to study the syllabus for Kanji course in the university; the case study of Japanese major students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The data was integrated from the Kanji proficiency test of Rudeemad (2018). The results were presented in form of practices or activities that enhance the skill in recognizing the Kanji's shape, structure, pronunciation, meaning and usage.

OBJECTIVE

1. To understand the problems of Kanji learning in 4 skills including shape, pronunciation, meaning and usage among learners

2. To create a tool that could help planning Kanji Lessons by focusing on the Kanji Leaning Topics and presenting them in form of Syllabus.

METHODOLOGY

This research focused on the topics of learning basic Kanji with the reference of the Kanji proficiency test in of the Kanji's shape, structure, pronunciation, meaning and usage of Rudeemad (2018) among Japanese major students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. 40 students participated in this study. Consequently, the results was presents in form of syllabus with specific contents including amount of time, objectives, situations, and practice activities.

For Kanji appearing in this syllabus, the researcher referred them from a Kanji textbook called "MANABO NIHONGO KANJIRENSHUUCHOU SHOKYUU1" and "KANJI TAMAGO SHOKYUU". The contents of the textbooks were analyzed and integrated into the Kanji course for the next semester and would also become a case study in creating a syllabus for teaching basic Kanji in university.

RESULTS

The researcher will describe about the problems in recognizing Kanji of students before analyzing for the suitable topics in Kanji lessons and presented it in form of syllabus. According to the data from the Kanji proficiency test of Rudeemad (2018), it was found that students over 60 percentage had problems in recognizing Kanji as follows.

1. The learners had problems in recognizing the Kanji structure and Kanji components.

2. The learners had problems in memorizing Kanji with Chinese pronunciation (音読み).

3. The learners had problems in integrating between shape and pronunciation of Kanji.

4. The learners had problems in using compound Kanji with Chinese pronunciation

5. The learners had problems in using Okurigana.

6. The learners had problems in using the correct word types.

7. The learners had problems in recognizing Kanji consistent with the context.

8. The learners did not have sufficient knowledge in Kanji related with grammar.

According to the data analysis, the researcher understood the problems of Kanji learning in 4 skills including shape, pronunciation, meaning and usage among learners. Therefore, the researcher studied about the learning topics of Kanji suitable for teaching basic Kanji and presented them in form of a table of syllabus as follows.

Table 1

Syllabus table for basic Kanji teaching

Week	Situations/ Topics of Kanji learning	Number of hours	Teaching contents	
			Radicals and Kanji lessons	Teaching activities
1	- Course introduction, Introduction to Kanji - Chinese pronunciation and Japanese pronunciation (漢字の音と訓の読み分け) - 6 types of Kanji (漢字の6種類)	3	漢字, 音読み, 訓読み, 部首, 手書き, 点, 線, 書き順	- Introduce the course outline, explain about the origin of Kanji and learn about 6 types of Kanji.
2	**Shopping** - Logogram(象形文字) - Alphabet symbol (指事文字)	3	日月火水木金土山川田人女子車門雨など。 一二三四五六七八九十上下中大小本円百千万半など。	- Show students pictures of nature such as mountain, river, rain, and tree to teach Kanji in the group of logogram. - Show students picture of shopping activities including buying goods or asking for prices and teach them Kanji in the group of alphabet symbol.
3	**Family** - alphabet telling meaning (会意文字) - Alphabet telling pronunciation and meaning (形声文字)	3	人父母姉妹兄弟男女子友先生学休毎犬高長短家族など。	- Explain Kanji related to family members and family trip along with pictures. - Students bring their family photos to class and write about their family members. Then, they can share their stories with friends. - 1st quiz
4	**Date and time** - How to count the lines and recognize the order of the lines of Kanji (漢字の筆順, 画数の数え方)	3	日月火水木金土今時週月年午前後間分半毎曜何朝昼夜晩など。	- Use pictures of calendar and pictures of garbage classification according to the date and time in Japan and teach Kanji in the group of date and time. - Students write a diary for 1 week telling what they did

Week	Situations/ Topics of Kanji learning	Number of hours	Teaching contents	
			Radicals and Kanji lessons	**Teaching activities**
				and when they did it in each day.
5	**Appointments** - The usage of Okurigana with verbs and adjectives (動詞や形容詞の漢字の送り仮名)	3	東西北南上下中外左右前後店駅学校国町待地図館電車会社行乗集合何時など。	- Show students pictures of locations in different cities to teach Kanji in terms of telling direction. - Students draw a map and tell the direction from their house to the meeting place by using Kanji of this unit. - 2nd Quiz
6	**Describing things** - The usage of word types in Kanji (漢字熟語の品詞の用法による分類)	3	大小高安多少新古長広近明甘赤白早遅など。	- Show pictures or flashcards of fruits, people, or places with Kanji description describing things. - Students try to familiarize with Kanji and use them to make up a story.
7	Lesson review of lesson in week 2-6	3	Review	- Provide students the teaching reviews for Kanji reading and writing.
8	Midterm examination	1.30	-	Midterm examination
9	**Health** - The usage of compound Kanji with Chinese pronunciation (同音の漢字による分類)	3	体目耳口鼻歯顔頭足手病気院薬局術重内外科運動心休など。	- Show students pictures of different locations in a Japanese hospital, where Kanji related to body organs can be applied. Then, say short sentences with those Kanji quickly and repetitively. - Students pair up and role play as a doctor and a patient. The doctor needs to ask the patient about his/her symptoms and gives advice in Japanese. - 3rd Quiz
10	**Holiday trip** - The usage of Kanji consistent with the context (文脈の意味的共起性による漢字語の用法)	3	食飲買話書言見聞旅行休先週毎午前後物世界春夏秋冬予約泊友家族彼女友など。	- Show students pictures of a restaurant or the sea to create a story of a trip by using Kanji explaining about activities. - Students write about their weekend trips: where did they go and whom did they go with, then share their story with friends in class.
11	**Traveling** - The usage of Kanji	3	行来帰乗降入出通歩散右左橋曲道前後中外間張留学止	- Show students pictures of traffic in the cities and teach

Week	Situations/ Topics of Kanji learning	Number of hours	Teaching contents	
			Radicals and Kanji lessons	Teaching activities
	with conditions related with grammar (文脈の文法的共起性による分類)		車電車到着など。	them Kanji related to travelling and sentences with grammatical issue of helping words. - Explain the usage of helping words including へ, に and を since these helping words can be used in the sentences related to traveling. - 4th Quiz
12	**Hobbies** - Recognizing the Kanji's structures and components (漢字の部首による分類)	3	歌音楽映画旅海作料理肉野菜好休泳読聞 <u>偏の部首</u> 木：校林村 日：時明映晴 女：好姉妹始 イ：作使休体住 氵：泳海洗池 言：説読話語	- Show students pictures of hobbies in daily life and teach them related Kanji with simple sentences for memorizing. - Group the Kanji in the lessons and teach students to know how to separate the Kanji components. - Provide some practices for students to enhance their skills in analyzing the Kanji structure, so they can recognize that which components show pronunciation and which components show meaning.
13	Lesson review of lesson in week 9-12	3	Review	- Provide students the teaching reviews for Kanji reading and writing.
14	Group presentation	3	-	- Students give presentation and discuss their knowledge about Kanji.
15	Group presentation	3	-	- Students give presentation and discuss their knowledge about Kanji.
16	Group presentation	3	-	- Students give presentation and discuss their knowledge about Kanji.
17	Final examination	1.30	-	Final examination

*Objectives
  ➢ For students to have basic skills in recognizing the Kanji's shape, structure, pronunciation, meaning and usage
  ➢ For students to be able to separate the Kanji components, understand the pronunciation and meaning from Kanji components, and use them in suitable situations.
  ➢ For students to practice their thinking process and be able to enthusiastically do the in-class activities.

*Teaching methods
  ➢ For each week, there are in-class activities with pictures as teaching materials.
  ➢ At the end of every class, the students will be asked to prepare and bring pictures related to the next

Week	Situations/ Topics of Kanji learning	Number of hours	Teaching contents	
			Radicals and Kanji lessons	Teaching activities
	lessons to the next class. ➢ The students are asked to write their own stories from the assigned Kanji every week and share their stories with friends. ➢ There are in total 4 quizzes. Each time, the students are asked to write a story with 6 -7 sentences long and use Kanji specified by the teacher.			
*Evaluation 1) Attendance 10% 2) Quiz 20% 3) Midterm- Final Examination 40% 4) Group report 10% 5) In-class activities 20%				

Table 1 showed a syllabus table for basic Kanji teaching integrated with the Kanji proficiency test of Rudeemad (2018), which stated the problems of recognizing Kanji among Japanese major students at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. All Kanji were from Kanji textbooks called "MANABO NIHONGO KANJIRENSHUUCHOU SHOKYUU1" and "KANJI TAMAGO SHOKYUU". In this table of syllabus, the researcher provided the information related to the course plan. The first column showed numbers of week in total 17 weeks, which were divided into 2 sections: 15 weeks for lessons and 2 weeks for midterm examination and final examination. The second column showed situation topics and Kanji topics for learning plan of the specific week. The third column showed numbers of teaching hours, which were 3 hours for each week lesson and 1.5 hours for midterm examination and final examination. The last 2 columns showed scopes of content: one was examples of Kanji sentences and another was in-class activities including 4 quizzes. Moreover, the researcher also identified 3 objectives of the course, short descriptions of teaching method, and proportion of score evaluation.

It can be concluded that the syllabus showed the details in all 17 teaching weeks. The Kanji in basic Kanji textbook and data of problems in recognizing Kanji among students were also bought into consideration in creating the syllabus.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORKS

According to the study of syllabus for teaching basic Kanji with the reference of the Kanji proficiency test of Rudeemad (2018) and Kanji textbooks called "MANABO NIHONGO KANJIRENSHUUCHOU SHOKYUU1" and "KANJI TAMAGO SHOKYUU", it was concluded that creating a teaching tool for a course including Kanji course required the understanding in not only the nature of the language, but also the condition of the students. Consequently, the suitable teaching materials and tools could be created for coping with the students' problems.

For the next research, the researcher plans to apply this syllabus in class and the students will be asked to perform a group activity with 1 imitation Japanese Vellum per group and select a topic specified by the teacher. Then, the students will brainstorm and create an in-class activities from Kanji related to the topic. The activity is to evaluate whether the lessons and in-class activities written in syllabus is effective enough for the students to adapt the knowledge and create a new activities for Kanji teaching.

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