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SPRÅK OCH LITTERATURER

# KANJI LEARNING AND WORKBOOKS

A comparative analysis of L2 and L1 kanji educational material

Karl Vagnemark

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Handledare:	Fusae Takasaki Ivarsson
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## Prelude

I wish to express my gratitude towards my academic advisor Fusae Takasaki Ivarsson for her support and help with this thesis.

# Abstract

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This study is an analysis of two kanji workbooks. The purpose of this thesis is to make suggestions for improvement in L2 kanji text-/workbooks through comparison of L2 and L1 kanji text-/workbooks. Also, to expand the research field regarding kanji-textbooks. As there is almost no research in this field, hopefully this analysis could contribute to the unexplored research field.

The research is based on previous studies regarding kanji workbooks and textbooks aimed at L2 learners. Richmond (2005) is the main theoretical framework, his study goes into depth regarding common practices and beliefs in kanji textbooks. General information about L1 learner's environment and general L2 textbook-/workbooks are collected from Riekkinen (2015)'s master's thesis.

The workbooks have been analyzed through three methods. Hirayama and Takahashi (2013)'s essay and the Nine steps of instruction by Gagné (1986) is the backbone for the main analysis on structure of the two workbooks. Hayashi (2011)'s essay on kanji-related elements is used to determine what information regarding the characters is presented and what is not. Lastly, Richmond (2005)'s article is used to analyze example sentences found in the two books.

Despite the two workbooks being similar in style, there are some interesting differences. In structure and style, they are quite similar, though the workbook for L2

learners goes more into detail with greater focus on understanding the materials inside. The results of this essay could probably be used to show that workbooks aimed at L2 learners have progressed over the years. However, the L2 book lacks much when it comes to eliciting performance, which is something that need more research in the future.

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## 1. Introduction

To master Japanese, learners need to adopt the three different ways to read and write, the phonetic hiragana, katakana and the semantic kanji. Due to the large amount of kanji that exist and the many ways to read them, for learners without a native background of kanji, kanji is usually the hardest part of Japanese (Ivarsson 2016). Kanji which originally come from Chinese, are logographic characters. Since these characters can be made up of one to 36 strokes they can become complex and hard to memorize. Moreover, the characters can have multiple ways to read them, which adds to their complexity.

Because of this, different methods have been conceived to help learners with this task. The most common manner of which kanji is studied is outside of a classroom and because of this, a textbook to aid these studies are important (Richmond 2005). However, many textbooks aimed at non-native speakers do follow certain trends and are written with the thought that native and non-native learners must be different.

This study will focus on comparing two kanji-textbooks, one aimed at learners of Japanese as a second language (L2) and one aimed at learners of Japanese as a first language (L1). My goal is to expand knowledge regarding kanji-textbooks and see what one aimed at L2 learners could gain from a book aimed at L1 learners. As a L2 learner of Japanese I wish to help speed up the learning process of kanji for fellow future students.

## 2. Background

L1 learners of Japanese start to study kanji in their first year of elementary school. During the elementary school years L1 learners will learn 1006 kanji characters. During the years in junior high and high schools they will learn the remaining 1130 kanji characters from a list of required kanji decided by MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). These 2136 characters make up the *jooyoo* kanji list, which is a guide to kanji for regular use (Agency for Cultural Affairs 2011) and the base for kanji to be learned in primary and secondary education (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 2017a). The list of kanji that the L1 learners will learn is designed so that easier characters with clear meaning occur first. This will be beneficial for said learners since these easier characters then can be used as stepping stones for more complex ones to be learned later. More complex characters that might appear very often in daily life also occur in the earlier lists (Kobayashi 1982). The common way to study kanji is to memorize

through repetition of writing. Through their lives, the L1 learner's knowledge of kanji is tested. This occurs many times at school but also during more expansive exams, such as for high school and university (Agency for Cultural Affairs 2011). These exams not only stress the importance of being able to read and understand but also to be able to write clearly (Riekkinen 2015). For L1 learners there is a possibility to take a kanji exam of different levels, the levels 10 to 1, where level 1 is the most difficult one. The exam is designed to test the examinee's ability to identify radicals, reading, writing, synonyms and antonyms, the ability to distinguish homophones and four-character kanji words<sup>1</sup> (Kanken 2017). Since L1 learners encounter kanji in their everyday life and have a basic vocabulary even before starting to learn kanji, they can grasp sounds and context of the kanji more easily. Because of this there is no class focusing on kanji, instead it is a part of the *kokugo*<sup>2</sup> class (Richmond 2005).

There are different opinions on how L2 learners who do not encounter kanji in their everyday environment and are not accustomed with kanji from their native language should learn kanji. Tornberg (1997) writes that learning kanji is part of learning the language itself and learning a language is different process for everyone. Several methods used for learning foreign languages exist. These methods aim to teach the students kanji through parts of education, such as in combination with translation, grammar, speaking, listening and vocabulary. Instead of learning the way to write the characters one by one, these methods focus on putting the kanji in context of other things (Riekkinen 2015).

But due to the divide between the environment and prior experiences with the language between L1 and L2 learners, other research suggests that L2 learners need different methods and context on how to learn kanji characters. There are several different methods devised to deal with different needs from different students, as there is no universal method (Richmond 2005). The way characters are presented can differ from literature to literature. In *Remembering The Kanji* (Heisig 1986) kanji which can be used and thought of as parts to build more complex kanji is presented first, to be followed later by of more complex symbols which they can be used in. In *A Guide to Remember Japanese Characters* (Henshall 1988) instead of switching the order after the writer's preference, characters are presented in the same order as Japanese school children learn them (Richmond 2005). These two books focus on mnemonic- and etymology-based methods of learning instead of repeating meaning and stroke order (Riekkinen 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> 四字熟語 *Yojjukugo*

<sup>2</sup> 国語 *Kokugo* is Japanese language class for L1 learners, which features reading, grammar and other general language-related subjects.



For L2 learners who want to measure their Japanese level there is the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). This test is divided into three major parts, namely, language knowledge, reading and listening. Language knowledge gets further divided into two sub-categories; vocabulary (including kanji and vocabulary) and grammar. Kanji in the test are presented in a real context and the test taker must be able to read and understand the encountered kanji. There is no official chart on what amount of kanji the test taker needs to know to pass the exam since 2010 (JLPT 2017).

L2 learners who wish to do so, may also take the kanji exam meant for L1 learners which was mentioned earlier (Kanken 2017).

### **3. Previous studies**

#### **3.1 L2 kanji textbook analysis**

Richmond (2005) discusses various kanji-learning exercises aimed at L2 learners. He also goes into shortcomings with the books he discusses. He then discusses and works from the following six common assumptions about L2 kanji learning methods, this to show that they are just assumptions, not fact (Richmond, 2005, pp. 57, 58, 59, 60 & 62).

Assumption 1.

L2 learners perceive kanji in fundamentally different ways to native learners of Japanese, who have more developed cognitive skills to handle logographic scripts.

Assumption 2.

Kanji are pictures, not writing.

Assumption 3.

Each kanji has its own meaning.

Assumption 4.

Since kanji directly represent meaning, they can be accessed without phonology.

Assumption 5.

Given the language handicap, L2 learners need simpler structures than native learners.

Assumption 6.

L2 learners need specialized methods (such as mnemonics) to master kanji, and should not use the methods employed by native learners.

Reikkinen (2015) conducted research on the structure of the kanji textbooks used at Stockholm University. Discussing what might be improved in the books they are using, what the strong points are, and what faults they have. He concluded that the three different book series he analyzed introduced different learning strategies for kanji. The beginner-level textbook series Genki 1&2 and Basic Kanji book 1&2 did not present any kanji-learning strategies and focuses on learning through vocabulary. The intermediate level book series Intermediate Kanji Book 1&2 did however introduce

several areas that may be useful for kanji learners. For instance, in Chapter 2 of book one, antonym words are introduced and through examples the student can see how they can be used to learn new words.

Hirayama and Takahashi (2013) have analyzed “Survival Japanese” textbooks by putting them in different tables and comparing attributes of the textbooks. It presents methods on how to sort textbooks contents with the help of the nine steps of Gagné (1986). Through their analysis, they concluded they were befitting for tourists or short-stay traveler due to their well-thought-out contents. However, they concluded that the textbooks are not suitable for exchange students. This is because students need to get another environment and have different needs.

Hayashi (2011) goes into detail on what kind of information and problems are presented in five different intermediate level L2 kanji textbooks. By applying the method to analyze kanji textbooks for beginners by Honda (2008), Hayashi is continuing research of intermediate level kanji textbooks. Her conclusion had two points. The first one was, information that deals with the meaning and usage of kanji was frequent but, information regarding the shape of kanji was scarce. Dependent on textbook, the difference of information regarding kanji-reading was substantial. The second point was, when comparing to beginner-level textbooks, the parameters that were similar were information regarding meaning and usage of kanji.

### 3.2 L1 kanji textbook analysis

Since there are official curriculum guidelines (学習指導要領 *Gakushuu shidoo yooryoo*) issued by MEXT that specify materials to be taught at each grade at all Japanese elementary, junior high and high schools, there is no major difference in contents of textbooks of the same subject for the same grade (MEXT 2017a). Therefore, there is not much research done on differences between textbooks aimed at L1 learners.

## 4. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to make suggestions for improvement in L2 kanji text-/workbooks through comparison of L2 and L1 kanji text-/workbooks. Also, to expand the research field regarding kanji-textbooks.

Research questions:

- a. What are the similarities and differences between L2 and L1 kanji text-/workbooks?
- b. What are the causes of the similarities/differences?

- c. What can L2 kanji text-/workbooks gain from L1 kanji text-/workbooks?

## **5. Theoretical Framework**

### 5.1 Theory for analyzing the structure, layout and learning strategies:

The nine steps of instruction by Gagné is a framework with a focus on outcomes of behaviors during instruction or training, it is based on Robert Gagné's original research on systematic instructional design (Gagné 1986). This framework is now regarded as an effective framework for analysis of instructional materials (Hirayama and Takahashi 2013). With the use of these nine steps in the same manner as Hirayama and Takahashi, it will be very easy to spot differences and similarities in the books to be analyzed, and to see their respective styles clearly.

#### Nine steps of instruction by Gagné (1986)

1. Gain attention: Present stimulus to ensure reception of instruction.
2. Tell the learners the learning objective: What will the pupil gain from the instruction?
3. Stimulate recall of prior learning: Ask for recall of existing relevant knowledge.
4. Present the stimulus: Display the content.
5. Provide learning guidance
6. Elicit performance: Learners respond to demonstrate knowledge.
7. Provide feedback: Give informative feedback on the learner's performance.
8. Assess performance: More performance and more feedback, to reinforce information.
9. Enhance retention and transfer to other contexts

### 5.2 Framework for analyzing kanji-related elements:

From Honda (2008)'s research regarding beginner-level kanji-textbooks, Hayashi (2011) takes the content of intermediate-level kanji-textbooks, analyzes it, and then compares it. With the use of Honda's framework Hayashi saw whether different information regarding the shape of kanji exists in the textbooks. Hayashi analyzes the meaning of the kanji and how to use them in the same manner as the information relating to how to read kanji.

This kind of framework will be useful in identifying what kind of information is expected to occur in a kanji-textbook and what should be available. As there are set points, it will be very clear what differences and similarities the two books have.

### 5.3 Framework for analyzing example sentences:

For analyzing and comparing example sentences within the material, Richmond (2005)'s assumptions, especially Assumption 5 "Given the language handicap, L2 learners need simpler structures than native learners" will be used. This assumption discusses the semantic clues within a collection of example sentences. Example sentences for L1 learners are not necessarily easier, but they have more context for the learner. For example, 学校でウサギとニワトリを飼育する "(We) keep rabbits and chickens at school" (Kumon 1990, p.14, cited in Richmond 2005) instead of 店内にはいろいろな外国のがあります。" There are many foreign items in the store." (Kano *et al.* 1989, p.145, cited in Richmond). The first sentence which is aimed at L1 learners has more semantic context, based on which they can come up with a list of possible readings, whereas the latter's context does not give such a semantic clue. In other words, by reading the first sentence in Japanese there is more context for the reader to guess what the word means and how to read it than the latter.

## 6. Material and Method

### 6.1 Material types

The material that will be used in this study is two different kanji textbooks, one aimed at L2 learners and one aimed at L1 learners.

#### L2: Various types and styles

There are various types and styles of kanji-textbooks, the following list has examples of typical textbooks within each category.

1. Kanji textbook with information about kanji and separate workbook for practicing (e.g.: Kanji Look and Learn (Banno *et al.* 2009).
2. Kanji textbook with workbook combined (e.g.: Basic Kanji Book Vol.1 and Vol.2 (Kano *et al.* 1989), Intermediate Kanji Book Vol.1 (Kano *et al.* 1993) and Vol.2 (Kano *et al.* 2001)).
3. Kanji textbook with no workbook (e.g.: Remembering The Kanji (Heisig 1986), A Guide To Remember Japanese Kanji (Richmond 2005)).
4. Integrated general textbook including kanji and separate workbook (e.g. Genki Vol.1 and Vol.2 (Banno *et al.* 2011a and 2011b)).

5. Kanji textbook which contains kanji used in a corresponding general textbook with kanji information and exercises (e.g. Power Up Your Kanji (Oka, *et al.* 2010))

L1: Due to the ministry of education deciding what sort of content should be in different textbooks, there are no major differences in types and styles (MEXT 2017a).

Since the Japanese student encounters practice exercises related to the kanji in their *kokugo*-class's literature, which means main instructional material for kanji comes not in the form of textbook but of workbook, which contains information and exercises on the kanji included in the *kokugo*-textbook. For the students that wishes to practice more there also exists extra material that can be bought privately.

## 6.2 Materials to be analyzed in this research

For L2 『きたえよう漢字力 上級へつなげる基礎漢字 800』(Power Up Your Kanji: 800 Basic Kanji as a Gateway to Advanced Japanese (“Your Kanji”))

There is a textbook series for intermediate level learners of Japanese entitled “Tobira: Gateway to Advanced Japanese Learning Through Contents and Multimedia (『コンテンツとマルチメディアで学ぶ日本語 上級へのとびら』)” with general textbook and grammar- and kanji- workbooks in separate volumes. The kanji workbook of the series entitled 『きたえよう漢字力 上級へつなげる基礎漢字 800』(Power Up Your Kanji: 800 Basic Kanji as a Gateway to Advanced Japanese (“Your Kanji”)) is the one to be analyzed in this study. Your Kanji is a continuation on an earlier work in the series. It has 503 new kanji to introduce as well as repetition of the earlier 297 kanji introduced in the previous book. By completing this book learners have learned a total of 800 characters. The book consists of a total of 15 chapters which all handle slightly different subjects regarding Japan. For each new chapter, the book gives information of kanji which are related to parts from the main book and relevant vocabulary, followed by exercises.

The reasoning behind choosing this workbook is its similarities to a Japanese *kokugo* workbook in both setup and style.

L1 『漢字かんぺきくん 5年(上)・(下)』 Kanji-kanpeki-kun 5<sup>th</sup> grade (vols. 1 & 2) Mitsumura Kyooiku Tosho (n.d.) (“Kanpekikun”)

Kanpekikun is a workbook aimed at 5<sup>th</sup> grade elementary school students. Since they have learned 640 characters by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, with 185 new ones to be learned at the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, they have learned a total of 825 characters (MEXT 2017a). The style of the book is very similar to Your Kanji

from a first glance consisting of information of kanji used in the corresponding *kokugo*-book and exercises, but some differences are the frequent occurrences of self-tests and a couple of comic strips.

It can be concluded that Your Kanji and Kanpekikun are comparable with each other in terms of the level (with approximately 800 learned characters) and style (information of kanji from the corresponding main book and exercises). They are also both supposed to be used with corresponding textbooks.

### 6.3 Method

- 6.3.1 In this thesis the structure of the book, layout and learning strategies will be analyzed by using the nine steps of instruction by Gagné (1986).
- 6.3.2 Text analysis will be conducted in the same manner that Hayashi (2011) studied shape, meaning/use and the readings of kanji.
- 6.3.3 Analysis of usage examples (words/phrases/sentences) of the common target characters based on Richmond (2005) esp. Assumption 5. Due to size limitations of this thesis, I will analyze five sentences from each book. These will be selected from the later chapters in the books as the sentences are presumably more complex at that point.

## 7. Analysis

### 7.1.1 Analysis of structure, layout and learning strategies – Your Kanji

In this section the structure of Your Kanji will be analyzed according to the nine steps of instruction by Gagné (1986).

#### 7.1.1.1 Gain attention

There are no pictures or questions in each chapter except for the chapter title and an exercise in which the user writes a short text from their own perspective.

#### 7.1.1.2 Tell the learners the learning objective

It does not express any learning objective other than to practice the kanji presented in the chapter. In the beginning of the book however, a goal of the user not only learning how to read and write kanji but also how to study kanji effectively is written.

#### 7.1.1.3 Stimulate recall of prior learning

When starting with Your Kanji the user is expected to know around 300 kanji already, these kanji repeatedly appear throughout the workbook. In the start of each chapter's "explanation part" we find that the writers have used pictures for the simpler parts such as tree (木) or sheep (羊) to help with structuring up new, more complicated kanji. Within the list of new words which are presented with each new kanji we find that previously learned kanji are reused for new compound-words, one example is “人形” where the character to the left is a previously learned character. Also for each new kanji you have a small easy example sentence which usually has previously learned words, if not the word has *furigana*<sup>3</sup> written below so the user easily can figure out its meaning. In the exercises we can find a lot of previously introduced words, this stays consistent with each chapter. Lastly, at the end of the “explanation part” there is a small list of kanji from earlier chapters for the user to rehearse.

#### 7.1.1.4 Displaying the content

All the content is split up into 15 chapters. Each chapter explains how to write and use the new kanji before moving on to exercises. Each new kanji introduced has a large clear picture with a handwritten character. No new information except for words the user might not have encountered is presented in the exercises.

#### 7.1.1.5 Provide learning guidance

Each chapter starts with a thorough explanation of each new kanji presented in that chapter. Each new character has a rectangular box with information about the character. Within this box we first find an index number, which is related to the order of the character in the book, secondly, we see how the character looks when written by hand, the character in font styles Mincho and Gothic, followed by pictures which presents the total number and writing order of the strokes. After this, we find *on-* and *kun-*readings in *katakana* and *hiragana*, meaning of the character in English, an explanation in Japanese for the radical<sup>4</sup> or origin of the character used, and a vocabulary list. The vocabulary list only has Japanese words with *furigana*, and the number of the chapter of the main textbook in which the word is used (if any), but without translation. Lastly, there are one to three example sentences. In these sentences, one word is picked from the vocabulary list presented with the kanji. That word's pronunciation is provided for the user, we can also see an English translation for the whole sentence. The parameters that might differ from kanji to kanji are the

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<sup>3</sup> Furigana is *hiragana* or *katakana* and is written above, under or by the side of a *kanji*-character to indicate its pronunciation.

<sup>4</sup> Radical is a semantically or functionally significant part of a *kanji*.

number of new words that the user is expected to learn together with each new character and the number of example sentences. If there is more than one example sentence, the kanji's on- and kun-reading gets one word and example sentence each but, the book does more often not follow this pattern than it does. Seventeen to 22 new kanji to learn both how to read and write are introduced in each chapter, and 22-27 unrelated new kanji are introduced as part of common words they are used in (Joukyuu no Tobira website 2017). For instance, if the user is learning “建”, it occurs together with “築” in the vocabulary list (建築 “architecture”) even though the latter character has yet to be introduced.

For each new exercise until chapter 6 there is a clear English description under the Japanese one to tell the user what they should be doing in each exercise, exercises with the same goal that reoccurs in following chapters do not have English written under. Within the exercises themselves there are *furigana* and English translations to words which the user has not been introduced to.

In the start of the textbook we have a radical index. In this index we can see how many strokes each radical consists of, which part of the kanji it will be, what it is called, what the basic original meaning comes from and an example where it is used. In the back we have two indexes, one for kanji and one for the vocabulary presented in the book. The kanji are presented in order of the Japanese syllabary (五十音順) rather than chapter order. The vocabulary list is presented in chapter order and is divided into words the user should learn how to both read and write and words the user is only supposed to learn how to read.

The example sentences or exercises in the book does not however have any grammatical explanations. However, when kanji that have grammatical functions are introduced, they have a grammatical explanation. For instance, if it can be used as a prefix. When semantically similar kanji appears, the workbook sometimes explains how they are different. For example, 産まれる (Umareru)-to give birth from a mother's body, 生まれる (Umareru)-something new makes itself. It is also sometimes written down when a kanji has an antonym that the user should know about. Some kanji also have *curiosa* written about them.

#### 7.1.1.6 Elicit performance

The exercises in Your Kanji are divided into four categories as in Table 1. The types of exercises that combine two or more elements, such as writing and reading, are counted as one in each category.



**Table 1 Type and number of exercises in Your Kanji**

	Understanding	Writing <i>kanji</i>	Reading <i>kanji</i>	Radicals
Number of exercises	94	56	78	15

The title “Understanding” is related to exercises where the user either translates a kanji/kanji-word to English or explains the word in Japanese with a sentence, combining two kanji to form a new word, or placing a word into a sentence to complete it. “Writing kanji” exercises are mostly, looking at *hiragana/katakana* and then writing the appropriate kanji. “Reading kanji” is related to exercises that focus on writing down the pronunciation of an occurring kanji/kanji-word. The last post “Radicals” is related to exercises that focus on building kanji from a list of presented radicals (部首) or exercises where one of the parts is already presented, then from a list of radicals the user is supposed to combine and build a complete kanji. The last kind of radical exercise is related to identifying wrong radicals in a kanji, and then write the correct character. In radical exercises, the user is often also supposed to translate the final product to English.

As we can see in Table 1, most of the exercises focus on understanding kanji, words and the context they are used in, rather than writing and repeating. One special exercise is picture description, the user has two previously decided words to work with and is supposed to make a sentence describing what a picture is, it is featured six times. Furthermore, there are three kinds of exercises that occur in every chapter throughout the whole book. The first one is to read a kanji-word and write down its pronunciation. The second one is to read a sentence then, from a list of kanji-words, put the correct word in the right spot to form complete sentences. If the word in the list is in *hiragana* the user is supposed to write it in kanji and if in kanji, the other way around. The last one is reading a small text that is related to the chapter’s theme, after reading the user is supposed to write down the pronunciations of a list of words from the text, and lastly write a paragraph regarding the same subject of the text with as many of the previously mentioned words as possible.

Between every two-three chapters there are special exercises. The first special exercise page comes after chapter three, the content is from the first three chapters, it is a kanji-puzzle. The second one is, put a list of words in pronunciation order so the last sound of the word matches with the next word’s first sound, it covers kanji from chapter 1-6. The third one is a crossword with kanji from chapter 1-9. The next to last one is a puzzle with exercises similar to the regular

chapters, the words that occur are from chapter 1-12. The last one is about cursive style of writing in Japanese, which tests the user's ability to read kanji written by hand.

#### 7.1.1.7 Provide feedback

Other than the answer sheet in the back of the book there is not any feedback directed at the user. Due to the nature of an answer sheet, all exercises where the user are supposed to write their own answer show only a very limited number of example answers.

#### 7.1.1.8 Assess performance

There are no forms of assessing the user's performance in the form of tests, though the exercises that focus on writing short sentences or short texts could be counted as assessment of performance. (Hirayama, S & Takahashi, M, 2013, pp.78)

#### 7.1.1.9 Enhance retention and transfer to other contexts

In the instructions on how to use the textbook it says that; if the users find something especially difficult, such as remembering the number of strokes or remembering a certain word, they themselves should assess this through repetition at the start of a new chapter. As stated by the authors of the book users need to continually repeat previous kanji to not forget them, they also provide their own website for extra exercises (Power Up Your Kanji, Oka *et al*, 2010).

### 7.1.2 Analysis of kanji-related elements – Your Kanji

#### 7.1.2.1 Kanji shape

For every new kanji introduced the book makes it very clear for the user in which order the strokes should be written. As for writing direction, there are small visual aids. Should the user not know the rules about writing in traditional calligraphy however, they will not be of any help. However, since this is an intermediate level textbook the user should already know this. There is no information regarding the principles of the stroke order. The number of strokes are clearly provided in a parenthesis in the same place as the stroke order.

Regarding radicals, there is a radical index in the start of the book with clear examples of them being used, not every radical is featured. Sometimes we can find information written down regarding the different radicals within the kanji being introduced. For instance, where some kanji

might have information what the radical means, others might have an explanation for the pronunciation. In the case of “燃 – burn”, “火” which is related to fire, and “然” which can mean “but, however, that may be so but” et cetera. However, the latter part is not explained what it means but instead clarified to be a separate part from “火”.

Regarding the origin of kanji, not every kanji has an origin explanation but, some of them has an explanation. Sometimes, the book explains kanji with the use of radicals. For instance, if “田” (rice field) is a radical, the book explains what “田” means.

#### 7.1.2.2 Kanji meaning

Some ambiguous words are explained how they are different or how the user should separate them, for instance “円” and “丸” which can both mean “circle”, in this case “円” has an explanation how to separate it from “丸”. This is however not the norm, and some kanji’s ambiguity is left unexplained. There are no broader comparison of kanji/kanji-compound words either but are left as side notes. Concerning antonyms this pattern stays consistent, though information about antonyms is more common than the other two. Information regarding suffixes and prefixes is introduced to the user, counting-word kanji are also introduced when they appear.

Regarding written or spoken language and usage of language within the book certain posts are skipped. Whether a kanji compound word is written or spoken language is not introduced. Idioms<sup>5</sup> are not introduced either. Within the books example sentences or exercises, when kanji can be used, it is used. In the book there are no articles, paragraphs or anything similar which was not made with the intent of a user using the book. This means that everything in the book is tailor-made for learners and the book does not include any authentic material.

#### 7.1.2.3 Reading and pronunciation

The book features a general explanation to where kanji comes from and why they are pronounced as they are today. In the start of the book there is a general explanation why some pronunciations are written in *hiragana* and others in *katakana*. However, it fails to mention why there is multiple ways to pronounce some kanji. It is not spelled out that a lot of homophonous words exist, but

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<sup>5</sup> 熟語

many of the exercises focus on teaching the user that there are a lot of words that has the same pronunciation. It fails to mention anything about which tone to use for which pronunciation<sup>6</sup>.

### 7.1.3 Analysis of example sentences – Your Kanji

Example 1: Chapter 15 イタリアの国旗は緑と白と赤の三色だ” The national flag of Italy is a tricolor of green, white and red.”

Example 2: Chapter 14 今、アルバイトを辞めるかどうか真剣に考えている “(I am) right now seriously considering whether or not to quit my part-time job.”

Example 3: Chapter 13 公園の池にたくさんのボートが浮かんでいる “There is a lot of boats floating on the pond in the park.”

Example 4: Chapter 12 三年前のモデルを 改善して、野菜を多く食べるようにしている “(I have) improved my lifestyle from three years ago and have been trying to eat a lot of vegetables.”

Example 5: Chapter 11 寿司も天ぷらも 共に 日本人が好きな食べ物だ” Both sushi and tempura are the Japanese people’s favorite food.”

(Oka *et al.* 2010, pp. 150, 164, 175, 190, 199; translation by the author of this thesis)

As we can see in these example sentences, they consist of four to six words each, excluding particles<sup>7</sup>. The grammar in sentence 15, 14, 12 is intermediate level, for instance 「ようにしている」 which can indicate habit making is intermediate level. We can also see that without an underline for the word that the user is supposed to learn it might be difficult to identify which one it is. The words are not linked to their example sentences due to the imprecise nature of the sentences, the content does not give the user any specific sentence to link the word to. In all sentences multiple words could be swapped and still present a grammatically correct sentence. However, the sentences are not void of semantic clues, for instance the Italian flag sentence is a strong sentence with good semantic clues.

### 7.2.1 Analysis of structure, layout and learning strategies – Kanpekikun

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<sup>6</sup> Due to Japanese having so many homophonous words, a lot of words are separated by tone instead. For example, *kaeru*, going home and *kaeru*, frog (帰る・蛙).

<sup>7</sup> 「が、は、を、へ、に…」 particles in Japanese can mark subject of a sentence, mark topic, mark object, mark direction and so forth.

In this section the structure of Kanpekikun will be analyzed according to the nine steps of instruction by Gagné (1986).

#### 7.2.1.1 Gain attention

Each chapter has a title which is not very related to the content of the chapter. However, since Kanpekikun is supposed to be used together with a textbook that has the same titles it is understandable. There is no information, specific questions or pictures directed at the user.

#### 7.2.1.2 Tell the learners the learning objective

In Kanpekikun we find clear instructions in form of numbers on how the user is supposed to approach each new character. First the user is supposed to train their knowledge regarding pronunciation, then learn how to write the character and lastly how to use it in a word and a sentence.

#### 7.2.1.3 Stimulate recall of prior learning

Throughout the two volumes there are six pages dedicated to rehearsing and remembering kanji which were learned in the previous year of school (4<sup>th</sup> grade). However, these pages feature only the type of exercises in which the student is supposed to provide the correct reading of a given kanji and writing a given word in correct kanji. Other than this, throughout the whole book the user needs to use their previously learned knowledge to solve exercises as they may contain words that they have previously learned. Radicals are most of the time explained to the user, sometimes with the help of kanji from earlier grades.

#### 7.2.1.4 Displaying the content

The contents of the two volumes are split up into 27 chapters, with five to ten new kanji each chapter. The chapters themselves do not have much that sets them apart, they follow the same structure of kanji explanation and lastly presents a self-test. But, within the kanji explanation section, the structure can differ. All chapters have the same structure for explaining each new kanji. First the user should practice *on-yomi*<sup>8</sup>, and if it has *kun-yomi* as well, it is the other way

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<sup>8</sup> On-yomi is the Sino-Japanese reading. Kun-yomi is the native reading.

around. Then writing order and structure of the character, lastly the user should write an example sentence. Every character also has a small information box regarding either the radicals or small things the user should watch out for when they are writing. However, in some chapters we find small comic-strips where the user can practice some of the new words in a context. Other than this we find smaller exercises which relate to, homonyms, making compound words, discovering incorrect radicals and what the meaning of the word is.

#### 7.2.1.5 Provide learning guidance

Kanpekikun provides within its description of each kanji some guidance. Such as the previously mentioned numerical order set out for the user to approach each new character and providing all pronunciations immediately before the user starts writing the character. As for writing there are very clear instructions on stroke-order and in the previously mentioned information box we can sometimes find common writing errors highlighted. There is no information regarding how to make the strokes, but this is probably due to Japanese schools having calligraphy class in their curriculum from first year of elementary school which teaches this basic knowledge.

#### 7.2.1.6 Elicit performance

The exercises within Kanpekikun are not very varied. They only consist of writing kanji through context of a sentence with pronunciation already provided. The user is first supposed to repeat the words provided after the explanation part. After they have done this they proceed to the “test-book” where the same exercises occur but without answers provided. This functions as a small test for each chapter. If the user made mistakes, there is a page provided for them to practice the words or kanji that they made mistakes on. There is however in Volume 2 some variation in form puzzles in which the user is supposed to pair together two kanji to form a compound word or match kanji with the correct pronunciation. There is also one exercise in which the user is supposed to copy a text, and with the help of *furigana* fill in the blanks of missing kanji.

In both volumes there is a challenge section. It is divided into four sections in Volume 1, and two sections in Volume 2. In these challenge sections, the user has additional exercises to test their knowledge of previous chapters in the book. Most of the exercises here are the same style as before, but some of them feature antonym- and radical-related exercises. In Volume 2 there is also a year-end test, in which the user is supposed to get a perfect score before finishing the book.

#### 7.2.1.7 Provide feedback

Kanpekikun does not provide much feedback other than answers to the exercises. As the answering format of the exercises leave no room for ambiguity, the user can easily check themselves if their answer was correct. These answers can be found in the last pages.

#### 7.2.1.8 Assess performance

Kanpekikun does not provide ways to assess performance other than the final test located in Volume 2. As this test requires the user to get a perfect score, it will be clear if the user needs to practice even more or not. However, this test does not cover everything presented in the book.

#### 7.2.1.9 Enhance retention and transfer to other contexts

In Kanpekikun there is no information regarding training kanji in other contexts nor how to apply the information in this book. This is probably due to kanji being such a basic part of reading and understanding the Japanese language, and that kanji occur everywhere else in their education as well as everyday life.

### 7.2.2 Analysis of kanji-related elements – Kanpekikun

#### 7.2.2.1 Kanji shape

We can see that information on stroke is presented for each new kanji in detail, both for the order and total strokes. There is no mention of the direction, type and finishing technique of each stroke (e.g. とめ stop, はらい stretch and はね hook). Once again, this is probably due to being basic knowledge.

Kanpekikun provides information on radicals for a select few kanji, often explaining the origin of radicals using pictograms. The origin of a whole character, however, is never explained.

#### 7.2.2.2 Kanji meaning

Regarding the meaning of the words presented to the user in this book, we can see that not much is offered to the user. The book's way of introducing new words is to have them presented in an example sentence, without any other information regarding meaning. Sometimes synonyms or

ambiguous words are presented in greater detail, but these instances are few. If presented, the book has a longer description of how the synonyms should be used together with example sentences. Antonyms are not discussed but they do appear in some exercises.

How to use the kanji/kanji-words is not discussed very much. Such as if it is written or spoken language, where it would be used, and if it is a prefix or a suffix. On the other hand, a lot of compound words are provided in both information parts and exercises. Some other exercises, such as kanji-puzzles focus more specifically on the user building compound words from a list of kanji, however these are few and far between.

### 7.2.2.3 Reading and pronunciation

*On-yomi* and *kun-yomi* are clearly provided for each new kanji presented in each chapter, but there are no conceptual explanations of on-yomi and kun-yomi. But, as most students learn in their history class that kanji comes from China and that kanji can have different on-yomi depending from where in China it came from at that time. The lack of conceptual explanations is probably due to this. Lastly, no other information regarding pronunciations nor homophonous words can be seen in the books.

### 7.2.3 Analysis of example sentences - Kanpekikun

Example 1: Chapter 25 桜が満開になる “The cherry trees will be in full blossom.”

Example 2: Chapter 24 電化製品を 輸出する “(They) export electrical appliances.”

Example 3: Chapter 23 参加者を小学生に 限る “Participants are limited to elementary school pupils”

Example 4: Chapter 22 係の人を 総動員する “(We) assemble all persons in charge.”

Example 5: Chapter 21 強い 意志 で計画を実行する “By (my) strong will, I will execute the plan.”

(Mitsumura Kyooiku Tosho (n.d.), pp. 46, 41, 38, 32, 29; translation by the author of this thesis)

Regarding example sentences presented in Kanpekikun, they are interesting due to a few points. The first point is that the sentences are compact and only have two to three words, except for the last sentence which consists of four words. The grammar in each sentence is very basic, although the words in the sentences do have semantic context. For instance, the word “満開” (fully blossomed) is used often in context with cherry blossoms, which means that it becomes relatable



to “桜” (cherry blossoms). Due to the grammatical simplicity, the sentences are very easy to translate as well.

## **8. Discussion**

### 8.1 Structure

While there are several similarities, the structures of Your Kanji and Kanpekikun have striking differences as well. As Your Kanji in form is very similar to a L1 workbook, the general structure of the two workbooks are very similar, as is initial presentation of each new chapter. Neither of the books give the user any clear goal on what is to be expected other than the name of the chapter, the presumption is that the user will systematically go through each character and then proceed to the exercises. Kanpekikun does however have a little bit more directional aid, as the order in which the user is supposed to proceed is always numbered. In order to stimulate recall of prior learning, both books make use of already learned kanji as radicals to structure up more complex characters, as well as incorporating prior knowledge into their respective exercises. As L2 learners are expected to learn more than the average L1 learner in a shorter period (Richmond 2005), it is not strange that the amount of exercises per character in Your Kanji far exceeds that in Kanpekikun. As Your Kanji has more example sentences for each new kanji, goes into further detail regarding radicals, has many exercises regarding understanding and putting the newly learned words into context. It can be concluded that Your Kanji has a greater focus on the user very clearly understanding its content.

The largest difference between the two books can be seen within the exercises. While Kanpekikun essentially only has writing and repeating exercises, Your Kanji has a wide array of slightly different structures that in the end focus less on writing and more on reading and understanding. This is due to L1 learners not having the need to learn both the kanji, translation of the word and the meaning. This is presumably due to the difference in focus on the learner's ability to be developed. With simple structured short sentences that are easily understandable for native speakers, L1 learners can concentrate on the kanji-related knowledge and skills. L2 learners on the other hand need to develop a wide variety of skills while learning kanji.

The other significant difference is the focus on self-assessment. Kanpekikun tests the user's memory after every chapter, which also shows very clearly what the user will have to study more afterwards. But since Your Kanji does not have anything like this, the user will have to feel what they might not have learned and study that themselves. Other than the extra exercises

on their webpage there is no extra help for the user. The webpage has kanji lists, kanji exercise sheets, similar kanji exercises as the book, kanji-flashcards and a kanji online resource.

## 8.2 Kanji-related elements

The characteristics of kanji related elements in Your Kanji and Kanpekikun are summarized in Table 2:

Points	Your Kanji	Kanpekikun
<b>Kanji Shape</b>		
1. Stroke order	Stroke order for each kanji is clearly provided, but principles are not provided.	Same as Your Kanji.
2. Number of strokes	Number of strokes is clearly provided, but not the type and finishing technique of strokes.	Same as Your Kanji.
3. Radicals	Radicals are presented and introduced, how to use them is also presented.	Radicals are not always presented.
4. Kanji origins	Some kanji's origins are explained.	Does not discuss origin.
<b>Usage</b>		
1. The meaning	The meaning of a new kanji is explained with the help of English and example sentences in Japanese. Ambiguity, synonyms and antonyms are somewhat discussed.	The meaning is explained with an example sentence. Ambiguity and antonyms are not discussed, but, antonym exercises do appear twice. Synonyms are sometimes presented.
2. Usage	Prefix and suffixes are introduced. Idioms and whether it is spoken or written language are not.	Not introduced.
3. Usage within examples	Yes	Yes
<b>Reading</b>		
1. On-yomi and kun-yomi	There is no general explanation of on-yomi and kun-yomi. On-yomi and kun-yomi are clearly provided.	Same as Your Kanji.
2. Pronunciation	There is no mention of homophonous words or how to pronounce them correctly.	Same as Your Kanji.
3. Origin of pronunciation	There is some mention.	No mention.

The items in Table 2 are based partially on Tables 2, 3 and 4 in Hayashi (2011). In Table 2 we can see similarities and differences of both books. Here we can once again see that approaches of the books are quite similar. General information regarding kanji such as stroke order, number of strokes, on-yomi and kun-yomi are all provided. However, presumably in relation to Assumptions 1 (L2 learners' difference in kanji perception) and 6 (L2 learners' need for special method) of Richmond (2005), Your Kanji has extra information about both radicals and origins of some characters, while it is not found in Kanpekikun. How the books introduce new radicals

to the user can at times be similar. For example, both the books use pictograms to help recall of the kanji's parts at later occasions.

Usage of the characters are presented in a slightly different manner in the two books. Your Kanji tends to focus on the user's understanding of the meaning and usage of kanji within a context rather than the meaning of the character itself. According to Richmond (2005) this does not resemble other famous L2 teaching material but instead is closer to Japanese textbooks, which was one thing that he believed to be very important for kanji learning and something that many L2 books missed.

Pronunciation is something the L1 learner encounters every day in their life. As intonation changes the meaning of some words completely it is surprising that homophonous words are not discussed in Your Kanji. Nor is there any mention of which words are only for writing, despite this also being an important aspect of the Japanese language.

### 8.3 Usage examples

The example sentences from the books which are presented in this study are very different. The ones used in Kanpekikun are short and simple, but they are, nevertheless, rich in semantic clues to specify the word in question. The ones used in Your Kanji are complete sentences, however they are if compared to Kanpekikun's sentences, longer and not as specific. For an intermediate learner, these longer sentences are not complicated enough to distract the user but, for focusing on kanji learning the simpler and more specific structure might be more useful. Although, here we can see a difference of the two books as well, as the Your Kanji series also features grammar and reading comprehension books, the focus might not only be to teach the student kanji but also strengthen the other parts at the same time. While Kanpekikun on the other hand has a much bigger focus on just kanji. Since the L2 learner needs to learn more information in a shorter period this is practical. This is however a very small sample size, but since they were picked from different parts it seems likely that most sentences follow this pattern.

## 9. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the differences and similarities of the two kanji-workbooks Your Kanji and Kanpekikun and discover whether similar L2 workbooks stood to gain

anything from such a comparison. As there is not much research done on comparing L1 and L2 textbooks, there is value to be found in such comparisons.

The similarities found in both books are probably because of the style they have, were Your Kanji is resembling a L1 workbook, especially when compared to other popular L2 textbooks (Richmond 2005, pp. 49, 50). Regarding the kanji themselves it does not seem that much can be gained from that kind of analysis. As most information presented in both books were similar and the differences were probably dependent on what information were presented in their respective textbooks. Regarding the example sentences in the books we can see that they are quite different. Whereas the ones found in Kanpekikun are much simpler in structure, the Your Kanji sentences are longer and incorporates more grammatical functions. This is due to the difference in focus of the two books. Kanpekikun only focuses on teaching the user kanji, while Your Kanji also aims to strengthen grammar and reading comprehension at the same time as teaching the user kanji. The findings in this study suggest that when comparing the example from 1989 “店内にはいろいろな 外国 のものがあります。”” There are many foreign items in the store.” (Kano *et al.* 1989, p.145, cited in Richmond) to the examples found in Your Kanji from 2010 we can however see some evidence that sentences with semantic clues have progressed and are being incorporated in workbooks.

This study does however have a very limited sample size. Comparing one kanji-material each for L2 and L1 is certainly not enough, but hopefully it is a valuable contribution to the unexplored field of research and can help spark more in interest in the subject. Also, due to length and time limitations the study was not able to go into depth as much as it could have been possible to.

An interesting part that might need more researching is how example sentences are presented with each new character. For instance, the examples presented in Kanpekikun are not for explaining what the new word means but instead through context, show how to use it. Maybe this sort of example sentence structure could be useful. Another significant point is structure, specifically eliciting performance. Your Kanji trusts the user to practice information that needs to be assessed more, and does not present any way to find out if the user needs to do so. Kanpekikun’s way of making space for the user to once again practice information might not be perfect, but it is an interesting idea that might be good to implement into Your Kanji and other L2 text books. It is also something that could be interesting to look more into and advancing it from just being extra kanji sheets.

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