

TEACHER'S DIFFICULTIES IN TEACHING JAPANESE WRITING SYSTEM (SAKUBUN)

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Abstract

This paper aims to describe the problem of teacher in teaching Japanese writing system (sakubun). Writing the letter of Japanese, *Hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji* will be the most difficult thing. Writing skills are necessary to develop students' practical communication abilities. Teacher is an important person in learning process. The role of the teacher is diverse and has several orientations. One important aspect is that of facilitator of student learning. The facilitator attempts to provide circumstances that will enable students to engage with the learning opportunities and construct for themselves their understandings and skills. That's why teacher should offer how to solve a Japanese student's problem in writing.

Keyword : Teacher difficulties, teaching Japanese writing system (sakubun)

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan permasalahan yang dihadapi guru dalam mengajarkan menulis sistem bahasa Jepang. Menulis huruf Jepang yaitu hiragana, katakana, dan kanji merupakan hal yang paling sulit untuk diajarkan. Keahlian menulis sangat dibutuhkan siswa untuk mengembangkan kemampuan berkomunikasi secara praktis. Peran guru bermacam-macam dan memiliki beberapa orientasi. Salah satunya adalah menjadi fasilitator dalam pembelajaran siswa. Sebagai fasilitator, guru harus mencoba untuk menciptakan suasana yang bisa membuat siswa terhubung dengan pembelajaran dan mengkonstruksi pemahaman dan keahlian mereka. Hal inilah yang membuat guru seharusnya menawarkan pemecahan masalah dalam belajar menulis bahasa Jepang.

Kata kunci: Kesulitan guru, pengajaran menulis bahasa Jepang

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has agreements with various countries, one of them is Japan. Therefore, in Indonesia, there has been a lot of people who studied the Japanese language. The development of Japanese language learning in Indonesia is quantitatively very rapid, but in qualitative still faces many obstacles. This relates to many factors, including the position of the mother tongue among the Japanese, Indonesian and English. Japanese language education in Indonesia, held at high schools, colleges, and courses. Interest in learning of Japanese language from year to year also continued to grow, both from the number of students and institutions/organizers.

In learning of Japanese language, the teacher is an important person. A teacher is a person who provides education for pupils (children) and students (adults). The role of teacher is often formal and ongoing, carried out at a school or other place of formal education. In Indonesia, a person who wishes to become a teacher must first obtain specified professional qualifications or credentials from a university or college. Improving the quality of Teaching and Learning Activities is the most important issue related to achieving quality education in Indonesia.

Writing must be considered from an interactive point of view, since the ultimate aim of any text is to be read and comprehended by a reader. Celce-Murcia and Ohlstein (2000:143), citing Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), speak of the "reader-based" approach to writing which gives great importance to the relation between reading and writing and considers that the aim of the latter is to produce a comprehensible text: In such a view the writer has the responsibility of creating a text which accommodates to the potential reader(s). The writer needs to use language, content, and

conventions of writing in a way that will enable the reader to extract the intended meaning effectively, even though the act of reading will be carried out at a time and place removed from and independent of the act of writing (Celce-Murcia and Olhstain, 2000:143)

Hoey can be said to share this interactive approach in that he considers that, from the point of view of writing, the different patterns may facilitate the learner the task of ordering the text which results in making it easier to read. Teaching the elements of the patterns can be beneficial to the learner since, as he says, "The various SPRE patterns serve as ready-made templates and, while it is emphatically not the case that all good writing has to conform to them, it can benefit a learner writer to have a pattern to stick to" (2001:167-8). In spite of the fact that knowledge of the patterns can be considered culturally bound to the Western World and, to that extent, familiar enough for the learner, Hoey insists that their teaching is not superfluous even if their sole utility is to help students organize their thoughts. In Hoey's view the signalling vocabulary plays an essential role in the teaching of the patterns. It is important to make learners aware of the fact that, as readers, they should be able to identify the signals that mark the patterns and, therefore, as writers they must provide these signals.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Japanese Language

Japanese as an international language has been taught in almost all countries in the world. In Indonesia, Japanese is a foreign language which is a subject to be taught in many schools. However, we have seen that the proficiency in Japanese of secondary school graduates still creates disappointment among teachers themselves as well as parents. The unsatisfying quality of Japanese in Indonesia of course is related to various different variables.

Many say that in terms of hearing and speaking Japanese is not that difficult to learn. The hard part is reading and writing, especially the kanji (Chinese characters). People need to know three alphabets to read a newspaper in Japan. The difficult-to-master Japanese writing system consists of two phonetic alphabets -letter hiragana (for Japanese words) and letter katakana (mostly for foreign words)—and Chinese characters known as kanji. Most Japanese understand around 2,000 kanji characters. Educated Chinese, by contrast, can read about 5,000 characters. Japanese has an extensive grammatical system to express politeness and formality.

The Japanese language can express differing levels in social status. The differences in social position are determined by a variety of factors including job, age, experience, or even psychological state (e.g., a person asking a favour tends to do so politely). The person in the lower position is expected to use a polite form of speech, whereas the other might use a more plain form. Strangers will also speak to each other politely. Japanese children rarely use polite speech until they are teens, at which point they are expected to begin speaking in a more adult manner. *See uchi-soto*. Whereas *teineigo* (丁寧語) (polite language) is commonly an inflectional system, *sonkeigo* (尊敬語) (respectful language) and *kenjōgo* (謙讓語) (humble language) often employ many special honorific and humble alternate verbs: *iku* "go" becomes *ikimasu* in polite form, but is replaced by *irassharu* in honorific speech and *ukagau* or *mairu* in humble speech.

2.2. Standard competencies of japanese teacher

Teachers need to improve knowledge and skills to enhance, improve and explore their teaching practices. Many of the studies on competencies of teachers focus on the teaching role of teachers in the classroom rather than teachers' competencies. Teachers' competencies have been broadening with respect to reform studies in education, development of teacher education, scientific results of educational science and other fields. Kress pointed out that "the previous era had required an education for stability, the coming era requires an education for instability" (133). Kress' ideas can explain why teachers' professional development should be redefined for sustainability. The aims of education change very quickly depending on the demands of the era requiring more capability. These demands directly affect educational system.

Teachers who studied Japanese must followed The Japanese Language Proficiency Test (日本語能力試験 *Nihongo Nōryoku Shiken*), which is a standardized criterion-referenced test to evaluate and certify Japanese language proficiency for non-native speakers. The JLPT was expanded to five levels in 2010, with passing Level N5 denoting simple language abilities, and Level N1

denoting advanced language abilities. This test is an excellent way to test your skills and will help motivate you to study. It is also good for showing potential employers what your Japanese ability is. If you want to enter a Japanese university in the future, passing the Level 1 test is required.

Table 1 Nihongo Noryouku Shiken content

Level	Kanji	Vocabulary	Listening/Conversation	Time of Study (est.)
N1	~2,000	~10,000	Fluent	900hrs
N2	~1,000	~6,000	Advanced/Business	600hrs
N3			Upper-Intermediate	
N4	~300	~1,500	Lower-Intermediate/Conversational	
N5	~100	~800	Basic	150hrs

2.3. Japanese writing system (*Sakubun*)

Writing skills in Japanese called *sakubun* can be classified into three kinds, namely:

1. write letters (Kana and Kanji);
2. write a sentence (*bunsaku*); and
3. write a story / essay (*sakubun*). (Sutedi, 2008a: 1)

Writing letters typically go into subjects (*Hyouki* or Kanji), while writing a sentence is usually given in the grammar lesson language (*Bunpou* / *Hyougen*). Essay writing is given in the lesson *Sakubun*. For teachers and students, *sakubun* is the most difficult lesson. Students have to spend all Japanese-language skills when it will convey an idea or ideas into written form. It should be supported with a mastery of kanji, vocabulary, sentence patterns and expressions of the Japanese language, so they can deliver their ideas into Japanese properly. Meanwhile, teachers required to provide an adequate training and guidance, both in quantity and quality, in addition he must be corrected and make revisions.

Writing refers to tasks in which students practice predetermined language forms, and the aim is formal linguistic accuracy, not self-expression. Guided writing differs in that the language is increasingly based on each student's experiences. In a pedagogical context, students' writing skills are usually assessed by test scores and overt performance. As a result, they are identified as successful and unsuccessful writers. However, from an activity theory perspective, these scores might not explain motives underlying their performance nor consider that student writers may all have divergent reasons and divergent goals for engaging in the task.

Activity Theorists suggest that teachers look at this underlying motivation as it is bound to affect learners' strategic approaches to the task and thus their learning outcomes. Writing processes also seem to be influenced by previous experiences, developed the idea that a good writer is one who can create a good Japanese sentence with accuracy, fluency, and quality. Teachers would do well to identify students' strengths and weaknesses by analyzing the individual students' learning history. The students interpreted academic writing very differently and hence they wrote differently according to their different beliefs. Teachers need to develop an awareness of students as individual agents involved in shaping their activities based on their own particular goals and previous learning histories. The individual's beliefs and motives largely determine which actions will be maximized and selected and how they will be undertaken in a particular setting. This indicates that different learning outcomes might be accomplished even though learners apparently engage in the same task under the same instruction in the same classroom.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research used qualitative method. Methods of data collection were used including documentary research and in-depth interviews with university lecturers who teach Japanese in universities. This research taken in university technology of Yogyakarta. It has interviews with high school teachers who teach Japanese language as well. The analysis of documentary sources is a

major method of social research and one which many qualitative researcher see as a meaningful and appropriate in the context of the research strategy (mason, 2002 p.35)

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Finding

The writing problems derive from many factors a lack of vocabulary, the sequencing of prose, difficulty understanding that context must be communicated and many more. In the Japanese language, three-character systems are used: hiragana, katakana and kanji. For students to become fluent in the language, they will need to know how to read each of these character types. Many teachers start by going over *hiragana*, a syllable system that is used for native Japanese words, Katakana is used mainly for foreign words, while kanji are based off the Chinese character system. The difficulties of write japanese letters could be the biggest problem. There are many problems if you teaching kanji. There is almost no connection between how useful a kanji is and how complex it is.

Other problems in teaching sakubun are the syntactic differences between Japanese and Indonesian languages, for example, where the predicate in a sentence, the location of the object, MD (menerangkan diterangkan) is also a change of verb in Japanese. It also adds to the difficulty of students in developing the Japanese sentence in an essay. Therefore, we need a good knowledge and understanding of the differences in both languages. In writing sakubun or essays, the *だ, です* or *である* form is normally used. Japanese normally distinguish between spoken form from written form and they are learned in the process of education as something you use when you speak versus something you use when you write.

Here, the example of student errors in sakubun

私の家族は五人います。父と母と兄と妹と私です。父は会社員です。48さいです。父は親切です。我慢です。頭がいいです。母は主婦です。42歳です。毎朝、料理を作ります。とても上手です。母は親切です。きれいです。頭がいいです。

The students only use some simple sentences in make sakubun task

The result of a Japan Foundation survey in 2009 showed that problems in managing Japanese education in Indonesia were: (1) inadequate textbooks; (2) shortage of teachers; (3) lack of students' enthusiasm; (4) shortage of equipment and tools; and (5) inadequate Japanese knowledge and capability of teachers, respectively.

4.2 Discussion

Contemporary Japanese possesses three major types of words, (1) *kango* (Sino-Japanese words), (2) *wago* (Japanese native words), and (3) *gairaigo* (loanwords), and each word type is associated with three types of scripts, (1) *kanji* (Chinese characters), (2) *hiragana*, and (3) *katakana*. *Kanji* are a set of logographic/ideographic scripts, and both *hiragana* and *katakana* are phonetic syllabaries. *Kanji* are used for presenting *kango* and *wago*, while some *wago* are written only in *hiragana*. *Katakana* are used for presenting *gairaigo*. The increase of *katakana* words in Japanese writings poses a problem to foreign learners of Japanese whose L1 is English. As reported in various research including Chikamatsu (1996), the learners generally experience difficulty in processing and comprehending *katakana* words. From the learners' perspective, the increase of *katakana* words in Japanese writings means that the learners need to know more *katakana* words than ever before to read Japanese writings. In general, a Japanese sentence is typically written in a combination of *kanji* and *hiragana*. *Kanji* are used for content words, and *hiragana* are used for some content words with Japanese native origin, as well as function words such as particles, conjunctions, and the inflected part of conjugating verbs/adjectives. *Katakana* are used for some content words, as well as loanwords from foreign language except Chinese, and onomatopoeic renditions.

There are several factors that can be considered to cause foreign learners' difficulty with *katakana* words. First, these learners have difficulty with *katakana* words because they cannot familiarize themselves with *katakana* script from the current teaching texts where *katakana* words do not appear as frequently as *kanji* words and *hiragana* words. Second, word frequency for the majority of *gairaigo* that do appear in textbooks was found to be considerably low. Nor are the pedagogical practices in Japanese classes for foreign learners particularly engaged with the problem of teaching about *katakana*.

Foreign learners of Japanese have difficulty with *katakana* words because they cannot familiarize themselves with *katakana* script from the current teaching settings where *katakana* words do not appear as frequently as *kanji* words and *hiragana* words. Accordingly, learners do not have enough exposure to these words and cannot establish a sense of script familiarity for the words, and as a result, they suffer in their lack of facility in rapid word recognition and lexical access. In order to help them develop their sense of script familiarity for the words and to familiarize themselves with *katakana* script, *katakana* script and *katakana* words need to appear frequently. Teachers of the Japanese language to foreigners must be trained to recognize how difficult *katakana* words are for foreign learners. This change in attitude and an awareness of learners' perspectives will make teachers specifically address *katakana* issues and develop the appropriate methods for teaching *katakana* words. In order to change teachers' attitudes toward *katakana* and to make them aware of the difficulty with *katakana* words for the learners, government agencies can play a significant role.

Teacher has several ways to solve the problem in increase the vocabulary of the students to make a better *sakubun*

1. Use a Flashcard

Flashcards are a great way to review hiragana, katakana or kanji: it requires students to read the character, then has them practice their pronunciation. Teachers can create paper flashcards of the different letters and practice them in a group setting. For example, the teacher can break the class into groups, then show a flashcard to one group at a time. If the first group does not correctly answer the flashcard, then the next team gets a chance to answer. When a group answers correctly, the teacher can add a point to a tally on the chalkboard. Whichever group has the largest number of points at the end of the flashcard practice can win a prize, such as extra credit, but the best way to learn kanji properly is to write each character out physically many, many, many times

2. Use some audiovisual media related to the use of radio and television in the teaching of

reading and writing of languages., through Japanese movies, TV programs and radio programs is the best way to know more about Japanese and Watching Japanese television programs, it feels like you're not studying but all the while there are kanji up on the screen Through Japanese movies, TV programs and radio programs is the best way to know more about Japanese and Watching Japanese television programs, it feels like you're not studying but all the while there are kanji up on the screen.

3. Make a summary (*youyakubun*)

Make some images series which form a story in sequence. This picture is shown on students, then they are asked to make a story based on the picture There are many solutions in teaching kana (the letter of Japanese) related to writing (*sakubun*)

4. Board memory

Write kana or kanji being studied randomly on the board. Ss then try to memorize them. Get Ss to put their heads down. 'Minai de kudasai. *みないでください。*' Then erase one of the letters. Ask the Ss to look 'Hai, mitte kudasai *みつてください。*' Ss put their hands up if they know which letter is missing. The Tt selects the Ss who was the fastest. If they are correct then they can get the next chance at erasing a letter from the board. (Flashcards can also be used instead of writing the letters on the board. These flashcards can easily be removed and replaced.)

5. Colour dictation

Give each student a copy of the hiragana/katakana dictation sheet. Ensure each student has coloured pencils or pens. Read randomly each letter and a colour, ie. Trace the hiragana ka in red (ひらがなの「か」をあかくなぞってください。) OR Trace the katakana ko in blue (かたかなの「コ」をあおくなぞってください)

5. CONCLUSION

Teachers are responsible for operating educational system and they need strong and efficient professional competencies also the Japanese teachers. Teachers, like other professionals, may have to continue their education after they qualify, a process known as continuing professional development. Teachers may use a lesson plan to facilitate student learning, providing a course of study which is called the curriculum. In education, teachers facilitate student learning, often in a school or academy or perhaps in another environment such as outdoors. A teacher who teaches on an individual basis may be described as a tutor

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