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Abstract (up to 500 words):

For non-Japanese living in Japan, it is essential to learn to communicate in Japanese in order to understand, appreciate, and actively engage in Japanese culture. Literacy is one measure of understanding, and also one of the greatest hurdles for foreign students; learning to read and write Japanese by mastering the Kanji in a reasonable amount of time. Dr. James Heisig has earned international acclaim through his development of an innovative approach to *Remembering the Kanji*, known as the Heisig Method, by which Dr Heisig taught himself how to read and write 2000 Kanji in just one month. Others have repeated this in various time frames, and a number of Website and Apps have been developed to support study by the Heisig Method.

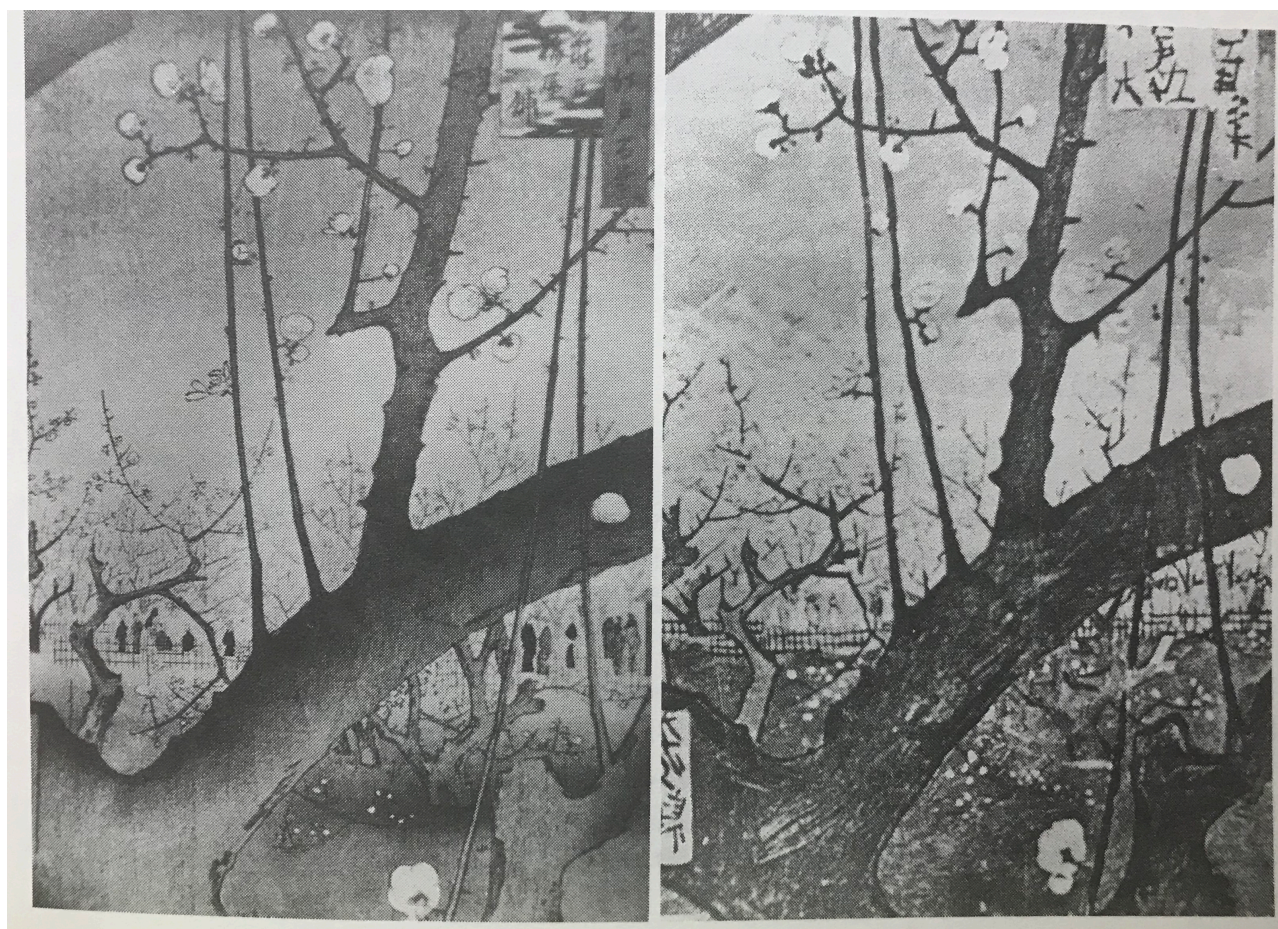
While the Heisig Method has proven popular among students of Kanji in many countries, the success of the method depends on four factors: *motivation, concentration, visualization, and review*. We have explored methods for increasing retention and engagement in the process of remembering the Kanji, making use of both digital and analog methods for enhancing concentration and visualization.

Concentration is developed using simple techniques to enhance mental focus, which are measured using the JINS MEME technology monitoring head and eye movements through sensors in special eyewear. Visualization is developed by illustrating the stories associated with

Heisig mnemonics, and recording these in a notebook for frequent review. Participants in the study are beginning students of Japanese enrolled as foreign students at Yamanashi University's International College of Liberal Arts (iCLA). Effectiveness of the approach was monitored by university professors of Japanese Language. It is hoped that this pilot study will form the basis for enhanced learning of the Kanji by students around the world.

Introduction

Vincent Van Gogh's oil painting *Flowering Plum Tree* (1887) is a remarkably accurate copy of Hiroshige's Ukiyoe *Plum Park in Kameido* (1857), Graphically faithful in nearly every detail when it came to flowers, tree branch shapes and angles, it contains an awkward anomaly. The Chinese characters in the painting are a poor estimation of the original, drawn in distorted proportion, and seem to have been added as a border decoration without any of the attention to detail given to the tree branches. Presumably unable to read or write Japanese characters, they are only roughly rendered. To the untrained eye, it is difficult to distinguish one Japanese character or Kanji from another, and at first glance they may appear to be as illegible as chicken scratches.



From *Shodo: The Art of Coordinating Mind, Body, and Brush*, William Reed, Japan Publications (1989). On the right is Van Gogh's painting as a copy of Hiroshige's Ukiyoe on the left.

The hurdle facing non-Japanese attempting to gain literacy in the Japanese language is formidable. Japanese children begin learning to read Japanese at the age of six, are expected to be able to read 1,006 Kanji by the time they graduate from Elementary School, and 2,136 Kanji by the age of 15 as part of their compulsory education. Moreover, Japan's literacy rate is frequently cited at 99%. While this is often attributed to repetition and rote learning from a young age, few non-Japanese have the time or inclination to study Kanji by this method.

A total of 317 Kanji are covered in GENKI, the commonly used textbook for foreigners learning Japanese at university level. The pace of study is generally set at 4 or 5 hours per week for 30 to 32 weeks, with 145 Kanji in the first year with GENKI I, and 172 Kanji in the second year with GENKI II, accounting for 254 of the 284 Kanji required for Level 3 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. This is slightly more than the 240 Kanji that are taught by the second grade of Elementary school for Japanese children.

However, in this study using a method adapted from James Heisig's *Remembering the Kanji*, and enhanced by the use of student-generated stories, illustrations, and presentations, university students from 7 different countries were able to master reading and writing of 240 or more Kanji in a period of just 15 weeks, with only 2-1/2 hours of classes per week. Although the evaluation was limited to matching and writing Kanji with key English words, not including Japanese readings, pronunciation, or vocabulary, students who studied by this method consistently outperformed classmates studying the GENKI textbook by the conventional method and pace.

The method of Kanji Mnemonics used in this course will be explained in detail, with examples given of student-generated illustrations and stories. A theory will be proposed for why this method proved so successful for foreign students learning Kanji, along with suggestions on how to enhance concentration and even double the effectiveness of the method. While this approach was designed for foreign students learning Japanese, it also proved effective for students from Hong Kong who were already familiar with Kanji in Chinese, and it will be recommended as an innovative method for Japanese to learn English studying Kanji alongside foreign students. As a result, students were able to master in just 15 weeks the reading and writing of Kanji that are typically taught at university level over a period of 2 years. All students aspired to learn even more Kanji, and one student from the UK mastered 500 Kanji after only 4 months in Japan.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to develop methods for increasing retention and engagement by foreign university students in reading and writing Japanese Kanji characters. We started with the *Remembering the Kanji* method developed by Dr. James Heisig, Permanent Fellow, Nanzan

Institute for Religion & Culture, and Professor, Faculty of Arts and Letters at Nanzan University in Nagoya, Japan. *Remembering the Kanji* is a 3-series volume first published in 1977, written by James Heisig to share the method which he developed for his own study of the Kanji, and by which he was able to master reading and writing of over 2000 Kanji in just one month. Originally written in English, the book has been translated into Dutch, French, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, German, and Hungarian. The Heisig Method has proven popular among students of Kanji in many countries, and has led to many support tools based on the method, reference sheets, smart phone Apps, and interactive websites.

Making use of both digital and analog tools that support the Heisig Method, we established a ritual for students to create their own stories and illustrations to enhance concentration and visualization. To increase retention, students regularly presented their original stories and illustrations to the class, which were also written into in a common notebook that was shared in PDF form at the end of the course. For review we made use of Flashcards and paired study, and gave frequent quizzes matching and writing Kanji with English key words, as feedback on actual retention.

The process of creating original stories and illustrations using the Heisig Key words, sharing creative output through paired study and presentations, and frequent feedback through Flashcards and Quizzes enhanced the effective application of the method by boosting *motivation, concentration, visualization, and review*.

Origin and Review of the Heisig Method

According to an interview with James Heisig in *The Japan Visitor*, he was invited by the then President of Nanzan University to come to Japan and help establish The Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture. He was sent by the university to a Japanese language school in Kamakura, where he was expected to learn Japanese as part of the process. He was told to concentrate on the reading rather than the writing of Kanji, and to follow the textbook by coming to class. He was not interested in attending classes, preferring to study the language on his own, for which he met strong resistance from the Japanese language teachers, given it was his first exposure to the Japanese language, and because of the difficulty of learning the Kanji.

Nevertheless, he persisted in his plan for self-study, through which he discovered that the characters were made of some 220 pieces, which fit together in a rational system that formed pictures, and could be described in a short sentence. Based on this discovery, Heisig went about assigning key English words to the parts and the characters, and in the process was able to associate key English words with each Kanji character. Spending about 10 hours a day, he was able to learn how to read and write the 1875 required Kanji in just 30 days! This was done by comprehension and association, and with hardly any review.

His language teachers did not believe that this was possible, but he proved them wrong by correctly reading or writing Kanji selected at random from the full list. Nevertheless, by consensus the language teachers told him that he was doing himself a big disservice learning in this way, and that it was only possible because he had a photographic memory. He would not retain them over time, and it would discourage the other students who did not have a photographic memory.

When he returned to Nanzan University, where he had been assigned the task of learning the Kanji, he was again met with disbelief, but after he proved that he had indeed learned the Kanji, the president of the university recognized this remarkable achievement, and told him that he should put his method into a book, which the university would publish. Eventually it was taken up by a publisher, and became known worldwide as the Heisig Method, the cause being supported by a number of smartphone apps and interactive websites.

James Heisig himself acknowledges that the method requires dedication, and most people are not in a position to devote that kind of time and concentrated effort to the task. Given that *motivation, concentration, visualization, and review* are also critical factors in successfully mastering the Kanji, it is a rare person that can actually achieve Heisig's level of success in that short a time. Critics of the Heisig method find that some of the key word choices are ambiguous or eccentric, and that rapid initial progress can sometimes slow to a snail's pace, or the demands of business and family life can often interfere. Some people visualize better in pictures words than words. Some students prefer to create their own stories, while others prefer to work with stories already provided. Heisig acknowledges that his own stories and associations were highly individualistic, and encourages people to form their own.

Nevertheless, consistency in the use of Key words is essential if you want to access words in a digital application, and helps to avoid confusion as the number of Kanji increases.

Research Form and Methods

The *Shortcuts to Kanji* Class at the International College of Liberal Arts (iCLA) at Yamanashi Gakuin University has been conducted on a pilot basis, and is now in the fourth year. While the mix of students varies from semester to semester, in the Spring of 2018 we had 10 foreign students, coming from the Philippines, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom. In past semesters we have also had students from Germany, Belgium, Northern Ireland, Croatia, Azerbaijan, and Burkina Faso. We have been able to test and refine the method with foreign students from fourteen countries. The course is taught entirely in English, as students are only expected to read and write the Kanji by association with English key words. They are free to learn the Japanese pronunciation on their own, which is also covered

along with grammar and vocabulary in other Japanese language courses. Certified teachers of Japanese language who are also professors at iCLA have supervised the course, and also conduct the quizzes and evaluations. They consistently remark that students who are taking the *Shortcuts to Kanji* Class have a distinct advantage when they encounter these Kanji in other Japanese language courses. When they encounter Kanji in other language classes, they are already familiar with their meaning and how they are written, so they can concentrate more easily on pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar in context.

In order to provide consistency in content, we use an established list of key words for the Kanji that is drawn from the Apps and interactive websites based on the Heisig Method. The students are tested based on the association of the Kanji with these key words. The Kanji are introduced in the sequence used by Japanese Elementary school students by class year, not the sequence used in the Heisig book *Remembering the Kanji*, or in the GENKI textbook, although there is considerable overlap.

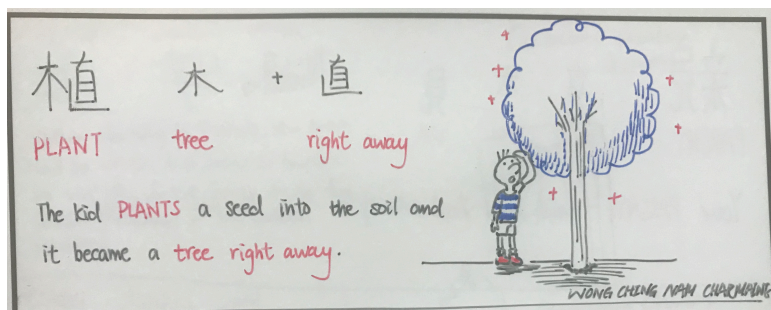
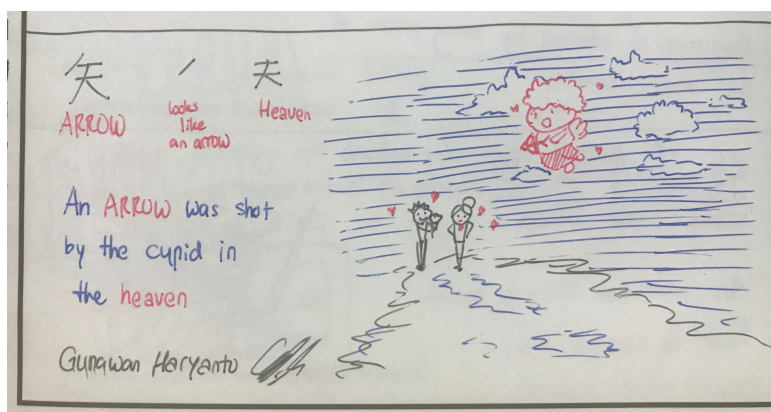
In order to provide consistency in method, students follow these 8 steps, writing the Kanji in their own notebooks, as well as a common notebook. We review them frequently, until they become familiar faces.

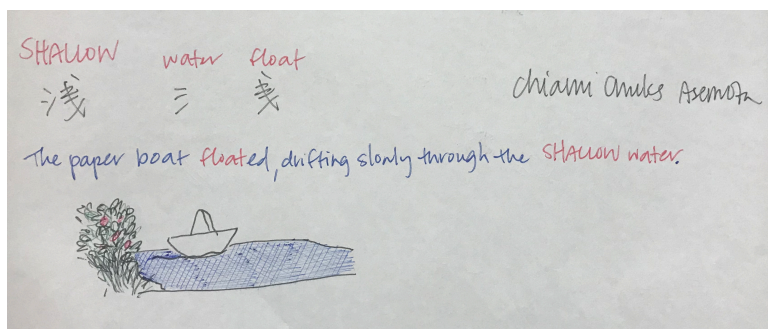
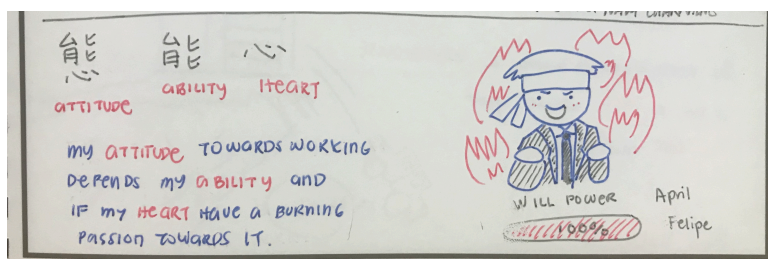
- 1) Use a three-color pen, or a **black**, **blue**, and **red** marker to write the Kanji, the Key Words, and draw the pictures for the Stories.
- 2) Write the Kanji in **black**, making sure to use the correct stroke order and stroke proportions for proper balance.
- 3) Write the key word from Heisig in **red**.
- 4) Write the radicals or primitives in **black** which make up the Kanji, and their Key words in **red**.
- 5) Connect these parts in a simple sentence that uses all of the Key words. It is best to come up with your own imaginative story, but this takes practice, so you may wish to search on kanshudo.com, kanji.koohii.com, for stories that other people have come up with around the world, refer to Heisig's original stories and key words in *Remembering the Kanji* book or App, or in Apps such as *Kanji Chart*.
- 6) Draw a simple sketch to illustrate the story or connections, using **blue**, but with touches of **black** and **red**.
- 7) Tell or teach the story to another person, or read it out loud to yourself, referring to the picture and Key words. The key here is *Show and Tell*.
- 8) Repeat this process with frequent review, but speeding it up and doing it mentally. Go back regularly and test yourself.

These 8 steps become a ritual for taking notes and inputting the Kanji in memory. Although excellent mnemonic stories are readily available in the Apps, students usually prefer to create their own stories, and all of the illustrations are original student drawings. The quality of the illustrations is exceptional, and each is a unique expression of the student's personality and sense of humor. Drawing in 3 colors with an erasable pen enables students to engage their imagination in a way that could not be achieved with monotonous indelible black ink, or with printed characters in a textbook.

Looking at samples of the students' drawings, you notice immediately how the illustration occupies from a third to half of the frame. The logic of the character is embedded in the key words assigned to each part of the Kanji, and the short sentence connects the words into a story. The author signs each illustrated Kanji Story, providing a sense of ownership and originality. Although the Apps and interactive websites provide prewritten stories to help remember the Kanji, most of the students prefer to create and illustrate their own sentence stories from the key words.

Foreign students at iCLA from Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and the USA produced the following drawings. They are imaginative, fun, and easy to remember.





The illustrations and stories above are student generated. They also have access to stories online such as the following from Kanshudo.com, which breaks the character into parts with key words, and suggests a sentence that connects the key words and makes them easier to remember.

浅

セン あさい shallow, superficial

the three spears (浅) in the water (水) show it's shallow

three spears

(looks like) a spear (戈) with three (三) bars not one

戈

spear; javelin

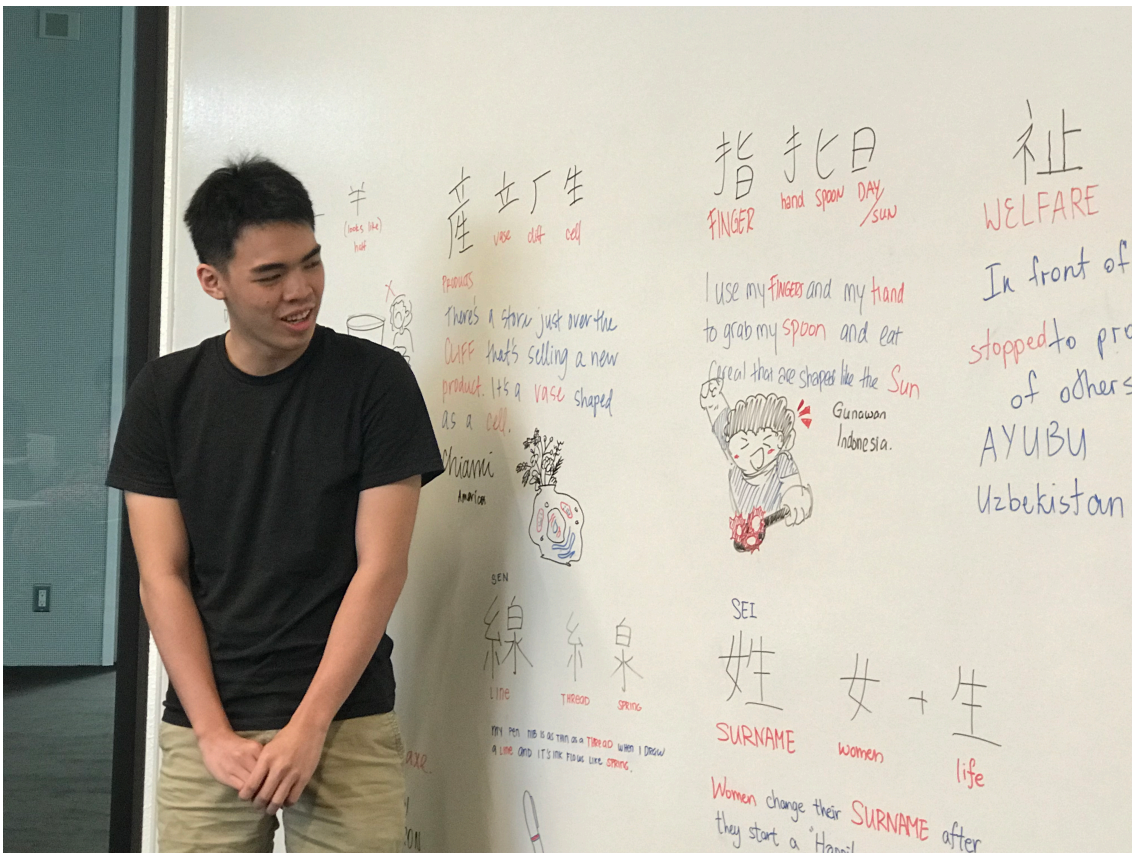
三

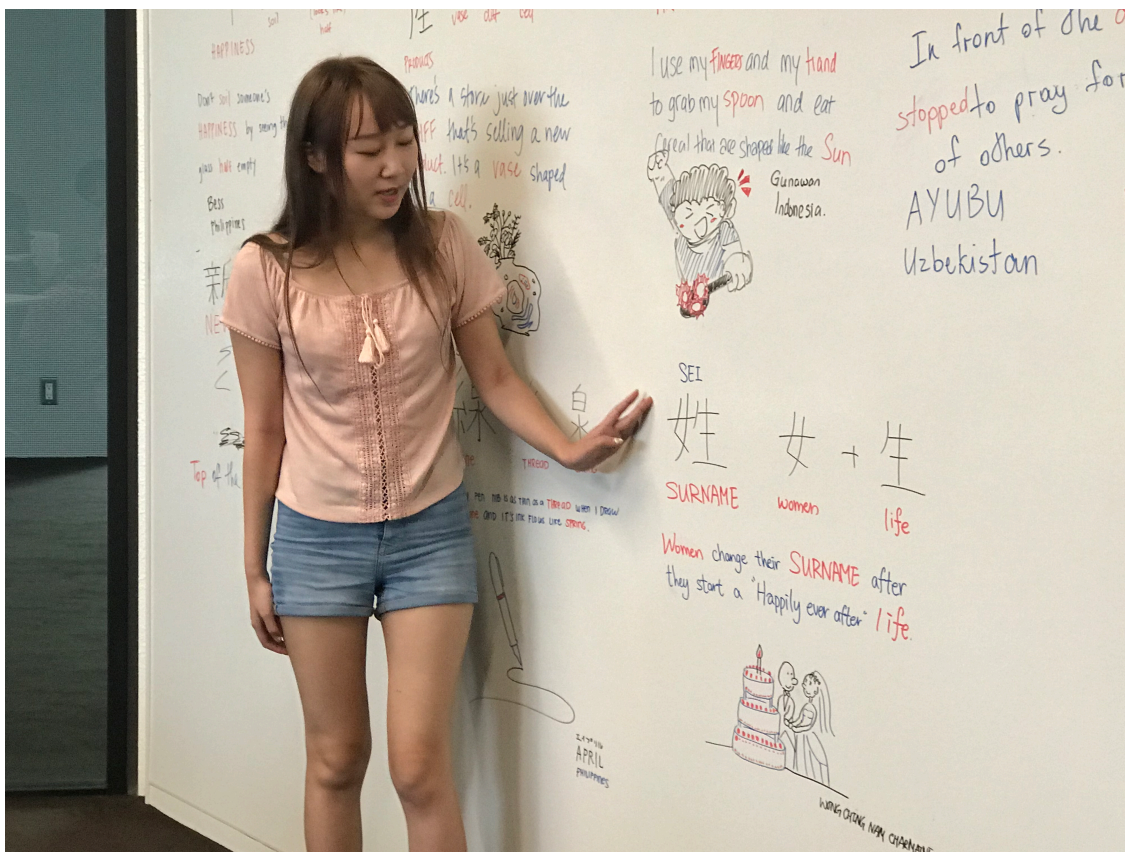
サン みつ three

水

すい みず water

The diversity of cultures represented in the classroom, and the ratio of two instructors for ten students allows students to proceed at their own pace, to study in pairs, and to share their results with their peers. This leads to a high degree of concentration, and motivation stimulated by frequent feedback and real progress. Students enjoy the mix of analog methods such as drawing and presenting stories, along with quick access to key words in digital tools.





In the words of an experienced teacher of Japanese as a foreign language, Akiyama Maki, Adjunct Instructor of Japanese Language to Yamanashi Gakuin University's Business and Information

Sciences Department, who has supervised the *Shortcuts to Kanji* Class and conducted the testing and evaluation:

“In a Japanese language school or university class for beginning students of Japanese from foreign countries, the typical number of Kanji which students are expected to learn at the beginner’s level in a period of 3 to 4 months ranges from 80~100 Kanji. However, in the Shortcuts to Kanji class students starting from zero knowledge of Kanji, Hiragana, or Katakana, were able to master correct recognition and writing of between 250~400 Kanji in just 15 weeks. This exceptional level of achievement has not been possible with the conventional approach to teaching of Japanese Kanji to foreign students. It clearly demonstrates the importance of engaging the memory with mnemonic associations for the learning and retention of Kanji.

Moreover, students who have learned to recognize and read Kanji by this method have consistently demonstrated a distinct advantage when they encounter Kanji in other Japanese language courses, reflected in rapid understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence meaning. This approach has been highly effective in teaching Kanji to foreign students, and also demonstrates great promise and potential for Japanese students as a way of learning to communicate in English through Kanji.”

Findings

The Shortcuts to Kanji Course began by offering students 8 basic questions to get them started in thinking about their Kanji Study in this course. The purpose was to give students a balanced perspective on how to approach the study of Kanji, as well as inspire confidence in what they will gain through the course.

1. Can you demonstrate your ability to read and write the first 300 Kanji from the GENKI text?
2. Can you demonstrate your knowledge and use of Heisig Apps and Websites for Remembering the Kanji?
3. Can you demonstrate your use of Websites useful in looking up and remembering Kanji?
4. Can you demonstrate proper stroke order and the ability to write basic Kanji?
5. Can you recognize the principles of balanced handwriting in Kanji, and what it shows about the personality?
6. Can you show effective use of Flash Cards as a tool for reviewing the Kanji?
7. Can you tell and illustrate Kanji Stories using the Heisig imagery?
8. Can you demonstrate knowledge or a study plan to master the first 1006 Kanji required of elementary school students in Japan?

I started studying Japanese as a foreign exchange student at Waseda University in 1972. We had no electronic devices, no Internet, and no Heisig Method. Everything was by book, using complicated search tables to count strokes and find radicals, and rote repetition writing Kanji by hand. It was not for the faint of heart, and only the most dedicated students achieved Kanji literacy over a period of years. The tools available today, combined with the Heisig Method, make it much easier to learn Kanji. However, the rules for memory and retention are the same today as they were back then, and probably from the beginning of civilization. There are no shortcuts to motivation. Unless you use the mnemonic techniques with *motivation, concentration, visualization, and review*, then digital tools may help you in looking up a character, but will not help you in remembering it ten minutes later.

We found a number of approaches to be effective in creating an optimal learning environment and encourage students to keep up their momentum in learning Kanji.

- Have high expectations for the number of Kanji that they can learn, but let the students demonstrate and model to each other what is possible.
- Create an environment where students can feel comfortable studying Kanji entirely in English, which equalizes the learning process for the students.
- Emphasize the importance of ritual and consistency in Kanji study, but allow students freedom to move at their own pace and enjoy the social element of group study.
- Give frequent feedback with Flashcards and Kanji Quizzes, with praise and encouragement for their progress.
- Introduce interesting elements of Kanji Culture, such as handwriting and calligraphy, and show them how the ability to read Kanji can open new worlds of access and appreciation living in Japan.
- Relate Kanji to Pop culture, such as Anime and Karaoke, as well as to travel, food menus, and shop signs.
- Introduce useful Smartphone Apps that can enhance Kanji study, such as *imiwa?* and *yomiwa*, which bring Kanji to your fingertips.

Kanji is a critical element of learning to communicate in Japanese. It is also a bridge to the Japanese culture, as well as the culture of China. Kanji literacy is a passport to understanding, appreciating, and engaging in life while living in Japan. But without mnemonic shortcuts and the proper learning environment, Kanji can be confusing and frustrating to a foreign student trying to learn the language. Partly for this reason Japanese language texts have tried to slow down the process and lower expectations, rather than trying to encourage students to surpass their own expectations in learning Kanji.

Importance of Handwriting

Reliance on smartphones and digital communication, many young Japanese are losing their ability to write Kanji without reference to a digital dictionary. Engaging their fingers through handwriting may be the best way to engage their brains and remember how to write the characters in their own native language.

The role of handwriting in brain development and education is gaining attention from researchers in the United States, even as it is fading from the curriculum in schools. Maria Konnikova writes in a New York Times article, *What's Lost as Handwriting Fades*, that handwriting provides many benefits to the brain, and should not be considered a thing of the past. Educators in the United States are only teaching legible handwriting in Kindergarten and First Grade, then from an early age encourage students to shift toward writing on a keyboard. Some parents object to teaching handwriting at all, with the misguided impression that it serves no practical purpose in an IT dominated world. Yet psychologists and neuroscientists are finding that handwriting can promote brain development. Children who learn to write first not only learn to read faster, but are better at generating ideas and remembering information.

College students today tend to take notes on a computer rather than to write them by hand. Yet according to Konnikova: “Two psychologists, Pam A. Mueller of Princeton and Daniel M. Oppenheimer of the University of California, Los Angeles, have reported that in both laboratory settings and real-world classrooms, students learn better when they take notes by hand than when they type on a keyboard.”

William R. Klemm, PhD, writes in *Psychology Today*, *Why Writing by Hand Could Make You Smarter*, that there is strong scientific evidence showing that handwriting is superior to keyboard entry in terms of learning benefits. More evidence may emerge from the new field of research called *Haptics*, which studies the interactions of touch, hand movements, and brain function.

The importance of handwriting to cultivate intelligence has also been taken up by the Wall Street Journal, in articles such as, *How Handwriting Can Make You Smarter*, and *How Handwriting Trains the Brain*. Even the business world is promoting a revival in handwriting for note taking and creativity. If handwriting in the English alphabet can produce such benefits, it is intriguing to consider how the study of Kanji through handwriting might be an even further boost to creativity and memory.

Implications for Concentration and Focus

It is likely that handwriting and illustrating enhances another element critical in learning, depth of concentration. We live in an age of digital distraction and information overload. No matter how

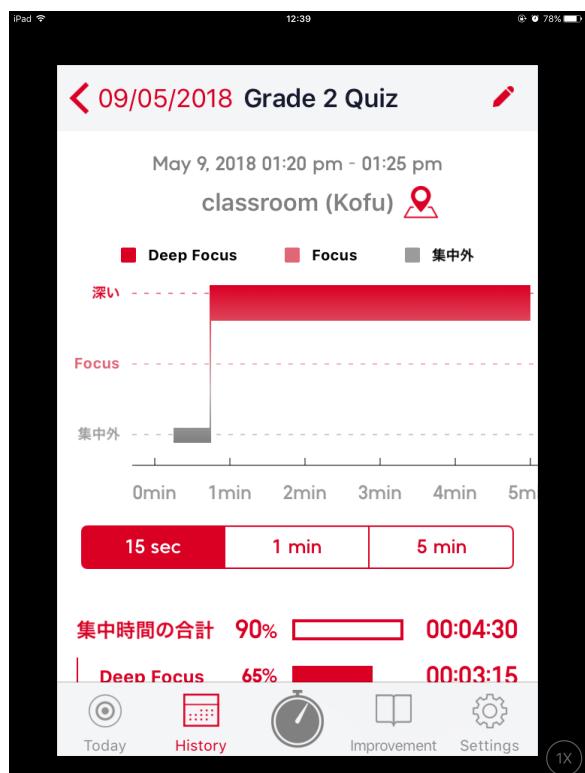
good the tools of your study, if you cannot focus on the task, you are not likely to get good results. To measure the depth of focus and concentration of students while writing stories and illustrations in the Kanji Notebook, we made use of an innovative tool called JINS MEME, intelligent eyewear produced by JINS Inc. Appearing as ordinary eye glasses, the JINS MEME eyewear contains three sensors in the frame, a three-point electrooculography sensor, an accelerometer, and gyroscope sensors, which measure mental focus and concentration by tracking eye movements, blinking, and head movements. The sensors send data by Bluetooth to an iPhone App called JINS MEME Office, which displays the wearer's depth and continuity of concentration. This is tracked in real time, and stored in the App for future reference. It tracks Blink Detection, Eye Movement, and Head Movement, providing separate and composite measures on a scale from 0 to 100. When the number rises above 60 it is considered to reflect a state of Focus, and when it rises above 80 it is considered to reflect a state of Deep Focus.

We tested the concentration levels of several students, and found that the highest achiever, a student from the UK who mastered 500 Kanji starting from zero in just 4 months, indeed had the highest level of concentration. We connected the iPhone to a projector screen so that the entire class could see the results in real time. He began writing the elements of the Kanji using the 8 steps outlined above, and speaking his thoughts aloud as he created the mnemonic sentence and drew the illustration. As soon as he began the process, the JINS MEME App displayed the Deep Focus level, and remained there for most of the five minutes that it takes to create a story and illustration for a Kanji. Despite the fact that the entire class was watching, he was able to stay in Deep Focus while going through the process.

We tested his concentration in three different modes, and found that the level of concentration differed depending on the task and length of time. It was highest while focusing for about 3 minutes learning a single Kanji for Pond 池, where engagement and output was greatest, with 77% of the time in Deep Focus Mode, and 100% of the time in a state of Focus. While taking a Quiz on familiar Kanji at Grade 2 level, his concentration over about 5 minutes stayed in Deep Focus Mode for 65% of the time, and 90% of the time in a state of Focus. During part of an extended learning session, we measured 5 minutes of his concentration at 35% Deep Focus, and 70% of the total time in a state of Focus.



Concentration on a producing a Kanji story and illustration for 3 minutes for a single character resulted in Deep Focus for 77% of the time.



Concentration during a Kanji Quiz for 5 minutes resulted in Deep Focus for 65% of the time.



Concentration during 5 minutes of an extended learning session Kanji resulted in Deep Focus for 35% of the time.

While not all students were able to achieve this level of concentration or retention, all of the students had higher concentration levels than students tested who were not taking the course, some of who could not enter a state of Focus or Deep Focus at all. This suggests that the approach we took adapting the Heisig Method showed improved results with practice and motivation in using the Method.

Concluding Observations

James Heisig radically changed the approach to learning Kanji beginning with his remarkable achievement in 1978 of learning to read and write close to 2000 Kanji in just 30 days. He established the Heisig Method of learning Kanji, which today has a loyal following among Kanji learners around the world. The method has its critics, but this is partly an indication that its successful application depends on such factors as motivation and persistence, and that not everyone can achieve the same results in such a short time. Nevertheless, the Heisig Method has spawned a number of excellent digital support tools, and has more than proven its worth and sustainability over the past 40 years.

As a self-study tool, it is likely to produce varying results, depending on the level of concentration and commitment. However, in a classroom setting with students from a diverse background of more than 12 different countries, tested and refined over 7 semesters at the International College of Liberal Arts (iCLA), by adding the enhancements of a ritual in 8 Steps including original stories to connect the key words of each part of the Kanji, illustrating and presenting the story to their peers, we were able to achieve results of students being able to read, write, and retain from 250~400 Kanji in just 15 weeks, 3 to 4 times the number of Kanji learned by foreign students studying Kanji as beginners for the same period of 3 or 4 months, and equivalent to something between the 2nd and 3rd grade of Elementary school for Japanese students.

We discovered that while learning Kanji depends on fundamental factors like: *motivation, concentration, visualization, and review*, it can also be enhanced by creating an environment that encourages social interaction, frequent feedback, sharing and presentations. A highly diverse student group, taught entirely in English, with students encouraged to advance at their own pace produced remarkable results in a short time.

Areas for further investigation include helping students find ideal environments and times for study of Kanji, feedback on Concentration and Focus using JINS MEME Eyewear, combining Kanji study with Handwriting improvement and Shodo (Brush Calligraphy), and how our adaptation of the Heisig Method might prove effective as a way for Japanese students to learn English through Kanji.

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<https://jins-meme.com/en/>

Apps:

Remembering the Kanji

Mirai Kanji Chart

Imiwa?

Yomiwa

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Lastly, I would like to thank my students from the Philippines, Vietnam, Uzbekistan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, Northern Ireland, Croatia, Azerbaijan, and Burkina Faso, and to students from over 30 countries attending college at iCLA, including Japan, who will take the *Shortcuts to Kanji* class in the future, for their

amazing ability of coming up with original stories, creating high-quality illustrations, and their fun spirit in sharing and presenting these to other students. Their enthusiasm and remarkable results keep us inspired to remain lifelong students, forever young.

Author's Profile (up to 200 words)

William Reed is from the USA, but is a long-time resident of Japan. Currently he is a professor at Yamanashi Gakuin University, in the International College of Liberal Arts (iCLA), where he is a Co-Director of Japan Studies. At iCLA he teaches courses and workshops on Japanese Culture, assisting in teaching a course on memorizing Kanji through Mnemonics. Since 2004, he has served as a judge at the All Japan Memory Championships every year in Yamato Koriyama, Nara Prefecture. He holds a 10th-dan in Shodo (Japanese Calligraphy) from the *Nihon Kyoiku Shodo Renmei*, and a 7th-dan in Aikido from the *Yuishinkai*. He also holds a 1st-kyu rank as a Graphologist Advisor from the Japan Graphologist Association. He serves as an advisor and calligrapher to the *Zen Nihon Kaou Kai*, which researches the history and design of Samurai Signatures. He has a monthly column on Samurai Calligraphy, *The Brush is the Sword of the Mind*, published in the Gekkan Hiden Magazine, and online on budojapan.com. A weekly television commentator for Yamanashi Broadcasting, he also has appeared numerous times on NHK World Journeys in Japan, and in documentaries as a navigator on traditional Japanese history and culture. Certified as a World Class Speaking Coach, he has appeared twice on TEDx stages in Japan and Norway, and has written a bestseller in Japanese on World Class Speaking.