A Content Analysis of Kanji Textbooks Targeted for Second Language Learners of Japanese

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Conventions

All translations, unless stated otherwise, are done by the author. This paper uses a modernized Hephburn system when Romanizing Japanese words in which long vowels are marked with a macron. E.g. words such as 常用 (じょうよう) are written jōyō. An apostrophes is used to separate two morae, e.g. hon’ne. With the exception of the word kanji, common words (sake, tsunami), as well as place names (Tokyo), all Romanized Japanese words inside of the text will be written in cursive. As a standard, translations of words will only be provided if necessary in order to understand the content and the translation of the words will be placed in quotation marks. All Japanese names will be presented in western standard with first name followed by family name. Due to the length of the reference material, I decided to not include it in this essay; instead it is in a separate document. I will upon request send it to anyone by e-mail.

1 Introduction

In today’s globalized society, European Union citizens must possess a certain amount of key competences in order to be able to adapt to an ever changing working environment. One of the eight key competences is the ability to communicate in foreign languages. In order to ensure employment, it is a necessity for the individual to being able to communicate in several languages (EU 2007). Among Swedish young people, with the exception of English, the interest for other European languages has fallen. Instead, an increasing amount of Swedish youngsters has an interest in other languages such as Japanese (Liedman 2008: 19). For instance, there are annually over 100 students who register for the Japanese beginner course held at Stockholm University (Ladok).¹ The reason for this increased interest in Japanese can be explained by the spread and consumption of Japanese popular culture. Students choose to study Japanese because they read manga, watch anime or listen to Japanese music. By learning Japanese, the students can on a closer level engage with popular culture (Sugimoto 2014: 196). In order to grasp the Japanese language it is necessary to study kanji - the Chinese characters that are used in Japan. However, many studies show that Japanese second language learners often struggle when learning kanji. In order to overcome these difficulties, several textbooks have been especially designed for second language learners. This paper will

¹ Ladok is the national system used to register and document students, study results etc in Swedish universities.
analyze the course literature used for kanji studies at Stockholm University, and aims to provide some proposals that could make kanji learning more efficient.

1.1 Terminology

**JSL**
JSL student means Japanese as a second language student.

**Kana**
Kana refers to the two phonetic Japanese writing systems, *hiragana* and *katakana*.

**On-yomi** ([音読み])
On-yomi is the adjusted Chinese pronunciation, e.g. 駅 (eki), 登山 (tozan).

**Kun-yomi** ([訓読み])
Kun-yomi is the pronunciation of native Japanese origin, e.g. 食べ物 (tabemono), 車 (kuruma).

**Radical** ([部首])
Radical (*bushu*) refers to the main component that builds up a kanji character, e.g. 丨 (tatebō), 门 (keigamae). As a standard, radical names in this paper are written by their Japanese names.

**Compound words** ([熟語])
Compound words (*jukugo*) refers to two or more kanji that form a word, with or without help of additional *kana*, e.g. 漢字, 引き払う.

**Jōyō kanji** ([常用漢字])
Jōyō kanji are the kanji that are covered in the *jōyō kanji-hyō* (常用漢字表) “list over commonly used characters”. Phrases such as “acknowledged readings” refer to readings that are covered in this list.
1.2 Purpose and Research Question

Native Japanese speakers encounter kanji in elementary school and study it until the end of high school. They have the benefit of living in an environment where there is contact with kanji on a daily basis, thus creating a bond between some frequently used characters and the characters that symbolizes easy meanings (Kano 1997: 1). JSL students from China and Taiwan share similar writing systems; hence they learn kanji faster than JSL students from other countries on average. South Koreans who study Japanese have some learning advantages due to the fact that the grammar construction is similar, and for the fact that many Japanese words have similar sounds in Korean, for instance 道徳“morals” Japanese: dōtoku, Korean: 도덕 dodeok. Nonetheless, South Koreans still struggle with kanji learning (Kano 2000: 2). JSL students from Sweden, who often start their Japanese studies at university level, have no advantages due to the major differences between the Swedish and Japanese language. The Swedish student, who only knows the alphabet, must learn two new phonetic writing systems alongside basic grammar and kanji. The encounter with kanji is sudden and the students face a situation where a vast amount of characters must be learnt in a short amount of time in order to acquire the skill to read and understand Japanese. Stephen Richmond (2005: 43-44) states that many JSL students face difficulties when they try to grasp the written language, especially when the student aims to reach a higher level of kanji knowledge. To overcome these obstacles, a wide range of kanji textbooks have been especially made for JSL students. Richmond (2005: 67-68) states that many textbooks cover few learning areas and often teach kanji out of context. Furthermore, the textbooks often use their own unique teaching methods and upon false assumptions many textbooks tend to omit many of the methodologies and knowledge areas used in Japan.

According to the course syllabus at Stockholm University; the Japanese language student will in two years, divided in four terms, learn how to read, write, and understand approximately 1000 kanji and various kanji knowledge areas by using six kanji textbooks in combination with other classroom activities (Stockholm University Course Description).² A bachelor study by Moberg (2013: 20-21) shows that two of the textbooks used in Stockholm University often omit many commonly used readings compared with native targeted material. Research has also pointed out that kanji lessons are often not a prioritized matter in universities outside of

² JKA111, JKA222, JKA331, JKA442
Japan. Kanji studies are often considered as an autonomous study process rather than led by a teacher; it is expected that the students study kanji and the different corresponding areas of kanji for themselves (Kawaguchi 2009: 121). In a teacher led class, students will most likely acquire methods, kanji learning strategies and other explanations while autonomous students often have to rely on learning material.

As the textbooks often uses their own selective methods and strategies designed for JSL kanji learning, it is vital to analyze these in order to acquire a greater understanding for optimal textbook usage. Moreover, textbooks can for autonomous students be considered as a primary source of kanji knowledge; therefore it is important to analyze the kanji knowledge presented in the textbooks. By in detail knowing the strategies and possible gaps can kanji teachers know which appropriate measures that needs to be taken in order to facilitate kanji learning.

What characterizes the content of the textbooks used for kanji studies at Stockholm University in terms of teaching kanji knowledge?

The purpose of this essay is twofold; to analyze the content of the textbooks used for kanji studies in Stockholm University, and from the results propose a number of suggestions that may facilitate kanji learning. In order to conduct this kind of study, it is important to define kanji knowledge and to know various strategies that are often used for JSL kanji learning. Even though there has been some previous research that has pointed out some gaps in kanji textbooks targeted for JSL students, I believe that the present study will shed further light on the current state of textbooks targeted for JSL students.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

1.3.1 Kanji and its Role in the Japanese Language

The Japanese language differs from many western languages, both in terms of grammar order and writing system. The Japanese writing system is unique, as a single sentence can carry the two Japanese phonetic writings hiragana and katakana and the Chinese semantic characters; kanji (Suzuki 1982: 34). Hiragana and katana consist of 46 characters respectively; however there are slightly over 2100 kanji that are considered as commonly used characters (Bunkachō 2011: 3). While the majority of kanji originated from China, there are some kanji that were
made in Japan and are defined as * kokujī *(国字). In order to fluently understand written
Japanese, being able to read and understand around 2000 kanji can be considered as sufficient
(Nomura 1982: 62). The Japanese language is problematic due to the fact that a single word
can carry multiple meanings depending on context, words such as *sayū* (左右) can both mean
“left and right” and “controlled, influenced”.

A single kanji can be considered as a character made up of a set of strokes; but it can also be
viewed as a character built by many smaller components. A kanji is often composed by a
radical (*bushū*) together with additional components; complex kanji, e.g. 鬱 (*utsu*) can be
decomposed into smaller components. Around 80-85% of all kanji are classified as *keisei* (形声),
kanji in which the radical or kanji components contains phonetic (the *on-yomi* reading)
and semantic (meaning) information. Even though native speakers are perhaps not aware of
all radical names, the knowledge and awareness about radicals is important when looking up
kanji by using dictionaries, moreover it plays an important role in kanji education for native
speakers (Richmond 2005: 52-53).

A single kanji can carry multiple meanings, and the majority carries two different readings; an
*on-yomi* reading and a *kun-yomi* reading. There are however some characters that only have
an *on-yomi* and some that only have a *kun-yomi*. Furthermore, kanji were introduced to Japan
over an extended period of time, where the original Chinese pronunciation and the meaning of
the kanji changed several times. This is the reason why some kanji have multiple meanings
readings, for instance kanji such as *ningen* has several meanings and 上 has 10 possible readings
(Richmond 2005: 46). There are mainly two kinds of *on-yomi*; 呉音 (*go’on*) and 漢音
(*kan’on*). Words from a Buddhism-origin are often read by *go’on*, words such as 人間
(ningen) “human” or 平等 (byōdō) “equal”. Words read by *kan’on* are originally from a
Confucianism origin. However, during the Edo period (1603-1868), the way of reading
characters changed, words that were read by *go’on* started to be read with *kan’on* and vice
versa. There are also many words with mixed *go’on* and *kan’on* readings, words such as 食堂
(shoku is *kan’on* while dō is *go’on*) “dining hall” (Satō 1982: 54-56). By being aware of the

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3 呉音 are readings that originated from the Wu dynasty (222 – 280)
4 漢音 are readings that originated from the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD)
on-yomi reading patterns can be beneficial for kanji learning, for instance, many characters with the on-yomi せい (sei) also carry the on-yomi しょう (shō).\(^5\)

The general rule upon how to read kanji is to read kun-yomi if it is single kanji and on-yomi if the kanji are used in a compound. However, this does not apply for all words. The chart below describes some variant of kanji words. Uppercase are on-yomi and lowercase are kun-yomi.

<table>
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<th>Kanji</th>
<th>Explanations</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>犬 (inu)</td>
<td>“dog”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>門 (MON)</td>
<td>“gate”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>判断 (HANDAN)</td>
<td>“decision”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>遠浅 (tōasa)</td>
<td>“shoal”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>出立 (SHUTtatsu)</td>
<td>“departure”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>成金 (nariKIN)</td>
<td>“nouveau riche”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>白髪 (shiraga)</td>
<td>“white hair”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>神楽 (kagura)</td>
<td>“ancient Shinto music”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>天手古い舞い (tentekomai)</td>
<td>“bustling activity”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>余所見 (yosomi)</td>
<td>“looking away”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Irregular pronunciation

The two first words are called jukuji-kun, in which kanji are used together for the meaning but not sound. The next two words are called ateji, in which kanji are used together for the sound but not the meaning.

The Japanese language is also different in the aspect that there are a vast amount of homophones in the Japanese language. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the meaning of a single word if it is presented in kana without context. For instance by only reading ”きょうこう” (kyōkō),\(^6\) it is almost impossible to know what it actually means; hence kanji helps the reader to know which word it is (Satō 1982: 56).

\(^5\) 生、青、性、省、精 and so on.
\(^6\) There are approximately 14 suitable words
1.3.2 A Standard Native Level of Kanji Knowledge

Kanji that are being used in public information, law text, etc. are listed in the 常用漢字表 jōyō kanji hyō “list over commonly used characters” (henceforth jōyō list). The list provides all official readings, along with word examples, and also the research and the premises behind the decision to define these characters as commonly used characters. The jōyō list consists of totally 2136 kanji and a majority of these are characters that are commonly used (Bunkachō 2011: 3). The purpose of the list is to function as a reference for kanji usage. Hence, in order to maintain a nationwide standard of kanji usage, unless for personal writings; such as novels, any individual should avoid using kanji as one pleases. By being able to read and understand all jōyō kanji will cover nearly 99% of all characters used in newspapers and magazines (Nohara 1982: 62). Kanji with difficult readings should be attached with furigana7 to indicate the pronunciation for the reader. The list does however contain several kanji that are used in specific occasions only while kanji that are commonly used are not included in the list. The reasons for keeping some kanji outside of the list are for instance that they have: few readings, few or no compound words, or that they are primary used as terminology in specific disciplines only (Bunkachō 2011: 179 – 182).

1.3.3 Native Speakers’ Study Process

Native speakers study kanji from the start of elementary school until the end of high school. In elementary school, native speakers will learn 1006 characters from the so called 学年別教育配当表 (gakusenbetsu kyōiku hyō, henceforth kyōiku list) “the list over kanji in each school year”; the pupil will learn the remaining 1130 characters from junior high school until the end of high school (MEXT 2015). The kyōiku list is created in order to match both the pupil’s cognitive level, and other school subjects, such as mathematics. Hence, the pupil will first learn kanji with concrete meanings and during the course of their education continue to build with increasingly complex kanji. For example, during high school, pupils learn kanji with abstract meanings (Kobayashi 1982: 75-76). The remaining commonly used kanji will be learnt during junior- and high school (MEXT 2015). A majority of Japanese people memorize kanji in drilling sessions; they write kanji over and over again until they are remembered. (Bunkachō 2011: 175-176).

7 Furigana is the phonological reading displayed over a kanji word.
1.3.4 Testing Native Speaker’s Kanji Knowledge

Native speaker’s kanji knowledge is tested and measured on various occasions, such as during entrance exams to enter high school or university. There is also a voluntarily exam that only focus on various areas of kanji knowledge: 漢字検定 (Kanji Kentei, henceforth Kanzen). Kanzen has twelve difficulty levels, in which various aspects of kanji knowledge is tested.\(^8\) Exam level ten to five are designed after the kyōiku list, in which a sixth year elementary student should be able to pass the fifth level. From level five to level two test the following areas: reading, writing, ability to identify the radical, synonyms and antonyms, ability to distinguish homophones,\(^9\) and four character words\(^10\) (Kanken 2015). The main difference between level five to two is the amount of kanji that each difficult level covers, e.g. level five covers 1006 kanji while level two covers 2136 kanji. Difficulty level one covers approximately 6000 kanji. The exam also stresses the importance of handwriting kanji clearly and correctly (The Japan Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation 2013: 6-10).

1.4 Foreign Language Learning and JSL Kanji Studies

1.4.1 Learning Foreign Languages

Learning kanji is a section of the wider concept of learning languages. Learning a second language is a process that is different for every individual. There are several methods that are being used for learning foreign languages; one of them is the grammar and translation method. This method teacher grammar functions of the targeted language through explanations in the mother tongue to then use the targeted language through translations of the mother tongue. This method includes also reading exercises where translations are often used to confirm that the student understood the content (Tornberg 1997: 34-36).

Another method is the direct method; the main focus of this method is speaking and listening comprehension. This method teaches the targeted language through the targeted language, explanations of words and phrases are often taught through synonyms. The main purpose with this method is to learn a foreign language in the same way one learns his/her mother tongue.

\(^8\) 10-3 級 (kyū), 準 2 級 (jun nikkyū), 2 級 (nikkyū), 準 1 級 (jun ikkyū), 1 級(ikkyū)
\(^9\) 同音・同訓異義語 (dō‘on dōken‘igigo)
\(^10\) 四字熟語 (yojijukugo)
Therefore, instead of grammatical explanations through classes, this method aims to teach grammar and correct speaking through a natural learning process (Tornberg 1997: 37-40).

The audio-lingual method is based on behaviorist theory, which states that language learning is similar to learning overall and that everything can be explained through rules and principles. By using this method, the student will learn new traits by imitation and repetition. The majority of the teaching is through repetitively tasks, such as to read the same paragraph several times (Tornberg 1997: 44-47).

An important area in second language learning is the ability to memorize vocabulary. Memory research has established the fact that there are different dimensions of memorizing. These are: procedure memory, perceptual memory, semantic memory, short time memory, long time memory and episodic memory. The main purpose with memorizing foreign words is to code the knowledge into the long time memory. Once the coding is complete, the knowledge is thereafter stored until it needs to be accessed again. The most optimal coding process can be achieved by associating the knowledge that the individual wants to learn with something that the individual already knows (Tornberg 1997: 121-124).

1.4.2 JSL Targeted Kanji Learning Methods

Due the major differences between native speakers and JSL students, JSL students cannot as effectively use the same for kanji learning methods and strategies that native speakers use. As JSL students often face difficulties when studying kanji, there are several kanji learning methods and strategies designed after the needs of western JSL students. This section will cover some of the many kanji learning methodologies targeted for JSL students. It is important to point out that there is no universal method or strategy that is applicable on everyone, every learner is unique and uses his/her own study method.

Mnemonic and Etymology Based Method

There exist a dozen of kanji learning strategies that involve mnemonic (memorizing) techniques that focus on connecting the etymology or forms of a kanji with its meaning, or techniques that advocate the concept of visualizing kanji as pictures. Two internationally used books that uses mnemonic and etymology based methods are Heisigs Remembering the kanji,
and Henshalls *A Guide to Rememeber Japanese Characters*. According to Heisig (1977: 1-7), learning over 2000 kanji by repeating meaning, stroke order and so on can be considered as time-consuming and meaningless repetition. By using mnemonics to create pictures that reflects the meaning of the kanji may help the JSL student to learn and remember the meaning, and how to write kanji.

The goal in *Remembering The Kanji* is to attain a native proficiency in writing the Japanese character and to associate their meanings with their forms (Heisig 1977: 6-7). This is done by presenting kanji with a detailed explanation linking the form with the meaning. For instance the character 千 (sen) “thousand” is explained as:

This kanji is almost too simple to pull apart, but for the sake of practice, have a look at the drop above and the ten below. Now put the elements together by thinking of squeezing two more zeros out of an eyedropper alongside the number ten to make it a thousand. (Heisig 2001: 30)

Henshalls book provide mnemonic for every listed kanji and their readings. The book borrows the original Japanese meaning and etymology in which a unique mnemonic phrase is provided. For example, the kanji 部 (bu) is given the mnemonic phrase CLANS STANDS OPEN MOUTHED IN PART OF VILLAGE, hence covering the names of the three parts that makes up the kanji and, two possible meanings of the kanji (Richmond 2005: 54-55).

**Meaning-Based Learning Method**

Both Heisig and Henshalls book focus on teaching the meaning of every kanji. This method bounds a single kanji together with an English meaning; hence the learner will learn the English meaning for the single kanji. While it may be helpful to learn the English meanings of every character in order to memorize the character, it is not a guarantee that it will be helpful when kanji is presented as vocabulary. A study by Kuwabara (2010: 1-10) showed that JSL students often misunderstood the meaning of compound kanji words by only knowing the meaning of a singular kanji. As an example, the word 少女 (shōjo) “young girl”, but the meaning of the characters that make up the word is 少 (few) and 女 (woman). Some kanji that carry several meanings; for instance kanji such as 治 that can both mean ”to govern” or “to
heal”, are difficult, if not impossible to decipher a two kanji compound word by only knowing the English meanings of a single kanji.

Vocabulary-Based and Context-Learning Methods

Another approach to learn kanji is to learn kanji through vocabulary. Kawaguchi (1993: 16) explain that kanji used day-today in Japan are inseparable from words, hence kanji learning should primary be conducted through vocabulary learning. Richmond (2005: 67) state that although this method is advocated by many not much of it can be identified in JSL kanji textbooks and learning materials. Most textbooks, under the assumption that JSL learning have limited time and linguistic resources, sacrifice most of the detail in their examples, focusing on the kanji or reading itself, which result in the loss of vital contextual information required for kanji interpretation (Richmond 2005: 60).

Kawaguchi suggests that this method, through contextualization, helps the development of the learner’s ability to use existing knowledge to deduce the meaning, reading and usage of unknown words. Contextualization is vital as many kanji meanings and reading rely on the context; thus Kawaguchi suggests the use of authentic material that shows the learner how kanji relate to one another (Kawaguchi 1993:16).

Kanji Order Used in JSL Studies

Professor Kazuhito Kobayashi (1982: 79-80) suggests that the most logical and optimal approach to learn kanji would be to first learn kanji with few amount of strokes, easy to grasp meanings, or kanji that are often used as components, before learning “complete” kanji. This would technically mean to before learning characters such as 怒 (okoru) “anger”, 努 (tsutomeru) “effort” the student would learn 奴 (do) “fellow”. However, he admits that his theory cannot be applied to native speakers as the kyōiku kanji list is designed to function in tandem with other school subjects and with the pupil’s cognitive level. Native children of the age of nine will most likely struggle when learning easy kanji that are used in words with conceptual or abstract meanings. Even though this kanji order theory is applicable on native speakers, it can be used in JSL studies, which often starts from a high school or university
level. JSL students at university level will most likely be able to grasp any meaning in Japanese, no matter if it is conceptual, abstract, or cultural, if provided with the translation in their native language, and in some cases with additional visual aid. Furthermore, a study by Maehara (2007: 1-2) showed that many second language learners often failed to reproduce complex kanji because the students failed to see the components; she suggests that more kanji components should be taught in an early stage. Richmond (2005: 51) states that kanji can be viewed as a “building-block” nature; it is more comprehensible if simple kanji (that often make up parts of more complex kanji) are presented earlier than compound forms. A similar strategy is used in the program “E-Learning KanjiKreativ” made by Professor Yamaoka. The program start by teaching the meaning of 280 kanji components to then teach the meaning of 1945 kanji. The fourth and fifth step involves tasks such as writing kanji by hand and learning readings. The sixth step is to learn kanji through context (Kawaguchi 2009: 128, Richmond 2005: 67).

Japanese Language Proficiency Test

There is no test specifically targeted at JSL learners that only measures kanji knowledge. There is however the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (henceforth JLPT) which is the largest Japanese-language test in the world, with 610 000 examinees in 2011 (JLPT 2015). The test is divided into two main categories, language knowledge and reading, and listening. The former is divided into three subcategories, vocabulary, grammar and reading. Only a few sections are similar to Kanken, such as the necessity to be able to read and understand kanji. Furthermore, it is also important to mention that kanji in JLPT is often presented within authentic context. However the test does not encapsulate the following sections: the ability to write kanji, homophone knowledge, or radical knowledge. The examinees level of kanji knowledge is basically tested only in the vocabulary and reading section. Prior to 2010, each difficulty level had an official chart that in detail specified which kanji were required in order to pass the exam. However, after 2010, the exam was revised and the chart was removed; hence currently there is no official chart that in detail displays which kanji are required in order to pass a certain difficulty level.
1.5 Survey of the Field – Relevant Literature Review

Kanji education and teaching for non native speakers is a wide field that has generated a various amount of research. Many of these are studies focuses on classroom activity, evaluative studies of teaching plans, or analyzes of kanji learning strategies.

Kano, who actually is one of the authors of Basic Kanji Book and Intermediate Kanji Book, has for decades been active both as a researcher and as a kanji teacher for international students at Tsukuba University. She has investigated a wide range of kanji areas such as student performance, types of kanji test and test evaluations and so on. Much of the research has been conducted by classroom observation and investigating test results. It is also worth to mention that much of her data are collected from the classes where the students uses Basic Kanji Book and/or Intermediate kanji book as course literature (1997, 2000).

Maehara who works as a lecturer and as a Japanese language teacher conducted several evaluative studies of exchange student’s kanji learning at Tokyo University. In one of her studies, she focuses on how to in an effective way teach kanji readings. The result shows that many strategies, such as practices based on sounds familiar to the learner (keisei kanji), tasks focusing on okurigana with flash cards, and drills to guess the meaning and readings of kanji compounds (Maehara and Fujishiro 2004: 1-2). Another study by her shows that many learners who started their studies often have difficulties in recognizing and reproducing kanji. Based upon the analysis, the conclusion is that effective kanji components should be taught as a main item in kanji class (2007: 1-2).

While there are several studies focusing on JSL kanji learning in Japan, there are fewer studies investigating JSL kanji learning outside of Japan. Sachiko Kawaguchi, who is a professor at Seigakuin University, researches about Japanese language education. She conducted a study where she investigated Japanese kanji learning in 38 institutions of higher education in Europe (2009: 121). She start by explaining the Japanese language programs in French universities, and the fact that even though there are many students who start to study Japanese, there are not many students who actually receives a degree. The survey shows that many universities require the students to in three years master 1000-1945 kanji while the amount of kanji classes were few. The second part of her investigation is the various methods universities across Europe use to teach kanji. Many universities teach kanji by presenting it in
a context, such as authentic texts and sentence examples. The survey shows that the main learning material used universities are universities own learning material, followed by Basic Kanji Vol. 1 and Vol.2, and Genki I and Genki II.

Hamada, Ichishima, and Takabatake who works as Japanese language lecturers/teachers at Toyama University published an article that shows the process and some of the reasoning that they had when they made a kanji textbook for exchange students at Toyama University. The article starts by explaining the layout and purpose of the Japanese language classes at Toyama University. Until 2005, there was one kanji class (90 min) per week, while only a few students’ needed kanji for their courses, many students’ needed kanji for their daily life as exchange students. Since many kanji textbooks are targeted for students who study at full time, there was no textbook that was appropriate for student who cannot attend to every class; instead there was a need of a material that can also be used for autonomous studies. The textbook “Everyday Kanji for Exchange Students” is mainly designed for classroom usage in order to in a teach areas that are regarded as “basic kanji knowledge”. The first volume contains 120 kanji, mainly those that are often in university and everyday life. The second volume contains 172 kanji that are mainly used in university and everyday life. In order to make the learning process easier for autonomous students, the authors uploaded the classes, answer sheets on the internet. The book uses pictographs or pictures of a kanji decomposed (e.g. 春 = 三 + 人 + 日). Moreover, the authors made the decision to intentionally omit readings that are not frequently used. The kun-yomi readings are displayed in polite-form (masu-form) in order to match other course material used at the university (2006: 17-25).

The amount of evaluative research about kanji textbooks targeted at JSL students is on the other hand scarce. Richmond, who works as an assisting professor at Kyoto Gakuen University, conducted an evaluative research in which he investigates four JSL targeted textbooks: Remembering the Kanji, A Guide to Remember Japanese Characters, Basic Kanji, and Kanji in Context. He investigates the textbooks from a wide range of angles, such as; instruction of kanji, kanji order, radical, meaning, readings, etymology and mnemonics. In every section, Richmond introduces methods used for native speakers and in some sections he connects previous research with his claims. From his analyze, Richmond covers several assumptions on kanji learning along with a review of some cognitive research on each. The first assumption is that JSL learners perceive kanji in different ways to native learners.
Richmond states that classifying studies of learner errors show that the types of errors made by native speakers and non-native kanji users differed to a great extent. Native speakers often phonological errors, followed by writing and semantic errors. Non-natives made mostly writing errors, followed by semantic and phonological errors. However, as the non-native learner’s proficiency level increased, they made similar mistakes as native speakers. The second assumption is that kanji are pictures, not writing. Richmond states that only approximately 12% of all kanji fall into the true pictograph category, there is a limit to the number of kanji that can be taught this way. The third assumption that Richmond found is that many textbooks suggest that each kanji has its own meaning. As kanji can carry several meanings and never occur in vacuum, Richmond states that assigning one English meaning to encapsulate all of the concepts is not only restrictive but illogical. The fourth assumption is that since kanji directly represent meaning, many claim that they can be accessed without phonology. While it may be true that it is possible to understand written Japanese without accessing phonology, Richmond states that cognitive research shows that phonological factors are vital for maintaining and processing of information in working memory. The fifth assumption is that JSL learners have a language handicap and therefore they need simpler structures than native learners. Richmond suggest that rather than simpler structures, kanji should be taught through a context rich structure in order to clarify how kanji are used. The sixth assumption is that JSL learners should not use methods used by native learners, instead they need specialized methods such as mnemonics to master kanji. While mnemonics may be useful for some learners, it may not be useful for others; hence these kinds of methods should not be regarded as a “magic method”. His conclusion is that based on empirically unproven assumptions, many kanji areas that native speakers use to learn kanji are often dismissed from JSL targeted material. Richmond suggests that methods and strategies used by native speakers can be transferable and beneficial to JSL student, the argument for their inclusion or consideration is valid (2005: 67-68).
2 Material and Method

I will investigate the chosen course literature that is currently used for kanji education at Stockholm University for the four terms of undergraduate level studies in Japanese. The main reason for selecting these books is to limit the research and for preventing it to become too wide.

2.1 Material

The literatures for investigation are six textbooks taken from two independent textbook series. The terms in the brackets refer to in which semester the books are used at Stockholm University.

*Genki I* (Only the section *yomi-kaki-hen* chapter 3 – 12)\(^{11}\) (Used in the first semester)\(^ {12}\)
*Genki II* (Only the section *yomi-kaki-hen* chapters) (Used in the second semester)
*Basic Kanji Book Vol. 1* (henceforth *BKB I*) (Partly used first semester)\(^ {13}\)
*Basic Kanji Book Vol. 2* (henceforth *BKB II*) (Used second and third semester)
*Intermediate Kanji Book Vol. 1* (henceforth *IKB I*) (Third and fourth semester)
*Intermediate Kanji Book Vol. 2* (henceforth *IKB II*) (Used fourth semester)

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Mixed Methods

Richmond (2005) analyzes the content of four kanji textbooks from various angles, and from the result he proposes several suggestions that may facilitate kanji learning. I will conduct a similar research, but I will investigate different areas. In order to present a comprehensive answer to the research question, I have decided to focus on a context analyze on the following four areas in the textbooks:

Structure: layout, and learning strategies

\(^{11}\) Only *yomi-kaki-hen* will be analyzed; however other areas of the book may be included in the discussion.
\(^{12}\) See bibliography for details
\(^{13}\) The textbook itself is not course literature, however since many sections of the book are used in the classes and that it is a part of a series, I decided to include it in this paper.
Kanji selection and kanji order
Readings and vocabulary
Exercises

The following areas will be investigated by a combining two approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. I believe that using a qualitative approach is appropriate to investigate structure, kanji selection and kanji order, and exercises. Readings and vocabulary are areas in which occurrences can be measured and statistically presented, thus a quantitative approach is more suitable.

The initial step will be to investigate the four areas in each book separately, followed by a concluding discussion to then continue to a general discussion of all the books. This approach will make it possible to determine the overall characteristic of the textbooks, and from the analysis I will be able to propose some suggestions that may facilitate kanji learning. Even though there has been some previous research that has pointed out some flaws in kanji education and literature for JSL students, I believe that my method and my approach will shed further light on the state of textbooks targeted at JSL-students.

Structure: Layout, and Learning Strategies

This part covers general information from the books, such as: how the book should be used, learning strategies and methods in how kanji can be studied. Furthermore, the layout of the books, such as knowledge areas will be investigated. This area covers learning strategies, such as do the books present any methods or strategies that may facilitate kanji learning? Is there any information about radicals?

Kanji Selection and Kanji Order

This section investigates the kanji selection and kanji order in each book. Moreover, this section covers areas, such as: chapter topics, the coherency between the kanji grouping, and are the kanji appropriate for the difficult level (e.g. beginner’s level). Kobayashi (1982: 79-80) suggest that the most optimal order for learning kanji is to first learn kanji with few amount of strokes and kanji that makes up components of other kanji before learning kanji that they occur in. Furthermore, Maehara suggest that learning more components in an earlier
stage can be beneficial for JSL students. By using Kobayashi’s kanji order theory, I will analyze the kanji order and highlight kanji components that are yet to be learnt. In order to prevent this section from becoming too wide, components in this paper will only refer to “complete” kanji that are located in the jōyō-list. I will analyze the kanji order by assuming that the student will study kanji in the exact order that they are presented.

Readings and Vocabulary

Jōyō kanji can be considered as a standard of kanji knowledge, knowing them and their associated readings will cover nearly 99% of all kanji used in newspapers (Nohara 1982: 62). This part will determine to what extent the textbooks follow the jōyō list; do the textbooks provide every possible reading, or are some readings omitted? If some readings are, which are they?

Kawaguchi (1993: 16) suggests that since kanji used in day-today Japanese are primary through vocabulary, kanji instructions should be done through vocabulary learning. Richmond (2005: 48) also states that “kanji education should provide opportunities for the learner to strengthen the association between kanji and vocabulary”. As learning vocabulary is one of the purposes of learning kanji, I will investigate the amount of vocabulary that the books provide in their kanji description. In order to make it easily viewable, the result of this section will be presented by showing statistics in charts.

Exercises

This section focuses on the types of exercises the books provide. Both Kaiser (1998: 25-31) and Richmond (2005: 63) suggest that there should be a provision of contextual information (examples, etc.) in order for the student to develop and maintain a balanced representation of kanji cognition. To reach a deeper understanding of the Japanese language, e.g. the vast number of homophones and synonyms/antonyms, the student must have some learning strategies at their disposal. Traditional JSL targeted material manifest no, or very little of this approach. However, test questions found in native targeted exams often test the exam-taker in many these areas (Richmond 2005: 63). Thus, I have decided to compare the exercises in the intermediate level book series (IKB I and IKB II) with the test questions in Kanken. The
comparison will mainly highlight overall similarities and differences. Comparing Kanken with beginner’s level book series could theoretically be possible; however a JSL at beginners’ level is grammatically unfamiliar with the Japanese language, solving the exercises can be difficult. For this reason, I have decided to include the beginner’s level books in the comparison.

2.2.2 Method Evaluation

A book presenting several learning strategies or displaying kanji in a certain layout does not mean that it is superior to any other books; an important aspect to consider is the purpose of the textbook. Hence, this paper will critically analyze the textbooks while considering the books purpose.

Kobayashi’s kanji order theory (1982: 79-80) is logical; however every student have their own study purposes and there are several factors that may impact ones kanji study. A law student studying law as an exchange student in Japan will most likely want to prioritize kanji that are often used within that discipline.

The jōyō list contains several kanji that are only used in very rare situations (Riekkinen 2013: 21) and there are several readings that are used in special terminology which in many cases can be hard to define as “commonly used”. Many of the obscure or rarely used readings may not be appropriate, or even necessary for a certain level (e.g. beginner’s level). Moreover, even though many Japanese are not aware of exactly which kanji and which readings are located in the jōyō list, the list should serve as a reference for kanji usage (Bunkachō 2011: 3). The main purpose with the comparison is to highlight to what extent the books follow the jōyō list. The reference material contains detailed information which reading(s) are missing for which kanji.

2.2.3 Limitations

This essay covers only kanji that can be found in the jōyō kanji list and the textbooks. There is a vast amount of factors that can impact the JSL students study process, such as motivation, cognitive conditions, previous cultural experiences, time for studies and so on. The text book
user is a full time student and is fully motivated with the purpose of reaching an eligible level of kanji knowledge. Moreover, the student uses the textbook primary as an autonomous study tool, but has to some extent access to explanations/information from e.g. teachers or internet.

The content in the textbooks may have been, or may be altered due to revisions. The result of this paper will only reflect the content of the investigated book edition (see bibliography for details). I am fully aware that some sections of the textbooks, such as layout, kanji readings or compound may have or may be revised from today (June 2015).

2.2.4 Reference Material

The reference material contains information that is used for the analysis. All readings, all omitted readings, words and some examples from the test questions in Kanken are located in the reference material. I will send it to anyone who requires it, but it should not be used for commercial purposes. E-mail: joonasplus@hotmail.com
3 Analysis

3.1 Genki I

3.1.1 Structure, Layout, and Learning Strategies

Layout and How to Use

*Genki I* is written in standard Japanese (*kana* and *kanji*), with the exception of the two first chapters which only have *kana* and roman alphabets. *Genki I* uses *kanji* from the *jōyō* list, but words that are considered as unrelated to beginners are written with *kana*. The earlier chapter contains more *kana* and the chapter becomes gradually more authentic. *Kanji* that the student has not learnt are displayed with *furigana*.

The purpose of the section *yomi-kaki-hen* is to improve reading and writing comprehension by learning Japanese characters (*kanji*) and utilizing it by reading and writings text. The instructions states that since it impossible to learn everything at once, the student should learn little by little every day. The student should practice writing each *kanji* according to the stroke order. The instructions also mention two important facts; *Genki I* cover only readings that are considered useful at an elementary level, and all possible derivative readings\(^{14}\) are listed (Banno et al. 1999: 10). The aim of the book is that the student will learn both Japanese grammar and *kanji* at the same time, with a higher focus on grammar. Hence, the *yom-kaki-hen* is supposed to be used in tandem with the other sections of the whole book, such as grammar.

*Genki I* displays *kanji* with an English meaning, readings, stroke orders, and total amount of strokes. The first edition displays *kun-yomi* readings with *hiragana* and *on-yomi* readings with *katana*; however the second edition displays both readings with *hiragana* that are marked differently. Every *kanji* have some assigned words, the shaded words are those that should be learnt, the remaining words should be used as a reference.

\(^{14}\) E.g. 学 (gaku) becomes がっ (ga(k)) in some compounds words
The kanji description is different from the jōyō list as *Genki I* only display the possible *kun-yomi* reading but not as whole words. For instance the *kun-yomi* reading kanji 代 is only displayed as か, while the verbs 代える (kaeru) or 代わる (kawaru) are not mentioned at all.

The chapters are divided into various topics (e.g. chapter 4; “Mary’s weekend”), where the kanji in each chapter have some relation to the chapter topic. The student will in every chapter (from chapter 3 and onwards) learn approximately 15 new kanji. Every chapter includes some sort of exercise, both reading and writing exercises. As the students proceed in their studies, the difficulty level of the exercises rises.

**Learning Strategies**

Besides the instructions to write kanji countless of times, *Genki I* does not provide the learner with any information nor methods that can simplify kanji learning. There is no information about radicals. However, since *Genki I* is primarily designed for classroom usage, *Genki Teacher’s Manual* contains a wide range of explanations to all listed kanji that the teacher can use when teaching, hence the aim of the authors is for teachers to include such explanations during class (Banno et al. 2000 106-110).

**3.1.2 Kanji Selection and Kanji Order**

*Genki I* gives no information regarding from which premises the kanji were selected or any information about the kanji order. Besides chapter 1 and 2, the kanji selection and order in *Genki I* seems to be created based on the kanji that occur in chapters’ text.
### 3.1.3 Readings and Vocabulary

**Readings**

*Genki I* explicitly states that complex readings are omitted; however, *Genki I* does not provide any clear information on which kanji in particular have their readings left out. The chart below describes how many kanji of each type have their readings left out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Amount of kanji</th>
<th>Discrepancy* (%)</th>
<th>Kanji with missing <em>kun-yomi</em></th>
<th>Kanji with missing <em>on-yomi</em></th>
<th>Kanji with excessive reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Genki I</em></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>91 (62.7%)</td>
<td>59 (40.6%)</td>
<td>55 (37.9%)</td>
<td>17 (11.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Discrepancy refers to the total amount of kanji in the book that in some ways do not match with the jōyō list.

The numbers in this chart displays the amount of kanji, not the amount of readings. (Reference material)

As the chart shows, the majority of the kanji presented in *Genki I* are missing readings. The amounts of kanji with missing *kun-yomi* readings are somewhat the same ones missing *on-yomi* readings. However, if one would consider the total amount of missing *kun-yomi* readings in a single kanji compared to *on-yomi* readings, it becomes evident that missing *kun-yomi* readings
readings are more. This becomes clear when investigating kanji that carry many meanings; e.g. 生 or 明, Genki I only assigned one of the meanings to respective kanji, while the rest are completely omitted. In the case of 生, only the meaning “birth” is reflected by vocabulary; “生まれる (umareru)”, while the many other meanings (live, grow, raw, life etc.) are omitted. Other kanji that misses commonly used reading are 上 with the missing readings, e.g. 上がる (agaru) and 上る (noboru), 下 with 下がる (sagaru) and 下る (kudaru), 分 with (分かる (wakaru) and 分かつ (wakatsu), and 行 with (行う (okonau). Genki I includes the reading 勧める (tsutomeru) even though it is not included in the jōyō kanji list.15 Furthermore, Genki I often only present a single reading while omitting the other reading with a slightly different meaning; e.g. 閲こえる (kikoeru) “to be able to hear” compared to the listed 閲く (kiku) “to hear” or 見せる (miseru) “to be able to see” compared to 見る (miru) “to see”. Genki I does not present kanji that can be used as transitive or intransitive verbs – e.g. 帰す (kaesu) and 帰る (kaeru) - in most cases, only one of the verbs is provided while the other is omitted.

Many of the missing on-yomi readings are used in relatively obscure or unique words; e.g. 出納 (suitō) “receipts and expenditure “or 行脚 (angya) “pilgrimage”. There are further examples of lack of coherency, on-yomi reading じつ (jitsu) is not listed, however it used as a compound example to the kanji 休.

Due to the fact that there is no explanation in how the reading of some compound words might be altered, Genki I list many excessive readings; (e.g. 学 has both がく (gaku) and がつ (gak)).

15 There are already three kanji with the reading つとめる (tsutomeru) in the jōyō list.
Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Total amount of kanji</th>
<th>Maximum amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Total amount of words</th>
<th>Average amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Amount of words per chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genki I</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

*Genki I* sets a cap on maximum six compound words to each kanji; however only a single kanji with six compound words, the majority only have three. There are compound words which are assigned to multiple kanji, e.g. 三年生 (*san’nensei*) “third year student” can be found assigned to both 三 as 年. *Genki I* omits several meanings of certain words, e.g. 左右 (*sayū*) is translated as “left and right”, but the secondary meaning in verb form ”controlled by” is not mentioned.

3.1.4 Exercises

The exercises in *Genki I* are designed to be an appropriate level for beginners. Many of them are simple and short reading comprehension with simple write and answer exercises. Kanji and words that the student has not yet learned are often written with furigana or simply *kana*. The instructions are mostly written in English with the exception of chapter 11 and 12.

The first section is named 漢字の練習 (*kanji no renshū*) “kanji practice” which mostly consist of minor kanji games. There is a big variation of the tasks; some tasks instructs the students to use a certain amount of kanji parts and create kanji with, while other are simple fill in the correct kanji in a sentence. Other types of tasks are to add strokes to some kanji and turn them into new kanji, or tasks that focus on creating vocabulary by pairing together kanji.

The second section consists mostly of reading exercises which are named after the chapter topic. They are often followed by simple questionnaire of the content. The exercises gradually become more difficult, according to the students’ cognitive development.
Early readings exercises consist mostly of kana and only few kanji.

に日本人のともだちとうえんにいきました。こうえんでともだちとはなしました。(Chapter 4)

Later chapters consist of sentences with more kanji and in semi-authentic context.

私もアウトドアが大好きで、山に登ったり、垂をしたりするのが好きです。(Chapter 11)

The third section is a writing exercise: a topic is provided in which the student will use pre-existing and newly learned kanji knowledge in order to create a text. The writing exercises are often related with other exercises that can be found in section two.

3.1.5 Concluding Discussion

*Genki I* is a book targeted for learners at beginner’s level which is perhaps the main reason for making the textbook user-friendly. Many approaches that could be used to lay a solid kanji knowledge base, such as pictograph kanji or radicals, remain unmentioned in the textbooks. Since *Genki I* does not contain a significant amount of kanji information or learning strategies shows that the book is designed for mainly classroom usage in which the teacher has to explain various learning strategies. Furthermore, as there are no deeper instructions in how kanji can be studied or any information whatsoever that could facilitate the learning process, every kanji may look like a unique entity constructed by only a set of strokes. Hence it is necessary that the teacher explains, but it is not a guarantee that all of it will be mentioned. Furthermore, the students who only use *Genki I* as an autonomous study tool will most likely miss the opportunities of acquiring learning strategies.

The kanji description is also JSL unique, native targeted material fully lists both kanji reading *okurigana* while *Genki I* only lists the kanji reading. The readings could be written in the native standard for a clearer coherency. In the 2nd edition, for clarification *kun-yomi* readings could be written with *hiragana* and *on-yomi* readings could be written with *katakana*. Moreover, according to Kawaguchi (1993: 16) kanji learning should be primary be taught
through vocabulary learning; however *Genki I* also does not explain the importance of studying kanji through vocabulary learning, instead the instructions suggest that kanji can be learnt by writing them multiple times, which may not be sufficient for every student.

As there is no information regarding the kanji selection, it is hard to understand the reasoning and logic behind the kanji selection process overall. Kanji that are easy to write, that serves as radicals or functions as key components are mentioned late, or are completely absent in *Genki I*. This approach can for some be constructive as the student may learn “bonus kanji”; however a study by Maehara (2007: 1-2) showed that many international students failed to see the construction in more complex kanji and that she suggested that more kanji components should be taught in an earlier instance. In *Genki I*, there are many examples in which less frequently used kanji are given a higher priority than more commonly used kanji. *Genki I* organized kanji after chapter themes, but many of the kanji in the chapter have no connection to the actual theme, it might seem that they just happen to occur in the text.

More than half of the kanji presented in *Genki I* contain excessive kanji readings and/or have left out readings. Furthermore, *Genki I* lists all possible derivate readings which can make it difficult to distinguish the “true” on-yomi from the derivate variants. The authors admit that only readings that are appropriate for beginners are listed, but there are no further information stating which kanji exactly *Genki I* refers to. It may indeed be true that it is not necessary for a beginner’s level student to remember all possible readings; however a reasonable suggestion could be that as a standard, all kanji could have at least one on-yomi reading and one kun-yomi reading (provided that they have that). The omitted readings could be located in an appendix or the kanji could just simply be marked for future reference. Furthermore, *Genki I* instructs the student to only learn the shaded words and to only use the other words as a reference, but many of the other words are in fact common and the student will most likely encounter them.

The exercises are clearly targeted for beginners; besides chapter 11 and 12, the instructions are in English and the majority of the exercises are JSL designed. Providing the instructions in Japanese (with English translations) could help the student to get familiar with the language overall. By repetitively see the same instructions is also a sort of language practice.

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16 E.g. when learning 動, the student will also learn 動 and 力 all at once. Once learning 力, it can become easier for the student to learn it from the earlier encounter.
Furthermore, since the majority of the exercises mainly require passive kanji knowledge, such as to write the reading to a kanji outside of context, may make it harder for the student to utilize the knowledge in practical situations.

As the student will most likely learn the other areas of the book simultaneously with kanji studies, the student will acquire a relatively wide vocabulary. Moreover, as the book is mainly designed for class room usage, one can assume that the unmentioned knowledge areas (radicals, keisei kanji etc.) or strategies will be covered by a teacher.

3.2 Genki II

3.2.1 Structure, Layout, and Learning Strategies

Layout and How to Use

*Genki II* is designed exactly in the same fashion as *Genki I*. There are only some minor differences, such as the kanji amount is increased from approximately 15 kanji per chapter to 16 kanji. Furthermore, there are eleven kanji chapters compared with ten kanji chapters in *Genki I*. As with *Genki I*, *Genki II* does not provide the learner with any information nor learning strategies and there is no information about radicals.

3.2.2 Kanji Selection and Kanji Order

*Genki II* is almost similar to *Genki I* in the aspect that there is no information regarding the kanji selection. The kanji seems to be organized depending on which kanji that are used in the text. This can create confusions due to the fact that kanji that can have a relation to topic are often found in another chapter.
As the chart shows, Genki II often introduces “complete” kanji before mentioning the kanji components (e.g. 動 before 重). Kanji that often function as radicals are introduced fairly late (e.g. 力).

### 3.2.3 Readings and Vocabulary

**Readings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Amount of kanji</th>
<th>Discrepancy</th>
<th>Kanji with missing kun-yomi</th>
<th>Kanji with missing on-yomi</th>
<th>Kanji with excessive reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genki II</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>80 (46.5%)</td>
<td>55 (31.9%)</td>
<td>26 (15.1%)</td>
<td>16 (9.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

As the chart shows, slightly less than half of the kanji misses readings and/or have excessive readings. Genki II covers kanji more sufficiently than Genki I, especially in the terms of on-yomi readings.

The kanji with missing kun-yomi readings can be divided into subcategories, kanji that are used as verbs, kanji used as nouns and other. There are many kanji in Genki II that are used as transitive and intransitive verbs, in many cases Genki II displays only one of the readings while omitting the other; e.g. 教える (oshieru) is mentioned while 教わる (osowaru) is not.
Furthermore, there are also some kanji used as verbs in which the *kun-yomi* is not mentioned at all; e.g. 記す (*shirusu*), 用いる (*mochiiru*), 結う (*yuu*), or 歩む (*ayumu*). The second category is kanji primary used in nouns where only the *on-yomi* is listed, and the *kun-yomi* is omitted, e.g. 飯 (*meshi*), 字 (*aza*), and 室 (*muro*). The third category consists mainly of kanji that have unique readings when used in specific compound words: 目深 (*mabuka*), 子守り唄 (*komoriuta*), and 風上 (*kazakami*).

The majority of the missing *on-yomi* readings are those that are in relatively obscure or specific words, e.g. 悪寒 (*okan*), 訃音 (*fuin*), 体裁 (*teisai*), 歩合 (*buai*), and 回向 (*ekō*). Other types of missing *on-yomi* readings are those that are used in commonly used words, such as 発足 (*hossoku*), 若干 (*jakkan*), and 払拭 (*fusshoku*). Other missing readings are those that used in extremely specific cases only, such as 読経 (*dokyō*).

The amount of kanji with excessive readings is somewhat similar to *Genki I*.

**Vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Total amount of kanji</th>
<th>Maximum amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Total amount of words</th>
<th>Average amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Amount of words per chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Genki II</em></td>
<td>172</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

By observing the total amount of words, it becomes evident that the difficulty level in *Genki II* has risen compared to *Genki I*. For instance, *Genki II* has on average more words per kanji than *Genki I* and there are many more cases of kanji that have five assigned words. The chapters in *Genki II* often contain a set of kanji that are together used as compound words, e.g. 料 and 理 in the word 料理 (*ryōri*) “cooking”, thus the single word is often listed multiple times making the total amount of words is fewer.
Compared to *Genki I*, *Genki II* has much more obscure kanji in some of its compound words. For instance the following compound words 悪魔 (akuma), 英雄 (eiyū), and 鎮痛剤 (chintsūzai). None of the kanji in bold are among the top 500 used ones, and the last kanji is not even among the top 1500 used kanji (Agency of Cultural Affairs 2015). *Genki I* covers the word 上品 (jōhin) “elegant” but not the antonym word 下品 (gehin) “vulgar”. Furthermore, due to the chapter construction, there are many kanji that are instructed through compound words, but where one of the two kanji is yet to be introduced. In many instances, one of the components is not introduced in the Genki series at all. As an example, chapter 13 introduced 肉 with the compound 肉屋 (nikuya); 屋 is not mentioned until chapter 16. In the same chapter the word 理由 (riyū) is introduced with the kanji 理, however the other components 由 is not mentioned in the series.

### 3.2.4 Exercises

*Genki II* has a similar exercise layout as *Genki I*, a kanji practice section, often several readings sections and a writing section. The majority of the task instructions are in Japanese with some words are translated to English.

The kanji practice section has two parts, a small review section and a small test section. The review section list five to seven already learnt kanji words with the reading provided in parentheses. The test section lists ten to twelve already learnt kanji words without the readings next to them (the answers can be found at the bottom of the same page).

The reading section contains several reading exercises in forms of texts, often somewhat related to the chapter topic. The exercises are often followed by a small questionnaire; there is a variation of yes or no type of questions as well as questions that require longer answers. The context becomes gradually more difficult; however all of the texts are often relatively authentic; words that are usually written with kanji are written with kanji. Unknown words are attached with furigana.

またアメリカ人が「怒っている」と思う表情を、日本人は「軽蔑」の表情だと考えそうです。(Chapter 23)
The writing section is similar to *Genki I*, a topic is provided and the student should write a smaller text. They are often related to the topic in the readings section. *Genki II* has also in one of its chapters expressions that can be used for greetings card, e.g. New Year greetings and summer greetings.

### 3.2.5 Concluding Discussion

*Genki II* is in many ways similar to *Genki I*, there is no information regarding kanji studying methods. There is no information about the kanji selecting process, only the notice that it is kanji for beginner’s level. The chapters theme often have very little or no relation with the kanji with the exception that they occur in the text. *Genki II* often introduces complete kanji before introducing the components that they are made from and as Maehara (2007: 1-2) stated, many students fails to reproduce complex kanji because of being unaware of the components. A reasonable approach could be to introduce more kanji components. The earlier chapters of *Genki II* are written with semi-authentic Japanese but the later chapters are relatively authentic. Almost all words that in native texts are written with kanji are written with kanji in *Genki II* as well.

Almost half of the kanji in *Genki II* misses readings and/or have excessive readings which is a slightly less compared with *Genki I* (62.7%). This is especially noticeable when viewing the amount of kanji with missing on-yomi readings, 26 in *Genki II* compared with 55 in *Genki I*. Many kun-yomi readings that are used in common words are omitted. Compared with *Genki I*, the total amount of words, words per kanji, and words per chapter have increased in *Genki II*, thus there is a slight higher focus on vocabulary learning. However, many words are assigned to multiple kanji which means that the total amount of unique words is slightly less. *Genki II* instructs the student to only learn the shaded words, but many of the un-shaded words are in fact common and the student will most likely encounter them.

The exercises have received an upgrade; the instructions are mostly in Japanese and there is a slightly bigger focus on connecting kanji learning with vocabulary learning which according to Kawaguchi (1993: 16) is how kanji learning should be conducted. Moreover, there are no kanji games in *Genki II*. The difficult levels in the texts gradually increases and are much more authentic than in *Genki I*. Every chapter contains a review section; however it is relatively small and the student will only learn the words outside of context, hence mainly
developing passive kanji knowledge. Furthermore, the size of the exercise does not exactly convey the importance of kanji repetition. Using *Genki II* in classrooms might create situations in which the teacher gives out further review methods, exercises, or test questions.

The analysis shows that *Genki II* focuses more on vocabulary learning than the predecessor *Genki I*. There is no information in the textbooks how kanji could be studied or any other learning methods that could facilitate the learning process. As the book is designed for classroom usage, the teacher may through classroom activities explain various methods for kanji learning.

### 3.3 BKB I

#### 3.3.1 Structure, Layout, and Learning Strategies

**Layout and How to Use**

*BKB I* is mainly written by a mix of *kana* and kanji, but to match the students learning progress, the earlier chapters have more *kana* while the later chapters have more kanji. Many parts of the book are written in English, to clarify some tasks or in explanations. Kanji that are yet to be learned are often attached with *furigana*, and once they are learnt, they are displayed without.

Besides focusing how to read and write approximately 500 kanji, the purpose with BKB series is to teach kanji systematically and effectively by focusing on the knowledge in the following areas:

1. Broad kanji related knowledge (etymology, ideographs, how to use *on-kun*, how to write, radicals etc.)
2. Practical usage knowledge (to understand/guess the meaning of words from context, to analyze the meaning structure of compound kanji words, to understand the meaning of sentences by knowing kanji words and so on)
3. Memorizing skill (to create a memorizing skill which is not only perceptive, but also productive in the sense that the student can utilize already learnt kanji whenever necessary)  
(Kano et al. 1989: 1-3).
BKB I instructions state that the student should first memorize the meanings, *on-kun* readings and usage examples. It may be of aid to copy the stroke order several times when memorizing the areas above. The student can continue to “Reading Exercises” in unit two as soon as a reading skill is acquired, exercise one contain essential readings that must have been acquired. Exercise two focuses on practical reading of kanji in sentences. Furthermore, BKB I advices the student to write the readings in a notebook, then ask the teacher to check the answers.

*BKB I* is constructed by the following standard:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 1</th>
<th>About kanji</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>Basic Kanji 10-12 kanji</td>
<td>Every chapter has 10-12 kanji with tasks that involves writing kanji. Reading kanji is a kanji index with associated readings and vocabulary. Reading exercises is reading kanji vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1 Writing Kanji</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2 Reading Kanji</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 Reading Exercises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unit 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit 3</th>
<th>Reading material (From Lesson 11)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading material (From Lesson 11)</td>
<td>Kanji in Daily Life (not in every unit)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review section (every fifth chapter)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chapter layout in *BKB I*

The main purpose with unit 1 is to introduce kanji explanations (e.g. derivations, structures, radicals, etc.). For instance some chapters show how kanji were developed from simple pictures while some other introduces the names of radicals.

Unit 2 consist of three parts: writing kanji, reading exercises and writing exercises. The earlier chapters also mention general aspects of kanji, such as basic stroke order rules when writing kanji. Writing kanji section display the kanji, an English meaning, readings, stroke order, total amount of strokes, and words examples. *BKB I* display inflectional words in their dictionary words with the exception of the so called な-adjectives. Readings displayed in brackets “( )” shows an uncommon reading. A line “－“connects the stem with the inflectional ending; e.g. おおきい. Irregular readings are marked with”*“and “・” indicates the kanji boundaries; e.g. だい・がく.
Unit 3 contains mainly reading exercises in which kanji is presented in context, with questions regarding the content. The reading material also includes other variants, such as tasks or games. There is also often a section in every chapter named “Kanji in Daily Life” in which the student can get closer with everyday kanji usage. This section has often no relation with the actual context in the chapter, it can instead be used e.g. as topic in classroom activities. There are also review sections after every fifth lesson.

Learning Strategies

Besides only listing kanji and their readings, BKB I uses various methods in the introduction of almost every chapter. In the earlier chapters, there is a big focus on explaining the etymology of kanji, how they were originally made from pictures.

BKB I provides basic information about kanji structures in chapter 5 “Kanji made from a Combination”. This approach can be constructive as it clearly highlights pictograph kanji knowledge that may not be apparent for every student. Furthermore, BKB I includes explanations, e.g. “both the sun (日) and the moon (月) are ‘bright’”, and hence the meaning for the 明 is bright.

There is also information mentioning variants of 形声 (keisei) kanji. This type of information can be useful for JSL students as it may help the students to see on-yomi reading patterns which consequently lower the amount of readings that must be learned.

BKB I contains some chapters that mention radicals and how kanji are structured: “Most kanji are formed from two or more components” (Kano et al 1989: 98). They introduce seven position names: へん (hen) (left), つく (tsukuri) (right), かんむり (kanmuri) (top), あし (ashi) (bottom), たれ (tare) (upper left), かまえ (kamae) (enclosure), and にょう (nyō) (lower left). Moreover, in order to raise awareness of radicals, BKB I includes basic radical knowledge through easy exercises and games.

For clarification and examples, see section 3.5.1
3.3.2 Kanji Selection and Kanji Order

In order to match the book’s aim and purpose, *BKB I* describes the kanji selection by the following criteria:

1) Kanji that teaches various kanji structure 象形文字 (shōkeimoji) ・ 指事文字 (shijimoji) ・ 会意文字 (kaii’moji)\(^{18}\)

2) Kanji that are used as basic nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

3) Kanji that function as basic radicals and for every radical an appropriate amount of kanji were also chosen.

4) Kanji that have a high usage frequency and kanji that have many usage possibilities (in compound words).

5) Besides the 500 kanji that are presented, there is an addition of kanji that are commonly used in names or place names and/or kanji that are confronted in everyday life (Kano et al. 1989: 3).

*BKB I* teaches kanji from a certain chapter theme, e.g. “Kanji made from Pictures -1-” consist of kanji made from pictures or “Kanji for Adjectives -1-” focuses on kanji for adjectives. Furthermore, there are also chapter that focuses on kanji used to describe time, family members, and kanji used to create compound verbs. The rest of the book follows similar construction patterns. It is evident that the authors have a clear purpose with the kanji selection.

---

\(^{18}\) 象形文字 “Pictographs” (e.g. 月), 指事文字 “simple ideograms” (e.g. 上) and 会意文字 “compound ideographs” (e.g. 岳)
Kanji in BKB I (The shaded bold kanji contain components that are yet to be learnt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kanji components that are yet to be learnt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>全刀可斤矢豆氏音欠舌孝尺免周永由交反各至央楽占又丙皮王玉束羊首争弓弔未更亡重完失官戸丁寸寸付羽虫升穴是合正台shire斗</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, BKB I covers several radical and key components; however there are still several components that are mentioned after kanji that they occur in (e.g. 岩 is mentioned before 石) or they are not mentioned at all (e.g. 刀).

3.3.3 Readings and Vocabulary

Readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Amount of kanji</th>
<th>Discrepancy</th>
<th>Kanji with missing kun-yomi</th>
<th>Kanji with missing on-yomi</th>
<th>Kanji with excessive readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BKB I</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>102 (40.6%)</td>
<td>63 (25.1%)</td>
<td>48 (19.1%)</td>
<td>15 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

As the table above shows, around 40% of all kanji are either missing and/or have excessive readings. There are more kanji with missing kun-yomi as on-yomi while the number of kanji with excessive readings are few. While the Genki series explain that many readings are intentionally left out, there is no such explanation in BKB I.
The types of kanji with missing *kun-yomi* can be divided into three categories, kanji mainly used for verbs, kanji used as adjectives and other. Kanji that have multiple *kun-yomi* readings for verbs, e.g. 生, 明, 上, and 下, have many of their readings omitted. Other examples are kanji that have two or more assigned verbs, e.g. 食, 敎, and 住; *BKB I* presents only one of the readings while not mentioning the other. *BKB I* does not mention many commonly used readings 好む (*konomu*) or 図る (*hakaru*). Kanji used mainly for adjectives have their adjective word correctly presented, but many of them can also be used as verbs, e.g. 広い (*hiroi*) is in one verb-form 広がる (*hirogaru*) and 高い (*takai*) is 高まる (*takamaru*). The other category consists of various kanji, mainly in kanji used in nouns, e.g. 政 (*matsurigoto*), 館 (*yakata*), and 社 (*yashiro*). There are also kanji that have an altered reading in some compound words, e.g. the kanji in bold 目深 (*mabuka*), 雨戸 (*amado*), 木陰 (*kokage*), 火影 (*hokage*) and 金物 (*kanamono*).

The kanji with missing *on-yomi* readings are often kanji that have several possible *on-yomi* readings. *BKB I* chooses to only list one, while omitting the other, e.g. 生 (*shō*), 早 (*satsu*), 強 (*gō*), and 気 (*ke*). Other type of kanji are those that have kan’on and a go’ on *on-yomi* readings, *BKB I* list only one reading but not the other, e.g. both 回 and 会 misses the *on-yomi* reading え (e), and both 青 and 政 misses the reading しょう (*shō*). The remaining kanji are those that have a relatively unique reading in certain compound words, e.g. the kanji in bold 大工 (*daiku*), 歩合 (*buai*), 出納 (*suitō*), 内裏 (*dairi*), and 体裁 (*teisai*).

The kanji with excessive readings have additional readings attached to them, most likely with the intention to highlight the readings changes when used in some compound words.

**Vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Total amount of kanji</th>
<th>Maximum amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Total amount of words</th>
<th>Average amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Amount of words per chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>BKB I</em></td>
<td>251</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)
BKB I sets a cap of maximum four words per kanji. Most of the kanji has around three associated words. BKB I usually assigns unique words to every; there are only a few examples in which a single word is assigned to multiple kanji. BKB I avoids repeating a single word by adding other dimension of it. 研究 (kenkyū) “research” is assigned to the kanji 研, while the word 研究者 (kenkyūsha) “researcher” is assigned to究. It is evident that BKB I mainly focuses on teaching beginner’s level of knowledge when they avoid to assign multiple meanings, e.g. 左右 (sayū) “left and right” can also be used in 左右する (sayūsuru) “control”. As BKB I does not have any instructions of learning priorities, hence the student should aim to learn all words.

3.3.4 Exercises

The first ten chapters have only “fill in the blanks” type of exercises. The student will write kanji words to an English translation or just write kanji readings, many of them are without context. The kanji made from picture –chapters also include a picture in which the student has to write the correct kanji to its corresponding picture. The sections “しッテいますかできますか” (shitte imasu ka) usually includes words that can be used in daily situations, e.g. at the train station or the way to read road signs. BKB I also introduces various kanji-games, e.g. かろた (karuta) “card” or radical games.

Every chapter from chapter eleven and onwards include some sort of a short, semi-authentic reading material. The words that the student does not know are often provided in hiragana, there are no furigana attached to unknown kanji. The topic of the text is not clearly decided, but many kanji that the student learnt in the chapter occur frequently in the text. Some sections also include questionnaires, or other tasks. As the student learns more kanji, the difficulty level also raises.

さて、私は先週の水曜日に新しい家にひっこしました。(Chapter 19)

Every fifth chapter in BKB I has a review section with various tasks, such as: “Make 5 sentences by using the kanji above” or “Form sentences using the following Kanji”. The
review section in chapter 20 also includes antonym word exercises and explanations of compound word kanji-structure.

3.3.5 Concluding Discussion

*BKB I* aims to teach basic kanji and knowledge areas around it, hence the name. *BKB I* covers various learning strategies, such as pictographs, *keisei* kanji, etymology, and combinations, which serves as an easy-to-understand introduction or as explanatory notes to kanji studies. Furthermore, *BKB I* contains a few chapters that mention radicals. However, the radical information is relatively short, knowing the radical can make it easier to use dictionaries; thus *BKB I* could include more comprehensive radical information (Richmond 2005: 52-53). Regarding the layout of *BKB I*, the chapter themes are clear and the layout is coherent which makes the book easy to follow. The only area that remains unmentioned is the importance of studying kanji through vocabulary which several researchers (Kawaguchi 1993: 16, Kaiser 1998: 25-31, Richmond 2005: 67) has stated as one of the most important strategies when learning kanji.

The earlier chapters have a clear kanji order, and a notion in the book admits that there are several kanji that are not commonly used, but as they serve as components in many kanji they are listed. However, there are still many kanji that often function as components that remains unmentioned. In many chapters, *BKB I* often introduces complete kanji first and thereafter introducing the components, such as 話 before the radical 言. Another example is the decision to list 政 while omitting 正, despite the fact that the latter gives both of the *on-yomi* readings to the former.

Around 40% of the kanji introduces in *BKB I* either misses or have excessive readings. Kanji with several *kun-yomi* and *on-yomi* readings have usually only a single reading listed, while the rest remain unmentioned, e.g. 明, 生 and 気. Kanji with left out readings could be marked or the readings could be located in an appendix for future reference. Furthermore, instead of listing several possible derived readings, *BKB I* could instruct the nature of kanji and how the sound may change in some words. *BKB I* often assigns a single English meaning when introducing kanji, which according to Richmond (2005: 59) is not only restrictive but also illogical as one English meaning may not in most cases encapsulate all the meanings that a
kanji may have. As the textbooks targeted for beginners, the cap on four words per kanji can in many cases be considered as reasonable, but with kanji that have several meanings could have more assigned words.

The exercises in the first ten chapters are mostly of “fill in the blank” kind of type and short reading exercises, thus presented out of context requiring only passive kanji knowledge. The reading sentences are in many cases composed by the kanji in the same chapter, which often leads to unnatural sentences that the student will most likely not stumble upon. Chapter 11 and onwards contain a smaller readings section; however they are often only semi-authentic and short. The texts are often followed by a smaller questionnaire or task; such “read the following passage and guess who is who in the picture”. Many of the texts could be made more authentic, for example by attaching kanji to commonly used words instead of kana.

The analysis shows that BKB I provides with various methods when introducing kanji which indeed can be helpful; however the importance of studying kanji through vocabulary is not clearly presented. Furthermore, many kanji that are used as components are often listed after kanji in which they occur in, or they are not listed at all. A reasonable suggestion could be to in an earlier instance list more kanji that serves as components. As BKB I omits several readings, the learner could be informed that there are many kanji that have their readings intentionally left out. From a short term perspective, it may be true that students at a beginner’s level do not need to learn and memorize all possible reading; however by not mentioning that there are more readings may make the student unaware of them. Moreover, when presenting the learning strategies, BKB I could also present the method of learning kanji through vocabulary.
3.4 BKB II

3.4.1 Structure, Layout, and Learning Strategies

Layout and How to Use

*BKB II* is written in the same way as *BKB I*, hence the kanji presentation, chapter layout is the same. The only difference is that *BKB II* uses less English and more Japanese, it also puts a higher focus on vocabulary learning and practical usage of kanji.

Learning Strategies

*BKB II* introduces fewer learning strategies than its predecessor *BKB I*; there are only a few examples of chapters covering strategies. One of the strategies is that *BKB II* uses pictures to describe words, but rather than focusing on kanji with concrete meanings, *BKB II* applies this mostly on kanji with abstract meanings. Moreover, *BKB II* also provides pictures to several for clarification in chapters that mention kanji that are used as both transitive and intransitive verbs.

*BKB II* contains one chapter that covers radicals. *BKB II* presents Japanese radical names вод (さんずい) (*sanzui*) and てへん (*tehen*).

3.4.1 Kanji Selection and Kanji Order

The kanji selection in *BKB II* is constructed from the same premises as in *BKB I*. *BKB II* organizes kanji through various chapter themes, e.g. “Hobbies”, “An Entrance Exam”, and “Signs”. The chapters contains mostly of kanji that have connection with the theme, e.g. the chapter “Japan’s Four Seasons” contains the kanji used to describe seasons; 春夏秋冬 (*shunkashūtō*) “spring, summer autumn, winter”. It becomes evident that the authors have thoroughly considered which kanji are appropriate to be taught together.
Kanji in *BKB II* (The shaded bold kanji contain components that are yet to be learnt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kanji components that are yet to be learnt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>央与斗里已吏昔吉巾羊舌丸令軍士我義亜占未各旨斤丁肖炎泉至甲弓害呂又矢穴氏辛志固幸非豆亡敬皆直黄周曾寸衣王刀弔去</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the table shows, several kanji components are mentioned after kanji that they occur in (e.g. 思 before 心) or they remain unmentioned (e.g. 衣).

### 3.4.2 Readings and Vocabulary

**Readings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Amount of kanji</th>
<th>Discrepancy</th>
<th>Kanji with missing <em>kun-yomi</em></th>
<th>Kanji with missing <em>on-yomi</em></th>
<th>Kanji with excessive readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>BKB II</em></td>
<td>249</td>
<td>93 (37.3%)</td>
<td>65 (26.1%)</td>
<td>27 (10.8%)</td>
<td>18 (7.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

As the chart above shows, slightly more than every third kanji in *BKB II* lacks readings and/or carry excessive readings. Around every fourth kanji are missing one or several *kun-yomi* readings while slightly every tenth kanji are missing one or several *on-yomi* readings. The amount of kanji with excessive readings is only 7.2%.
There are mainly two categories of kanji with missing kun-yomi readings, the first one is where *BKB II* only introduces the on-yomi reading while the kanji also carries a kun-yomi reading. There are several kanji that fits into this category, e.g. 和 (yawaragui and more), 仕 (tsukaeru), 記 (shirusu), 商 (akinai), and 果 (hatasu). The second category is kanji that have more than one kun-yomi reading, in which *BKB II* only introduces one or a few. Kanji in this category are: 冷, 結, 過, 軽, 空, and 初.

The kanji with missing on-yomi readings can be divided into two main categories, kanji that carry on-yomi readings that are used in specific words only, and kanji whose on-yomi are simply omitted. Kanji that falls under the first category are the kanji in bold: 和尚 (oshō), 好事家 (kōzuka), 建立 (konryū (also kenritsu)), 夏至 (geshi), 業病 (gōbyō), and 謀反 (muhon). The second category consist of kanji such as 払, 泣, 色, 発, 業 despite the fact that they can easily be taught through common words, 払拭 (fussoku), 号泣 (gōkyū), 景色 (keshiki), 発足 (hossoku).

*BKB II* adds additional readings to kanji whose reading changes when used in compound words, most likely with the same intention as in *BKB I*; to highlight the change of the reading.

**Vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Total amount of kanji</th>
<th>Maximum amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Total amount of words</th>
<th>Average amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Amount of words per chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>BKB II</em></td>
<td>249</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

*BKB II* has a cap of maximum four words per kanji and most of the kanji have four associated words. Kanji that are presented in the chapter tend to not share compound words while kanji in different chapter does. The kanji 映 and 画 are both in the same chapter, thus the word 映画 (eiga) is only listed once, but the kanji 座 and 席 are located in different chapters, thus the word 座席 (zaseki) is listed twice. Regarding kanji that carry many meanings, *BKB II* often
choose to priority only one side of a kanji while neglecting the other. This becomes evident when *BKB II* description of kanji such as 折る (*oru*) which means “to fold or to break”, but the word 折 (*ori*) is omitted.¹⁹ The biggest difference between *BKB I* and *BKB II* is that the latter focuses more on words that are used as vocabulary rather than names or place names. There are of course some place names that are common, e.g. 銀座 (Ginza) or 関東地方 (Kantōchihō); however these areas and place names are indeed widely known.

### 3.4.4 Exercises

The exercise section in *BKB II* mainly consist of a reading section, a writing section, and a text followed by a questionnaire. The first reading section contains is mostly single kanji-words and shorter sentences, the student should write the kanji readings with hiragana.

I. 次の漢字の読み方をひらがなで書きなさい。
1. 思う 2.楽しむ 3.楽な 4. 楽しい。
(Vocabulary exercises presented outside of context) (Chapter 23)

II. 次の漢字の読み方をひらがなで書きなさい。
1. ぐらむは重さの単位で、センチメートルは長さの単位です。
2. 私はこのごろ太って、体重が5キロも重くなりました。
3. きのうの晩、胸が苦しくて、眠れませんでした。
(Vocabulary exercises presented in context) (Chapter 38)

The writing section focuses on vocabulary knowledge, in which the student will write kanji. There are mainly two types: one in which *BKB II* provides the English meaning and reading and the student simply has to fill in the correct kanji, and the in the other the student must write the correct kanji-words in a given sentence.

(かんとう)(ちほう)に(たいふう)9(ごう)が(ちか)づいています。
(Chapter 40)

In the text reading section *BKB II* provides a shorter semi-authentic text, often followed by a questionnaire. The content of the text is relatively random; however they often contain many

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¹⁹ 折 = is a synonym to 時 (*toki*) and has nothing to do with “folding” or “breaking”.

45
of the kanji that the student learned in the same chapter. As the student learns more kanji, the reading material gradually becomes more difficult.

私はおもしろいニュースをさがして、いつも走り回っています。(Chapter 27)

1965年とくらべて、1980年さらに2000年で大きく増えた食品は、油脂、肉類、牛乳、乳製品である。(Chapter 43)

*BKB II* has a review section in every fifth chapter. The first task is to review already learnt kanji by reading them. Other tasks may involve word structure exercises, antonym words tasks and writing the correct kanji in the correct box.

### 3.4.5 Concluding Discussion

*BKB II* is in many ways designed in the same fashion as *BKB I*; however there is a slight higher focus on vocabulary learning and practical usage. With the exception of pictographs, explanations of practical usage of certain kanji, there is no clear mentioning of other learning strategies, and there is only a single chapter that mentions radicals. The textbook instructions in *BKB II* are mostly written in Japanese, and the majority of the texts are in semi-authentic state that gradually becomes more difficult.

*BKB II* organizes kanji after relatively wide chapters and the majority of the kanji in the chapter have some relation to the actual theme. However due to the broad themes; any chapter could in reality contain several suitable kanji. E.g. chapter 26, “Japan’s Four Seasons” could contain kanji used in the word for “seasons”: 四季 (shiki) or 季節 (kisetsu). Furthermore, there are several cases in which the kanji grouping can be question; the chapter named “Kanji for Verbs” contains also kanji for adjectives and “Opposite Action Verbs” contain also kanji that do not have any opposite action. Moreover, there are several cases in which kanji that function as components are taught after the kanji they are included in. One of the most noticeable aspects is that the book only covers a small numbers of kanji that serve as components in several other kanji, despite the fact that the authors state that kanji components would be covered.
Slightly less than 40% of the kanji in *BKB II* misses reading and/or carry excessive readings, whereas every fourth kanji misses a *kun-yomi* reading and every tenth kanji misses an *on-yomi* reading. Many of the left out readings are used in common words, and a reasonable suggestion could be that all kanji could be presented with one *on-yomi* and one *kun-yomi* (provided that they have that). It is important to point out that some of the readings are only used in obscure words and are perhaps not appropriate for beginners. Nonetheless, a proposal could be that kanji with left out readings could be marked, or the readings could be located in an appendix (or covered in the *IKB* series).

*BKB II* can be described as a textbook for the upper layer of beginner’s studies, the step before preparing the student for an intermediate study level. However, the focus on vocabulary learning is similar to the predecessor *BKB I* and the total number of words is only slightly increased. The cap of four words per kanji can in some cases be restricting, especially with kanji that have several meanings and/or several usage possibilities. In the current state only one usage area and meaning is mentioned while the other are left out. As mentioned in the section 3.3.5, it is restrictive and illogical to only assign a single English meaning to a kanji with several meanings. As the average students have reached a higher level, the difficulty level in the book could be set a little bit higher and the amount of words could be slightly increased.

The exercises in the majority of the chapters are of passive type; many of them consist of writing the readings to kanji or write kanji outside of context. There are some difficult exercises in which the student must read a sentence solely made of *kana* and convert all possible words to kanji. Furthermore, the reading material is on a semi-authentic level throughout the whole book; however the later chapters become more difficult and can be considered as more authentic.

The analysis shows that *BKB II* provides only a few learning strategies and there is only a single chapter mentioning radicals. While *BKB II* is targeted for student at a higher level than *BKB I*, the difficulty level is similar to *BKB I*. There chapters contains mainly kanji that have a connection with the theme; however there are several kanji components that are mentioned fairly late or not at all. Several readings are omitted, but there is not notion stating that some readings are omitted. By not being aware that many readings are left out may in the long term become a learning obstacle, especially for students aiming for an intermediate level.
3.5 IKB I

3.5.1 Structure, Layout, and Learning Strategies

Layout and How to Use

The introduction states that the IKB I focuses on the following principles regarding kanji studies:
1. Studying kanji equals studying vocabulary.
2. Solely to know how to read and write kanji is not enough, it is also essential to learn how to and when to use kanji.
3. It is desirable to learn kanji within authentic context.
4. Besides only teaching readings and vocabulary, IKB I also adopts the strategy to teach additional knowledge elements that can lead to a more effective kanji learning.
5. Due to differences in culture, interest or study style, it is desirable that the student discovers his/her own appropriate study method (Kano et al. 1993: 6-9).

IKB I is written in a semi-authentic Japanese context, most of the words that should be written with kanji are written with kanji, but kanji that are yet to be learnt are written with kana. All instructions and most of the word definitions are written in Japanese and unknown kanji words have attached furigana. The only few occasions when the book uses English in the definitions of the kanji meanings and kanji words.

IKB I is divided into 10 chapters and each chapter consist of five sections; review section, basic exercises, key points, applied exercises, and tasks. The review section targets kanji from BKB series in which the student is tested in already learnt areas. Basic exercises focuses on the new kanji, the exercises are mainly reading exercises and option based exercises. Exercises that are too difficult can be skipped for a while and once the student has gathered enough knowledge, the student can try again. Key points consist of knowledge that can be useful for memorizing different areas of kanji, such as how to read kanji, how to use them etc. Applied exercises focuses mostly on writing kanji and using kanji correctly in context. The main idea with the task section is that the student will study kanji by other means, e.g. from interest areas or other course subjects.
The main difference between *IKB I* and the *BKB* series is that the kanji readings, vocabulary etc. are located in a section named pattern index, which is separated from the kanji lessons. The pattern index organizes radicals first after their position and then their stroke order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radical Position Order</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>へん</td>
<td>イ in 侍</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>つくり</td>
<td>リ in 剣</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>その他(左右)</td>
<td>戈 in 戦</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>かんむり</td>
<td>穴 in 空</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>あし</td>
<td>八 in 共</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>その他(上下)</td>
<td>手 in 撃</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>たれ</td>
<td>厂 in 厚</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>かまえ</td>
<td>勲 in 包</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>にょう</td>
<td>〇 in 造</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>その他(全体)</td>
<td>鼻 in 鼻</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Radical order in the kanji index in *IKB I*.

In the radical section, *IKB I* does not only mention the kanji that can be found in the *IKB I*, it mentions all kanji that share the same radical from any of the *BKB* or *IKB* book series. For instance, all kanji with the radical イ ( ninben) are mentioned, and *IKB I* informs the reader of in which volume and chapter the student can find the detailed description. However, the kanji description, such as compound words, reading, meaning etc. contain kanji that can only be found in *IKB I*, kanji from other volumes are not mentioned, e.g. the kanji 仏 which is in *IKB I* is listed while the kanji 偏 which is in *IKB II* is not.
IKB I kanji description covers stroke order, total amount of strokes, English meaning(s), and word examples. IKB I displays inflectional words in their dictionary words. A line “—” connects the stem with the inflectional ending; e.g. ことわる. Irregular or unique readings are marked with “*”. Compound words that can be used as so-called suru-verbs are marked with スル, e.g. 創業スル (sōgyōsuru). IKB I also presents the kanji as a vocabulary in an example sentence, e.g. the kanji 縮 is used in the example: “これは濃縮ジュースです。”. The words have an English translation and some words have their antonym or synonym word marked as well.

Learning Strategies

Besides teaching the reading and meanings of kanji, the section “Key Points” lists and explains many different areas of kanji that might be useful for overall kanji learning. The earlier chapters mention different types of kanji word structure and variations of kanji words. Chapter 2 displays variations of antonym words and it also some examples in how they can be used. Chapter 3 presents the difference between 漢語 (kango) “on-yomi words” and 和語 (wago) “kun-yomi words”, abbreviations and omissions, structure of kanji verbs, as well as structure of kanji compound words. Chapter 4 contains both word structure, type of words as well as antonym words. Learning these kanji areas through patterns instead through unique words can be a useful strategy for many students.

Chapter 5 mentions the following areas: kanji with same phonetic markers, i.e. keisei kanji, same reading on-yomi suffixes (e.g. 所 and 署), homophones with different accentuations, and homophones with different meanings.

Both chapters 6 and 7 mention the structure of kanji words. Chapter 6 focuses more on teaching the way in how to understand longer compound words by showing disassembling methods. Chapter 7 focuses on teaching the function when kanji are used in compound words. E.g. 新設する: 新しく → 設ける. Being able to recognise patterns and knowing how kanji can be compounded are skills that may clarify the links between kanji and vocabulary (Hatta, Kawakami and Hatasa 1997:415).
Chapter 8 introduces the meaning of kanji with several kun-yomi or on-yomi readings and how to distinguish them. IKB provides examples by placing the words in sentences, e.g. the kanji 細 that has two kun-yomi readings: (細かいお金を数える。) (細い糸でセーターをあむ。). Furthermore, IKB provides examples for kanji with several on-yomi readings, the first type is kanji where the on-yomi refers to two different meanings, e.g. the kanji 楽 in which the reading がく (gaku) means music while the reading らく (raku) refers to comfort or amusement. The second type is kanji that both have kan’on as well as go’on readings, and IKB displays the readings by introducing them through vocabulary, e.g. the kanji 盛 in the word 盛況 (seikyō) and 繁盛 (hanjō). Another type of examples is how a single word may have multiple meanings depending how it is read, e.g. 生物 can be read as せいぶつ (seibutsu) “organism” as well as なまもの (namamono) “raw item”. IKB provides examples by presenting the words in sentences.

Chapter 9 continues to introduce homophone kanji that share same kun-yomi. IKB provides detailed examples and definitions in how to use the homophones. IKB includes some example of how to use the kanji in sentences, e.g. the word ふる (furu) which in 振る the particle を (o) is used, while in 降る the particle が (ga) is used.

In chapter 10 IKB present synonym words and examples in how to use them. The first section mentions examples of synonym kanji. The second section shows examples of kanji that often shows similar meanings, e.g. 対 in the words 対照 (taishō), 対称 (taishō), and 対比 (taihi). IKB the third section mentions suffixes that have similar meanings, e.g. 料 and 代. The fourth, fifth and sixth sections shows how synonyms words are used in context, and also instructs the different usage methods. IKB presents also synonym words whose usage can sometimes be hard to distinguish, as well as homophones that are also synonyms. IKB dedicates many review sections for keisei kanji. Many of the tasks in this section highlight several keisei kanji. However, there are keisei kanji that are not always coherent, for instance, IKB lists 各 is the part that carries the reading (かく (kaku)); however there are many kanji that has the part but the reading is not (e.g. 落 (raku), 給 (raku), 略 (ryaku), and 路 (ro)).

20対照 “contrast” 対称 “symmetry” 対比 “contrast, comparison”
While there are no radical exercises, there is a slight focus on radical knowledge as *IKB I* organizes the kanji index after radicals. *IKB I* uses the strategy to label kanji parts as radicals, e.g. both the kanji 隈 and験 share the same right part and *IKB I* names this part けん. This part is not radical but phonetic part. As mentioned earlier, a study by Okita (1997: 74) showed that many second language learners believe that radical knowledge is beneficial for their kanji studies.

**3.5.2 Kanji Selection and Kanji Order**

The *IKB* series targets the student who have completed an elementary Japanese language course (can understand elementary level grammar) and mastered 300 – 500 kanji. The *BKB* and *IKB* series together cover over 1000 kanji and they are labeled as “kanji for common use”. The remaining *jōyō* kanji are labeled as “basic kanji for specific area” and are not covered; instead the authors state that the students will learn them when progressing in their specific subject areas. The kanji selection process is describes by the following criteria:

1. They correspond to the Japanese Ministry of Education’s official list of 1006 kanji; i.e. kyōiku kanji list
2. This amount meets the requirement of the JLPT II.
3. They are frequently used in newspapers and magazines (Newspaper Kanji 1976) (Kano et al. 1993: 6-10)

Rather than organizing kanji after wide topic themes, such as “Airport” or “University Life”, the kanji are ordered after the four different main themes introduces in chapter one: shape, pronunciation, meaning, and usage. It is evident that the authors had a clear purpose when organizing the kanji, e.g. many kanji used in compound words are taught together.
Kanji in IKB I (The shaded bold kanji contain components that are yet to be learnt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Amount of kanji</th>
<th>Discrepancy</th>
<th>Kanji with missing kun-yomi</th>
<th>Kanji with missing on-yomi</th>
<th>Kanji with excessive readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IKB I</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>5 (1.6%)</td>
<td>3 (1.2%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

As the chart displays, IKB I covers almost all readings, even kanji with obscure readings and/or readings used in unique words only. The reason for the missing kun-yomi readings is that the book was written prior to the revision of the joyō list; kun-yomi readings were added to the following kanji: 応 (kotaeru), 創 (tsukuru), and 側 (gawa). The kanji 側 had also the reading かわ (kawa) removed; the reading がわ was added instead. IKB I lists the reading すけ (suke) for the kanji 助 and correctly state that it is only used for names.
Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Total amount of kanji</th>
<th>Maximum amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Total amount of words</th>
<th>Average amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Amount of words per chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IKB I</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1517</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>126.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

*IKB I* has a limit of 14 words per kanji, and there are several kanji that have 14 associated words. However, it is worth to mention that many kanji share same words, e.g. the word 税務署 (zeimusho) can be found both under 税 and 署, hence the total amount of unique words are less. Words with unique readings or meanings are marked with a * symbol, e.g. 独文 (dokubun)* or as in 納屋 (naya)*. *IKB I* often displays and highlights both synonyms as antonym words. Antonym words are marked with arrows (←→) e.g. in 激増 (gekizō) ←→激減 (gekigen), while synonym words are marked with an equal sign, e.g. 防衛費 (bōeihi) = 国防費 (kokubōhi). *IKB I* contains mostly commonly used vocabulary, but there are some places names and historical person names, e.g. 徳川家康 (Tokugawa Ieyasu).

3.5.4 Exercises

Each chapter in *IKB I* contains three types of sections with exercises, review exercises, basic exercises, and applied exercises, followed by a section labeled as tasks. The exercises are often designed after the chapter topics, e.g. the exercises in chapter one, “Grouping of Kanji” contain many kanji grouping exercises. The review and basic exercise section are somewhat similar; with the difference that the review exercises consist mainly of *BKB* kanji while basic exercises consists of new kanji. The applied exercises often involve questions and tasks in which the student should use kanji in authentic sentences. The task section contains of wider tasks that have a strong relation to the chapters theme, many of them involve making notes, charts or wordlists that can be useful for kanji learning.
Select the most appropriate word
4. 鉄道の開通により、町は( )し、人口も増加した。
   a. 進歩  b. 発達  c. 発展
9. あの2人は考え方が正反対で、全く( )的だ。
   a. 対称  b. 対照  c. 対比
(Synonym word exercise from IKB I) (Chapter 10)

Many of the chapter topics in IKB I are areas that are tested in Kanken; hence there are several exercises shows similarities with the test questions in Kanken. Both IKB I and Kanken often present the questions in an authentic context, for instance the task can be to only write the reading of a kanji word but the word is always presented within a sentence. While the majority of the exercises in IKB I put a higher emphasis on passive kanji knowledge, such as to select the correct word/kanji among alternatives, almost every test question in Kanken requires that kanji needs to be handwritten. There are a few exercises in IKB I that requires writing kanji, but they are often short.

Read the following sentence, write the reading and fill in additional synonym words in the brackets.
1. 人間はだれでも「たんしょ」と長所を持っている ( )
5. 「きょうよう」を身につけるため、その「こうしゅう」会に行くことにした。( )
(Example of synonym word exercise from IKB I that requires handwriting) (Chapter 10)

3.5.5 Concluding Discussion

IKB I is the first book in the series that introduces the strategy of learning kanji through vocabulary and that it is important to learn kanji in context in order to harness active kanji knowledge. IKB I introduces several additional areas that can be useful for kanji learning, by explicitly and repetitively mentioning several areas, such as keisei kanji and radicals. The majority of the book is written in authentic Japanese; however there are some occasions in which kana is used instead of kanji. Furthermore, English is in the most of the cases solely used in translations of words. IKB I is the only book in the series that focuses on a comprehensive radical knowledge.
The kanji in *IKB I* (as well as in *IKB II*) were mainly selected on three premises; most of the kanji are kyōiku kanji, they are in JLPT N2 and they are frequently used in newspaper. The authors claims that kyōiku kanji has some influence on the selection process, there are several kyōiku kanji that remains unmentioned in the *IKB* series. Many of these are indeed very simple kanji, e.g. 盤 (*sara*) “plate” and 蟲 (*mushi*) “insect”. Moreover, as mention in section 1.4.2, as of 2010 JLPT have no official kanji list designed after each difficult level.

*IKB I* organizes kanji after four main themes; shape, pronunciation, meaning, and usage. Since *IKB I* follows the four chapter themes throughout the whole book makes it easy to follow. The kanji grouping often match the themes; however there are several kanji that serves as components that are often taught after kanji that they are used in. Simple kanji, such as 犬 (*inu*) “dog” or 刀 (*katana*) ”sword” are not even mentioned late in *IKB II*, despite the fact that they both occur in kanji as components in the *BKB* series and *IKB I*. As Kobayashi (1982: 79-80) and many suggested, the most optimal kanji order is to first teach kanji that are mainly used as components, before introducing “complete” kanji.

The largest difference between *IKB I* and the *BKB* series is that *IKB I* focuses on vocabulary learning. This approach is clearly visible when observing kanji readings and the amount of words. *IKB* cover almost all acknowledged readings and the only ones missing are the kanji which the Agency of Cultural Affairs revised in 2010 (Bunkachō 2011: 188). The amount of words per kanji is almost twice as much as *BKB I* and the amount of words per chapter is more than three times as much as in *BKB I*. Moreover, *IKB I* provides further vocabulary knowledge areas by mentioning antonym and synonym words, as well as highlighting words with irregular readings. While the vocabulary learning approach can be considered as a natural transition from beginners to an intermediate level, however the amount of vocabulary information can be somewhat sudden. Furthermore, many of the omitted readings and words from the *BKB* series could be introduced in the review chapters in *IKB I*.

Even though *IKB I* is targeted for JSL learners, many of the exercises in *IKB I* show similar traits as the test questions found in the native targeted Kanken. The main difference is that many of the test questions in Kanken have a high focus on writing kanji while *IKB I* focuses more on reading type or selecting the correct kanji type of exercises. Nonetheless, the exercises in *IKB I* often require a combination of both vocabulary and practical usage.
knowledge. The few areas that could be revised are mainly the intonation exercise which for autonomous students can be hard to use. Moreover, as hand writing can be beneficial for kanji learning (Bunkachō 2011: 175-176), there could be an increased amount of writing kanji exercises in favor of alternative-type of exercises with two or three possible alternatives.

The analysis shows that *IKB I* introduces several learning areas, in which many areas are tested even for native speakers. *IKB I* mentions almost all acknowledged readings, a vast amount of words, and have a clear and coherent chapter structure. The exercises often require a combination of both vocabulary and practical knowledge, but are mainly of select the correct alternative type. There are several kanji components that are yet to be learnt, a reasonable proposal could be to introduce them in an earlier instance.

### 3.6 *IKB II*

#### 3.6.1 Structure, Layout, and Learning Strategies

**Layout and How to Use**

*IKB II* follow the exact same principles regarding kanji as in *IKB I*, such as studying kanji equals studying vocabulary. *IKB II* is uses only authentic Japanese, words that should be written with kanji are mostly written with kanji. All instructions, all explanations, and all words are written in Japanese. Unknown words, specific or unique words often have *furigana* attached. The only English that can be found in *IKB II* is in the kanji description section in which the kanji’s meaning is provided, and in some translations of special terminology.

*IKB II* is divided into 16 chapter and nine columns. Every chapter contains approximately 20-22 kanji while each column has around five to nine kanji. It is possible to follow the chapter order, but the authors state that this order is not absolute as the students have the freedom to skip some chapters in favor for others. Each chapter consists of four sections: a quiz, key points, exercises, and tasks. The quiz section consist of a reading task and a vocabulary task, the tasks contain kanji and words from *BKB* and *IKB* series. By doing the quizzes, the student can know his/her strengths and gain an insight in what kanji that needs to be reviewed. The key point section contains vital information and strategies that may facilitate kanji learning. The exercise section contains various exercises that test the following areas: reading, writing,
practical usage and so on. As the task section does not have any answer sheets, it should be solved by using dictionaries or other tools. The authors also state that since much of the text is old and outdated, the student can use websites or other tools to find additional reading material. The column section contains kanji that are frequently used and that also are used as place or person names. *IKB II* state that the column section should be studied if the student has spare time, or interest, but that they are not necessary.

Kanji readings, meanings, vocabulary and so on are located in separate index named “Kanji for Learning Index”. The main difference between *IKB I* and *IKB II* is that the latter have abandoned the radical order; instead the kanji are organized after which chapter/column they occur in (as in the *BKB* series).

*IKB II* describes kanji as in *IKB I*; with the addition that *IKB II* also provides detailed information if the kanji is jōyō, kyōiku and/or which difficulty level in the JLPT. Antonym words are marked with arrows (←→) and synonym words are marked with an equal symbol (=). Irregular or unique readings are marked with“*”*, e.g. 身体 (からだ* (karada)). *IKB II* also marks keisei kanji whenever it can help the student to know readings, e.g.”供「きょう (kyō)」→共供恭”. All words in the *BKB* series as well as *IKB I* have English translations, *IKB II* does not. However an English translation of the meaning(s) of the kanji is provided.

*Learning Strategies*

The book does not only contain information of how to write and read kanji, *IKB II* puts a stronger emphasis of learning kanji in one of many possible authentic contexts. While the “Key Point” section in *IKB I* focuses mainly on a broad type of kanji knowledge that can be applied onto many fields, the “Key Point” section in *IKB II* sometimes focuses on a more specific field. However, there are still several chapters containing detailed information that can be applied to several areas.

*IKB II* puts a lot of focus on teaching and explaining synonyms and this can be found in chapter 1, 3 and 12. Chapter 1 clarifies a wide range of synonyms whether they are used in a positive or negative meaning, e.g. 意志が強い (ishi ga tsuyoi) “strong will” = 頑固な (ganko na) “stubborn”. Chapter 3 explains how to distinguish synonyms by usage and minor meaning
differences. Chapter 12 contains a small synonym word section in which *IKB II* instructs the minor different usage areas.

Antonym words is an area that is both mentioned in *IKB I* as well as in *IKB II*, this type of information can be found in a small scale in chapter 2 and 14, as well as in a larger scale in chapter 8. Chapter 2 focuses on antonym words that can be used for class evaluation while chapter 14 contains antonym words used to describe environmental problems. Chapter 8 introduces a vast amount of antonym words that are often used to describe economic changes.

Both chapter 2 and 14 describes the correlation between *kango* and *wago*, stating that *kango* are often used in a formal context while *wago* are often used in an informal context. Chapter two also mentions words that are often used as education related terminology, such as the casual (*wago*) word 習う (*narau*) “to learn” is in educational fields 学習する (*gakushūsuru*) “to learn” or 習得する (*shūtokusuru*). Chapter 14 introduces and explains the difference between *kango* and *wago* words used to describe environmental problems.

As the books chapter themes sometimes contain many long and complex terms and for the fact that intermediate students may often stumble upon long compound words when reading texts, *IKB II* has many chapters that explains how to disassembly long compound words. Chapter 4 and 5 introduces four pattern types that many long compound words share. Chapter 16 clarifies long words by changing the kanji words into a sentence; e.g.: 対人地雷前面禁止条約採択 → 対人地雷を全面的に禁止する条約を採択する (こと). Chapter 15 explains that many new words are actually created by shortening long kanji words, e.g. 都市銀行 = 都銀. This phenomenon is often seen in the Japanese society, as many new common words are made by shortening longer words, e.g. 東大 (*Tōdai*) “Tokyo University” for 東京大学 (*Tokyo daigaku*) or 年確 (*nenkaku*) “age confirmation” for 年齢確認 (*nenreikakunin*).

*IKB II* introduces a wide range of homophones (同音異義語 (*dō-on ‘igigo*)) in chapter 10; but *IKB II* presents only a list of words with no English translation or any examples in how to practically use them.

Chapter 9 contains a small section of *keisei* kanji and column 9 covers all *keisei* kanji that can be found in the *BKB* and *IKB* series. Furthermore, the “Kanji for Learning Index” also contains detailed *keisei* kanji information.
IKB II does not contain any information of radicals, despite the facts that it can be beneficial for JSL student when learning kanji. While there is a strong focus on radicals in IKB I, it is nonexistent in IKB II.

Instead of strategies or methods that can be applied on any field, the “Key Points” often contain information, mainly terminology that is only applicable on specific disciplines. For instance, chapter 4 introduces terminology when dealing with computers. Chapter 6 contains words and phrases that are related to earthquakes. Chapter 7 introduces words and phrases that are used within geography. Chapter 13 covers mathematic formulas, chemistry formulas and names from the periodic table.

3.6.2 Kanji Selection and Kanji Order

IKB II targets student who have mastered the kanji in the BKB series as well as in IKB I. The kanji in BKB series are labeled as “Basic Kanji” while the kanji in the IKB series are labeled as “Commonly used kanji for reading academic Japanese”. IKB II labels the remaining jōyō kanji as “kanji for specific area” and are thus not covered; instead the authors state that the students will learn them when progressing in their specific subject areas. Once mastered both BKB and IKB series, the authors state that the student will know 1167 kanji which is required to be able to pass JLPT N2. While the IKB series covers a wide range of kanji, the authors recommend the student should study kanji according to his/her needs. Furthermore, the authors state that teaching kanji that are used in specific terminology is not optimal for a language class and will therefore not be covered in the IKB series; instead the student should consult a teacher/instructor from that specific field for details (Kano et al. 2001: 6-9).

IKB II organized kanji after broad themes, such as “Students class evaluation” or “Bullet trains and environmental problems”. The columns often contain clear themes, such as “Japanese names” or “Kanji with similar shapes”. It seems clear that the authors made an effort to introduce kanji with similar usage areas, however due to the wide chapter concepts; there is a wide diversity among the kanji.

IKB II includes some kanji that are outside of the jōyō kanji list; 伊, 彦, and 智. All of these are mostly used in person and/or place names.
Kanji in *IKB II* (The shaded bold kanji contain components that are yet to be learnt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kanji</th>
<th>Amount of kanji</th>
<th>Discrepancy</th>
<th>Kanji with missing <em>kun-yomi</em></th>
<th>Kanji with missing <em>on-yomi</em></th>
<th>Kanji with excessive reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>IKB II</em></td>
<td>427</td>
<td>13 (3%)</td>
<td>4 (0.9%)</td>
<td>2 (0.4%)</td>
<td>7 (1.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

As the chart displays, *IKB II* covers almost all acknowledged readings. The only few kanji with missing readings are those that were altered in the revision of the jōyō list. Two of the kanji: 描 and 委 were given *kun-yomi* readings and the kanji (旬) was given a second *on-yomi* reading.
reading (shun). Many of the kanji with excessive readings contain readings that are used for names, while the readings are in no way false, the jōyō kanji list does not include any readings used for personal names (besides names for time periods, such as 昭和 (Showa)). The kanji 浦 (ho) had its on-yomi reading removed and the on-yomi readings of the kanji 鹿 (roku) and 熊 (yū) are not official.

**Vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Total amount of kanji</th>
<th>Maximum amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Total amount of words</th>
<th>Average amount of words per kanji</th>
<th>Amount of words per chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IKB II</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3987</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>159.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Reference material)

IKB II has the largest quantity of words and most associated words per kanji. There is a limit of max 20 words per kanji, and there are several kanji that reach up to that amount. The total amount of words does not reflect the total amount of unique words, a single word may be listed under several kanji; e.g. the word 環境 (kankyō) can be found under both 環 as 境. IKB II often marks antonym words that are covered in the book series, such as 陽性 (yōsei) “positive” ←→ 陰性 (insei) “negative”, and also a few synonym words. IKB II introduces several personal and/or place names. Furthermore, IKB II introduces many words that can be used as specific terminology in some fields, such as chemistry or geography. The majority of the words in IKB II can be considered as commonly used, thus it is valid to think that the student should strive to learn them all.

**3.6.4 Exercises**

Each chapter in IKB II consists of three exercise sections: review, practice, and reading tasks. All review section often starts with a shorter text labeled as “力だめし” (chikara dameshi) followed by a reading review with 40-80 words presented outside context, although they

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21 1926-1989
22 The kanji 婦 (Chapter 11: 315) contains 3 words that do not have the kanji 婦 in it, most likely an error.
sometimes occur in the text. The book instructs that words that the user fails to read should be reviewed. The review sections also contain kanji words from the BKB series as well as IKB I.

The majority of the exercises in the practice section are “select the correct kanji” kind of type. The task sometimes overlaps with other areas, such as write the reading, and write the antonym/synonym word. Other exercises that often reoccur are those that mention same sound- and keisei kanji; the task is to find kanji with same on-yomi reading and/or other keisei kanji. Other exercises that can often be found are to attach words to kanji, and to create kanji by using various kanji components. Nonetheless, the variation is limited and can become monotonous.

2. 彼は、自分で____した歌を歌ってる。（品詞　作詞　助詞　名詞）
   (Select the correct word exercise from IKB II focusing on synonyms) (Chapter 1)

Chapter 4, 12 and 13 contains some exercises that mainly targets words and phrases used in specific disciplines.

Consider the meaning and draw a line to the correct English words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Japanese Term</th>
<th>English Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>仮想私設通信網</td>
<td>ATM (asynchronous transfer mode)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>符号分割多元接続方式</td>
<td>WDM (wavelength-division multiplexing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>非同期転送モード</td>
<td>TDMA (time division multiple access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>非対称デジタル加入者回線</td>
<td>VPN (virtual private network)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>デジタル統合サービス網</td>
<td>CDMA (code division multiple access)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>波長分割多重方式</td>
<td>ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>時分割多重接続方式</td>
<td>ISDN (integrated services digital network)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Chapter 4)
Read the following words, consider the meaning, and draw a line to the correct word.

乳酸菌 oxidizing agent
食物繊維 fatty acid
過酸化水素 lactic acid bacteria
硫化水素 NaC\(^1\)
二酸化硫黄 H\(^2\)O\(^2\)
塩化ナトリウム dietary fiber
酸化剤 H\(^2\)S
脂肪酸 SO\(^3\)

(Examples of discipline specific exercises in IKB II) (Chapter 12)

The task section contains a shorter text sample and questions related to the text. Some are simple read and answer types, while other instructs the student to write shorter summaries. Furthermore, the section contains other exercises, such as select the most appropriate kanji, write hiragana words with kanji, write the reading of kanji, and write a shorter sentence to a kanji.

Comparing the exercises in IKB II with the test questions from Kanken shows that there are some slight similarities and major differences. Both of them often share similar areas, e.g. antonym and synonym words. The exercises are often presented in a bigger context; thus the student can see how the words function within a sentence. While the exercise sections in IKB I have several areas that are same as in Kanken, IKB II has fewer. The main difference is that IKB II often has “select the correct kanji” type of exercises while Kanken requires handwriting.

3.6.5 Concluding Discussion

IKB II is the textbook that contains the largest number of both kanji and words that are taught in authentic contexts. While the predecessor IKB I focuses on teaching kanji through strategies that theoretically are applicable on a wide range of disciplines, IKB II also teaches kanji through terminology used in specific disciplines. Moreover, IKB II contains fewer learning strategies than its predecessor IKB I; for instance radicals are completely omitted and the kanji index does not contain English translations. Language learning becomes easier if the student associates the language that the student wants to learn with previous knowledge (Tornberg 1997: 121-124); hence a translated vocabulary list could be favorable. Even though
many JSL students are not native English speakers, the average university student can grasp English words, and if needed translate the word from English to their native language. Many of the chapters have wide topic titles, such as “Volcano and hot springs” and “Bullet trains and environmental problems”; any given kanji could theoretically pose to be suitable. While chapters themes such as “Earthquakes” or ”Bullet trains and environmental problems” can be considered as common knowledge, chapters such as “Gas molecules” are perhaps more learner specific. As the book introduces kanji through several disciplines, it seems that the book is designed for exchange students who studied his/her major in Japan. Thus, some of the chapters are perhaps not optimal for students outside of these fields. The kanji index in IKB II highlights all keisei kanji and presents all kanji that share the same on-yomi reading part, which can help the student to learn kanji through existing patterns.

The kanji in IKB II were selected by the same premises as in IKB I; kanji from the kyōiku list, JLPT II and that they are frequently used. As discussed under IKB I, there are several kyōiku kanji that are yet to be mentioned. The chapter themes in IKB II can sometimes be wide and discipline specific, there are several instances in where it is hard to find the connection between kanji grouping and the chapter. Moreover, there are many kanji components are taught after kanji they occur in, and several kanji that serves as radicals remains unmentioned. The description that kanji outside of the BKB and IKB series are “kanji for specific areas” can be questioned when unmentioned kanji such as 又 “again”, 干 “to dry”, 虫, 皿, 舟, 舌, 穴, and 衣 “cloth” can easily be found in commonly used words. If the book is used in a teacher led classroom, there is a high possibility that many of the radicals and kanji components will somehow be covered, but it is rather uncertain for autonomous students. Moreover, IKB II mentions several complex kanji which are often used in names instead of kanji that are primary used in words; however one can argue that learning how to write and read everyday used kanji such as 皿 can in this stage be far more useful than learning how to read and write names.

The result shows that IKB II covers almost all acknowledged jōyō readings; the only readings that are not covered are those that were revised in 2010 which is after the latest (2008) publication. IKB II introduces a vast amount of ways to reading kanji through their usage names; however is hard to find it necessary to study kanji readings through names, especially
with common names such as ひろ (Hiro) or たけし (Takeshi). Associating kanji with vocabulary can be a much more suitable approach; e.g. 藤 can be presented through 葛藤 (kattō) “conflict” instead of the names 佐藤 (Satō), 近藤 (Kondō), or 速藤 (Endō).

Nonetheless, IKB II presents the largest amount of words, 9.3 words per kanji and 159.4 words per chapter, which can indeed be considered as an appropriate number for intermediate students.

The exercises in IKB II have less variation than the ones in IKB I. The review section is a list of words in which the task is to only confirm the readings rather than the meaning. Some of the words are indeed used in the texts and the student can learn the kanji in context. The majority of the exercises in the practice section are “select the correct kanji” kind of type, thus mostly harnessing kanji recognition. Moreover, IKB II contains discipline specific exercises that are perhaps not optimal for students outside of these fields. Due to the rapid change of technology and lifestyle, the authors admit that many of the chapter topics are outdated thus one can argue for less texts and more practical exercises. Comparing the exercises in IKB II with the test questions in Kanken shows that both test kanji in an authentic context. The main difference is that only a few exercise areas in IKB II that are similar to those in Kanken while there were several in IKB I. Furthermore, IKB II prioritizes exercises with the main task of selecting the correct answer among alternatives while Kanken requires hand writing. As mention in section 1.3.3, more handwriting exercises could be beneficial in order to memorize kanji.

The result shows that IKB II is the textbooks with the largest amount of kanji and words. While the kanji learning through vocabulary is undoubtedly the purpose of the book, the decision to not include English translations seems like a contradiction. If studying kanji equals studying vocabulary, it would be more reasonable to include translations than to not to. Furthermore, many of the learning strategies from IKB I are absent or vaguely described in IKB II making the former more user-friendly than the latter. IKB II could cover some of the strategies that were taught in IKB I in order to create a more natural transition from IKB I to IKB II. Many kanji components and radicals (especially kyōiku kanji) could also be covered in the BKB- or the IKB series in favor for kanji that are used in names. While learning how to read names is important, it is reasonable to argue that learning kanji such as 虫, 舟, or皿.

23 Hiro = 宽・弘 and many more, Takeshi = 剛・武・毅 and many more.
could be of higher priority. Moreover, there are many exercises in *IKB II* that are discipline specific and there is a small variation, and there are only a few exercises that encourage handwriting.
4 General Discussions, Proposals and Conclusion

4.1 Discussion of Genki I & II and BKB I and II

Regarding the layout and learning methods, there are many similarities and differences between the textbooks targeted for beginners. The BKB series mostly display kanji according to the jōyō list while the Genki series uses their own layout style. The second edition of the Genki series could display on-yomi reading with katakana and kun-yomi reading with hiragana (as in the first edition). The books targeted for beginners (Genki I and BKB I) use mostly English in their explanations and instructions, but the amount of English becomes gradually less. The texts and instructions found in the textbooks for the upper layer of beginners (Genki II and BKB II) become gradually more difficult, and the later chapters often include rather complex texts. The texts, instructions etc. are semi-authentic which is necessary considering that the students at this level cannot grasp fully authentic texts. While the BKB series introduces several learning strategies, there are none in the Genki series; hence the most optimal usage for the latter is in a teacher led classroom. Only BKB series covers radicals, but there are only a few chapters. As radicals is an area that can be beneficial for JSL students (Richmond: 2005:52-53), more radical examples could be favorable. Another approach that could be used is to include keisei kanji information (as in IKB II) provided that it can help the student to remember readings. In the current state, it may not be apparent for every student why some kanji share readings, e.g. 正 (sei) and 政 (sei).

The BKB series present their kanji selection process while there is none Genki. BKB introduces several kanji that are often used as components in other kanji and the ten first chapters are constructed by a balanced mix of kanji and kanji components. There are several instances in both book series in which kanji components are often listed after kanji they occur in, or not even mentioned at all. Maehara (2007: 1-2) showed that many foreign students often make mistakes when writing kanji that are constructed by several component. Kanji with concrete meanings and few strokes which are taught to elementary children in Japan are often not introduced until an intermediate level, or they are not mentioned at all. E.g. kanji such as 虫 (1st year) 弓 (2nd year) 矢 (2nd year), 犬 (1st year (mentioned in Genki series but not in BKB)) 戸 (2nd year). Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that more kanji components could be introduced in a much earlier stage.
The analysis shows that the textbooks targeted for beginners contain less information and words, most likely because a native layout with several readings and words would cause an information overload. Students who just started their studies would most likely struggle if it would be absolutely necessary to learn all readings. Thus, the approach of intentionally omitting some readings can in many cases be considered as reasonable. It is hard to argue that it is necessary for beginners to learn readings that are used in obscure and rare words only, e.g. 建立 (konryū) or every possible kun-yomi reading of the kanji 生. However, a reasonable suggest could be that every kanji could contain at least one on-yomi and one kun-yomi reading (provided that the kanji have a kun-yomi and an on-yomi reading). In the current state, there are several kanji in which commonly used readings are not listed, e.g. 用いる (mochiiru) and 記す (shirusu). As the BKB and IKB is the same series, the omitted readings from the BKB series could be displayed in the review section in the IKB series.

The amount of vocabulary in the BKB- and Genki series are somewhat similar, they are few which can be considered as an appropriate amount for beginners. The Genki user will learn additional words when using other sections (grammar studies etc.) of the book. While the Genki books become gradually more difficult as there are a slight increase of both kanji and words, the BKB covers roughly the same amount of kanji and words. As the BKB II user reached a higher level than a BKB I user, the word cap per kanji could be set slightly higher.

The exercises in Genki I and BKB I are often repetitive; often include kanji games and shorter readings sections. Many exercises focus on writing kanji through words outside of context. The exercises are more difficult in Genki II and BKB II, but some of the exercises can be monotonous. Moreover, the reading exercises often include a questionnaire; hence there is a need of a person who can correct the answers. Since none of books contain any major focus on kanji repetition, the importance of review and repetition may not be clear for every student. Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that some of the exercises could be done in teacher led classroom activities in combination with additional exercises that would facilitate kanji repetition and practical kanji usage through context.

While Genki I and II are textbooks that cover both Japanese grammar and kanji at the same time, the BKB and IKB series only covers kanji. The kanji section in the Genki series is also noticeably shorter than the grammar section; hence there is a higher focus on the grammar
learning rather than kanji learning. As the texts in *BKB II* (and in the *IKB* series) are relatively authentic, it is necessary that the students study grammar in order to understand the texts.

### 4.2 Discussion of *IKB I* & *II*

The books targeted for intermediate students show many similarities in layout and learning strategies. The main focus in the *IKB* series is to study kanji through vocabulary learning and practical kanji usage by studying kanji within an authentic context. Thus, the books use mainly Japanese in all instructions and texts with some English for explaining words or phrases. Both of the books introduce several learning strategies that are applicable on a wide range of disciplines, but *IKB II* includes also discipline specific learning areas. *IKB I* covers radical information by organizing the kanji index after radical; however *IKB II* does not cover radicals at all. *IKB II* adopts the strategy to in the kanji description add *keisei* kanji information; making it clear which part of a kanji that provides the on-yomi reading, a strategy that could also be implanted in *IKB I*. Instead of presenting readings and words in each chapter as *BKB*, the *IKB* books places the readings in a separated kanji index located in the end of the book. The kanji index in *IKB II* is organized after chapters, making it somewhat similar to the *BKB* books; however the kanji index in *IKB I* is organized after radical. The *BKB* series and *IKB I* provides an English translation to the words; however there is none in *IKB II*. It is reasonable to suggest that the kanji index in the *IKB* series could be unified.

The kanji selection process is detailed and has a clear purpose; however there are still several kanji components that remain uncovered, especially kyōiku kanji. *IKB II* introduces several kanji that are often used in names and two *jinmeiyō* kanji. As mentioned earlier, there are several kyōiku kanji that are yet to be learnt, e.g. 虫 (*mushi*) and 盤 (*sara*) and perhaps kanji such as these could be covered in the *BKB* series. Prior the making of *IKB II*, the introduction text in *IKB I* states that *IKB II* will contain approximately 250 kanji. Instead the latter covers almost twice as many kanji as the former; the amount of kanji in *IKB I* (240) and *IKB II* (427) could be more balanced. The chapters in *IKB I* are organized after four major groups while *IKB II* organizes chapters after broad themes. The themes in *IKB II* often have two topics, such as “Volcanoes and hot Springs” which several kanji could actually fit in one of the topics. It is in some cases it is difficult to see the connection between the kanji grouping.
The *IKB* series covers almost all acknowledged readings, and the few kanji that does not match are those that were revised in 2010. A student at an intermediate level will most likely encounter many of these readings, hence making it understandable why all readings are covered. However, the transition from *BKB II* to *IKB I* can be somehow steep, from 37.3% kanji with unmentioned and/or excessive readings in *BKB II* to 1.6% in *IKB II*. Moreover, the readings that were left out in the *BKB* series could be mentioned in the review sections in the *IKB* series.

Both of the intermediate level books present a wide range of words making apparent that the *IKB* series focuses on kanji learning through vocabulary learning. As the student reached an intermediate level, it is only natural that the difficulty level has risen as well. For instance *IKB I* contains fewer kanji than *BKB II*, but has 50% more words, almost twice as many words per kanji and approximately three times more words per chapter. Mainly the transition from *BKB II* to *IKB I* can be sudden as the total number of words in *IKB I* is far more than in *BKB II*. *IKB II* covers more than twice as many words than *IKB I*. Despite the clear focus in vocabulary learning in *IKB II*, the book does not contain English translation. A reasonable suggestion could be to include English translations in order to clarify the meanings of the words.

Both of the books have similar types of exercises; however the format is different. The exercise layout in *IKB I* differs depending on the chapter while in *IKB II* uses the same pattern. Both of the review sections cover kanji from previous the *BKB* series (and in *IKB II* case kanji from *IKB I*). The majority of the exercises in both books are “select the correct kanji” which mostly harness a kanji recognition. Both of the books often present the exercises in a context; hence the student will not only learn the meaning of a kanji/kanji word, but also how to use it which according to Richmond (2005: 62) is a most reasonable approach. Many of the exercises in both *IKB I* and *IKB II* show some similarities to Kanken. *IKB I* covers several areas that are tested while *IKB II* has slightly fewer. The tasks in the *IKB* series as well as Kanken are often presented within a context. The main difference is that while the majority of the tasks in the *IKB* series require recognition kanji knowledge (select the correct answer among alternative), Kanken focuses more on writing kanji by hand. In order to pass Kanken, it is not only necessary to memorize the shape of a kanji, it is also necessary to reproduce it correctly by handwriting. With the exercises in the *IKB* series, it is often sufficient to know which kanji (among alternatives) is the most appropriate one. There are some exercises in the
IKB series in which the correct answer is too apparent, making it a too easy challenge. In today’s society there are few occasions where the average students needs to write kanji by hand (due to technological development, e.g. computers, smartphones etc.); however since handwriting kanji can for many be beneficial for kanji memorizing (Bunkachō 2011: 175-176), an increased amount of handwriting exercises could be reasonable.

4.3 Proposals

From the analysis and observations, it becomes apparent that the main similarity between all of the books is that there is low priority on teaching kanji that are often used as components. While kanji such as 弓 or 矢 may not be so commonly used, they are often used as components in several commonly used kanji. If kanji learning would have been a short time process, learning uncommon kanji would be futile. However, kanji learning is undoubtedly a process that requires time, and a time requiring process needs a solid foundation to start from. Most teachers would recommend a beginner to start from kana to then proceed to kanji and not the other way around, i.e. it is logical to learn easy and simple elements before learning difficult elements. However, to start kanji studies by solely studying kanji that mainly function as components it not an optimal solution either (as many of these kanji are not commonly used as individual characters); thus a selective balance between kanji components and other kanji can be valid. BKB I uses this approach in the earlier chapters; hence a follow up of this approach could be reasonable. Kanji made from several components, e.g. 新, can be difficult to memorize and reproduce, but if the student would be aware of all the smaller components (立 + 木 + 斤), learning the kanji could become easier. As JSL students do not have any rules or specific kanji order that needs to be followed; with the exception of kanji used for numbers, a reasonable suggestion would be to avoid presenting kanji before the components that they are made from (unless absolutely necessary). This approach would mean that a selective balance of kanji with concrete meanings and few strokes (such as 刀 and 里), and some less frequently used kanji with sometimes difficult meanings (such 尺 and 奴) would be together learnt in a much earlier stage.

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24 一二三四五六七八九十
Kanji that could be introduced at an earlier instance are mainly the following:

**Genki I**
士寺全力目良欠刀王玉交贝斤门耳心可舌矢主米止丁首矛氏完央戸弓虫方走己史又重动申免丙巾吏

**Genki II**
刀央矢弓亡士己寸介与穴尺竹杀羊未杀取石合受式马官是羽王吉舌里予具共门至军占非周斗升奴孝弔

**BKB I**
全刀可斤矢豆氏音欠舌孝尺旦免周永由交反各至央楽占又丙皮王玉束羊首争弓弔未更亡重完失官戸丁寸者付羽虫升穴是合正台矢里斗

**BKB II**
央与斗里己吏昔吉巾羊舌丸令军士我义亜占未旨斤丁肖炎泉至甲弓害吕又矢穴氏辛志固幸非豆亡敬皆直黄周曾寸衣王刀弔去

**IKB I**
虫介垂系寸祭又曾升屯旦角斤亭衣倉巾矛谷王戒乔氏犬弓象我刀刑帅舌既忍敢凡享丸奴憂皿布昆尺貫昭

**IKB II**
苗敬采尺是又隻巾干乡虫票廷舍血舟卸呈寸顷斗屯朱舌雇叔即帝矢祭孔串侯唐旨穴齐充盾乙斥衣我羊

Another area that needs to be addressed is the extent of information when displaying kanji. Since the authors decided to include radicals (*IKB I*) and *keisei* kanji (*IKB II*), introducing these areas in a much earlier stage can be beneficial as both of these areas can facilitate kanji learning. Learning kanji through patterns and similarities is more reasonable than to learn kanji as unique entities. For instance, the student would learn that almost all kanji that share the component 生 all share the same *on-yomi* readings, rather than learning every *on-yomi* as brand new knowledge. Many kanji fall under this category but due to the fact that detailed *keisei* information is only covered in the last volume, many students may not notice it. Presenting radical information can also be beneficial as it may become easier to remember
shapes 禾 (ノ + 木 hence nogi-hen or 三 as yoko-me or amigashira). Moreover, knowing radicals often makes it easier to look up kanji, may it be traditional book dictionaries or online based dictionaries. A reasonable way to display kanji could be to include radical information (the names of the radicals can be located in an appendix) and keisei kanji information by highlighting the part that provides the on-yomi reading (as in IKB II). This approach needs to be selective in order to not cause an overload.

4.4 Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the content of the kanji textbooks used for Japanese studies at Stockholm University and to propose a number of suggestions that may facilitate the kanji learning in the investigated textbooks. I present the conclusions of this paper in the sections below.

Genki I

As Genki I intentionally omits many acknowledged readings and contains a limited amount of words. Genki I uses mainly English in the instruction and the book does not cover any learning strategies. Hence Genki I is most optimal for classroom usage where it is necessary that a teacher introduces several learning strategies. Furthermore, the presentation of kanji readings is somewhat unique (readings are not fully presented and both on-yomi as kun-yomi readings in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition are written with hiragana instead of the standard with katakana for on-yomi readings and hiragana for kun-yomi readings). The kanji selection is not presented, thus it is hard to determine the reasoning and the purpose of the selection. As many of the kanji occur in the texts, it seems that kanji order was decided in which order they occur in a text than the other way around; hence there are several kanji components that are taught after kanji they occur in. Many of the exercises in the earlier chapters are games, which most likely is designed to introduce a softer and simpler side of kanji learning.

Genki II

Genki II is targeted for the upper layer of beginners; thus it is only natural that many readings and words are intentionally omitted. Genki II is as Genki I most optimal for classroom usage as there are no learning strategies. The kanji presentation is as in Genki I uniquely designed
for JSL students. Moreover, the kanji selection is not presented; hence the purpose of the reasoning and decisions behind the selection remains unclear. Many kanji components are listed after kanji they occur in. As the student proceeds in their studies, the exercises in *Genki II* become gradually more difficult. Some of the later chapters are indeed authentic in which the student can learn kanji through context.

**BKB I**

*BKB I* is targeted for beginners; the book introduces several learning strategies such as etymology and pictographs when introducing kanji. As *BKB I* have detailed explanations and instructions, the book can be used for both classroom as well as autonomous usage. A strategy that remains unmentioned is learning kanji through vocabulary. The reasons and decisions behind the kanji selection are indeed justified and I would argue that there is an appropriate mix of commonly used kanji and kanji components. Some of the kanji in *BKB I* are not commonly used, but from a learning perspective, the decision to include them is reasonable. The earlier chapters are relatively clear and the kanji within them are indeed appropriate. However, the later chapters often introduce radicals and kanji components after kanji they occur in. Especially with radicals that more or less provides the meaning of kanji, such as 言 (say) together with 舌 (tongue) becomes 話 (talk). 25. *BKB I* does not mention that the many readings are omitted, but for the same reasons as *Genki*: both are intended for beginners and I assume that the authors do not want to overload the students with too many readings. The exercises are relatively simple, perhaps with the purpose to not intimidate the student with complicated exercises.

**BKB II**

*BKB II* is targeted for the upper layers of beginners, while the content is similar to *BKB I*; there is a higher focus on vocabulary learning and learning kanji in context. *BKB II* covers few learning strategies, such as pictographs to describe abstract concepts and practical usage areas for kanji and kanji words. While *BKB I* made an effort to introduce radicals, *BKB II* mentions radicals in only one chapter. The chapters sometimes cover wide topics and there are several instances with unclear kanji grouping. Furthermore, there are several kanji that

25 (言 is introduced after 話).
often function as components that remains unmentioned or introduced rather late. There are several kanji with omitted readings, most likely an intentional decision to not cause a learning overload as in *BKB I*. The amount of words in *BKB II*, which is targeted for the upper layer of beginners, contains almost the same number of words as *BKB I*. The exercises are designed to match the student’s process, they become gradually more difficult and the later contains several difficult texts.

**IKB I**

*IKB I* is targeted for intermediate students and the main strategy is to teach kanji through vocabulary learning. The book introduces several additional sub-areas that I would argue can be beneficial for JSL students. Furthermore, *IKB I* is the only book that contains comprehensive radical information. The kanji selection in *IKB I* (and *IKB II*) is constructed after three premises: that they are kyōiku kanji, it is required to know in order to pass JLPT II, and that they are commonly used. However, there are several kyōiku kanji that remains unmentioned through the series. The book organizes kanji after four main themes that stay coherent throughout the whole book making it easy to follow. While the kanji grouping often match the themes, there are several kanji components that are not mentioned in the book or are introduced fairly late. *IKB I* covers almost all acknowledged readings, and there only few missing were altered after the books latest revision. There is a large quantity of words which is necessary for the books purpose; to teach kanji through vocabulary. However, the amount may shock some student as the shift from *BKB II* to *IKB I* can be sudden and much more is required in *IKB I* than in *BKB II*. The exercises in *IKB I* are often to select the correct kanji type, but there are some exercises that require handwriting. Moreover, many exercises and areas *IKB I* shows similarities to the test questions in Kanken. The main difference between these two is that the latter focuses more on handwriting while the former focuses on recognition and selecting the correct kanji.

**IKB II**

*IKB II* focuses on kanji learning through vocabulary learning, the book contains the largest number of kanji and words. There are some learning strategies that are covered, but there are noticeable fewer than in the predecessor *IKB I*. The most noticeable are perhaps that *IKB II* does not have any English translations to the words and the fact that the kanji index is not
unified. The kanji were selected by the same premises as in *IKB I*, there are kyōiku kanji, required to pass JLPT II, and that they are commonly used. However, there are several kyōiku kanji that remains unmentioned. The book organizes and group kanji in several broad chapter themes, many of them are topics that can be considered as common knowledge. However some chapters contain discipline specific knowledge and are therefore perhaps not optimal for language students. Due to the introduction of kanji used in various disciplines, it seems that the book is designed for exchange student studying in Japan. There are several kanji that often function as components that remains unmentioned or are introduced later in the book. The book displays almost all acknowledged readings, and the few missing readings are those that were altered after the latest revision. The exercises in *IKB II* are often to select the correct kanji type, but there are a few exercises that require handwriting. The main similarities between the test questions in Kanken and the exercises in *IKB II* is that is that both books present kanji in context. The main difference is that Kanken focuses on handwriting while *IKB II* focuses on kanji recognition.

This research has presented the characteristic of the course literature used for kanji studies and presented a number of suggestions that may facilitate kanji learning. Learning kanji sufficiently is a time consuming process that requires devotion and consistency. Hence the main purpose for kanji literature is to create the most optimal conditions for kanji learning and to inspire motivation for continuous learning. As kanji studies can become monotonous, it is necessary to introduce strategies and methods to facilitate and quicken the process. Learning kanji through patterns is undoubtedly easier than to learn them as 2000 unique entities. Moreover, a great source for motivation is to learn kanji knowledge that can be practically used. A high focus on theoretical knowledge, such as meanings or etymology based mnemonics may indeed be a useful tool for memorizing kanji, but many learning how to correctly use kanji is a time consuming process. As textbooks present the meaning of a kanji, but learning the meaning of a kanji by a single English translation is illogical, and knowing the meaning alone outside of context have few practical meanings. Today, as kanji are mostly used as words; a larger emphasis on kanji learning through vocabulary learning in context is favorable.
Another area that I wish to address is the purpose of kanji studies, it may of course vary from student to student, but many students may not understand the purpose of kanji studies. Learning words and having a wide vocabulary is beneficial for reading, writing, listening and speaking comprehension, and learning kanji through vocabulary learning can address these four areas. Therefore, I consider that the correlation between kanji and vocabulary learning needs to be stressed, not only in textbooks but also in classroom activities.

In conclusion, I hope that the increasing number of people studying Japanese is a trend that will continue to expand, especially with the launch of “Cool Japan”. Even though this research has presented some results, there is still room for future research, such as how the textbook can be used in classrooms and teachers’ strategies. I would be grateful if this research and data could be used for future kanji research and for institutions that uses these textbooks. I hope that my next project will be to gather, test and develop strategies in order to create material that will facilitate JSL kanji learning.

4.5 Summary

The Japanese written language is considered as to be one of the most unique systems in the world. The writing systems consist mainly of two phonetic writings, hiragana and katana, and the semantic writings of Chinese origin: kanji. Due to the amount and complexity, many western JSL (Japanese as a second language) students struggle with kanji learning. In the Japanese language classes held at Stockholm University, students will in four terms learn approximately 1000 kanji by using six kanji textbooks. This paper analyses the content of the textbooks used for kanji studies at Stockholm University with the purpose to propose a number of suggestions that may facilitate kanji learning. There have been several research conducted on the area of JSL kanji learning; but many focuses on classroom activities or strategies used in kanji education. On the other hand, research of kanji textbooks is scarce.

The analysis shows that the four books targeted for beginners (Genki I, Genki II, Basic Kanji Book Vol.1, and Basic Kanji Book Vol.2) often omitted many readings and none of the books focuses on teaching kanji through vocabulary. The book targeted for intermediate students (Intermediate Kanji Book Vol.1 and Intermediate Kanji Book Vol.2) covered almost all commonly used readings (jōyō [常用] readings) and focuses on teaching kanji through vocabulary. The Genki series does not contain any learning strategies or other areas that may
facilitate kanji learning; hence the optimal usage is in a classroom led by a teacher. The Basic Kanji Book series introduces several learning strategies; thus the book can be both used as an autonomous study tool and in a teacher led classroom. The Intermediate Kanji Book series introduces several areas that can in many ways be beneficial for kanji learning. All of the books often introduce kanji components after kanji that they are used in, or the kanji components are not mentioned at all. The exercises in the beginner’s book are often designed to match the student’s level; hence some of the exercises in earlier chapters are semi-authentic while the later ones are fairly authentic. The exercises in the intermediate level books are often presented in authentic context; however the majority harness kanji recognition rather than kanji reproduction. By observing the results, the areas that need to be addressed are to introduce more kanji that often functions as components in other kanji, and to further extent present selective information, such as kanji parts that share the same readings and radicals.
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