The views and beliefs of Persian-speaking Japanese as a foreign language learners concerning the learning and teaching of kanji

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ABSTRACT
Learning kanji and language learners' beliefs regarding learning kanji are the most challenging matters in the field of Japanese language teaching. Learning kanji is particularly difficult for non-kanji using language learners who are studying Japanese outside of Japan. Since learning is influenced by the educational environment and personality of language learners, by examining the beliefs of language learners about kanji learning, and analyzing these beliefs, it is possible to achieve educational methods appropriate to those particular language learners. Therefore, a questionnaire study was conducted on Japanese language learners at the University of Tehran in order to analyze the beliefs and knowledge of Persian-speaking Japanese language learners about kanji learning and teaching. After analyzing the data by descriptive method and with the help of inferential statistics, the results showed that Iranian language learners consider kanji a great obstacle in learning Japanese, but on the other hand, strongly believe that the better they will learn kanji, the more they will be successful in the Japanese language. Basic language learners value kanji "reading", but advanced language learners place a greater emphasis on kanji "meaning". Furthermore, Iranian language learners firmly believe that learning kanji should be done independently of classroom-based learning and that Japanese literature should be used extensively in kanji instruction. The findings of this study can be used to support the teaching of kanji to language learners in areas where kanji are not used, particularly Persian-speaking learners.

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1. Introduction

Learning kanji (Chinese characters used in Japanese) is one of the most difficult components of learning the Japanese language, because not only is the kanji form more complex than the Latin alphabet, but kanji frequently has several readings (Jernqvist, 2016). To become profoundly proficient in learning kanji, Japanese language learners from non-kanji language areas must devote a significant amount of time and effort. As a result, a correct strategy for learning kanji is required. Unlike Japanese people, who are fluent in the spoken language before utilizing kanji, foreign language learners acquire both written and spoken aspects at the same time when learning Japanese, and so do not have enough time to master kanji. For teaching and learning these language learners, kanji is required (Paxton & Svtanant, 2013). According to much research, proper kanji teaching for non-kanji language learners is influenced by several elements, including the learner's cultural background, learning environment, and individual learning styles. According to Hatotowa (2006), a person learning Japanese as a foreign language outside of Japan is in a different circumstance than a learner learning Japanese in Japan under hardship and necessity. In contrast to learners who benefit from kanji's learning environment, Japanese learners who have no other option to look at kanji than textbooks spend a lot of time getting to know kanji's character. Non-kanji language learners, as well as language learners who have never read the language in which kanji is used, have difficulties learning kanji that they do not have when learning Kana letters. They discover that kanji is more than simply a letter; it is a meaningful element with three elements: form, sound, and meaning, and that each kanji has numerous readings and meanings in addition to complicated shapes and countless numbers. Understanding these issues is a difficult task for language learners, and it is possible that they will give up learning Japanese because of it.

The presence of hiragana, katakana (Kana letters), and kanji in Japanese make learning difficult. Kana is frequently learned first, followed by kanji, by Japanese language learners. Hiragana and Katakana both have 46 characters with meaningless syllables, while kanji has more. In hiragana and katakana, which are known as syllables, just glyphs and sounds are connected one by one, however in kanji, which is known as a logogram-ideogram, all information about letters, sound, meaning, and usage is connected (Kano, 1994). Each kanji has internal components including strokes (kakijun), radicals (bushu), and sound markers (onkigō), as well as two phonetic readings: onyomi and kunyomi. Because most beginner textbooks use Kana letters and language learners are used to writing in a

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script with a well-defined writing system and lower contents, and because they tend to use more kana letters than kanji for writing, they may even forget simple kanji too soon. According to Kurihara and Seki (2017), in Japanese language teaching, motivating learners to write in kanji has become a real problem when they can write in hiragana. On the function of motivation in learning kanji for language learners, Buasasengtham and Yoshinaga (2015) state for non-kanji language learners who do not use kanji in their mother tongue, whether or not kanji learning is appealing and meaningful in the early stages of learning may affect his/her success or failure in continuing learning the Japanese language. Therefore the major issue is how to retain and improve their motivation to learn kanji.

The topic of teaching kanji in teaching the Japanese language has grown more relevant as the number of Persian language learners of the Japanese language has increased. Learning kanji is a time-consuming and challenging process for many Persian-speaking learners, the majority of whom learn Japanese at university, making learning Japanese a big obstacle. When faced with the hiragana and katakana letters (each one including 46 letters) and the endless kanji character (about 2,000 kanji required for daily matters), Iranian learners who speak based on alphabetic language feel as if they are perplexed and terrified. Especially when they begin learning kanji after learning Kana letters, they encounter unforeseen

difficulties. In Iran, on the other hand, kanji education ignores the language background and personality of Persian language learners, and kanji is frequently taught in comparable methods to Japanese and Japanese language learners in Japan. As a result, research into kanji learning and teaching in Iran, as well as the beliefs of Persian language learners, is required.

2. Literature review

Bushimakina (2013a) looked at Japanese language learners who learned Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) to see how they believed in kanji learning. She developed a questionnaire based on the BALLI Questionnaire and distributed it to 86 learners from kanji and non-kanji speaking communities. The outcomes of language learners' beliefs in terms of kanji difficulty, learning aptitude, learning nature, learning motivation, and self-learning were then evaluated. As a result, non-kanji language learners were more likely to struggle with kanji learning in general, particularly in writing and understanding kanji meaning. However, reading and utilizing kanji was found to be similarly challenging for both groups. In terms of kanji learning ability, both groups were aware that "kanji learning is easier for language learners in kanji areas" and "kanji requires memory power". In terms of kanji learning, both groups believed that "kanji learning involves practice and repetition, and if they strive hard enough, they can improve their kanji". Both groups agreed that kanji learning is necessary for

learning Japanese as a whole, and that language learners wish to enhance their kanji reading and writing abilities. In terms of kanji's self-learning beliefs, both groups prioritize kanji self-reading outside of the classroom and believe that the learner's decision-making concerning content and learning techniques is an effective learning method. However, non-kanji language learners are more reliant on kanji textbooks than kanji language learners, according to the findings. Bushimakina (2013b) conducted a similar survey with 128 Russian students in the same year, and the results were nearly equal to the beliefs of persons in non-kanji speaking areas in the previous study. Russian language learners find it difficult to learn kanji in general, but they believe that reading kanji is more difficult than writing and understanding the meaning of kanji in facing specific issues. There is a strong understanding that "developing kanji leads to improving overall Japanese proficiency" and that "repetition of practice is vital for learning kanji". It was also discovered that Russian language learners had a strong grasp of kanji reading and writing, allowing them to read Japanese content in everyday situations. Russian language students are likewise well aware of the need of kanji self-study outside of the classroom, and they trust their own methods over those offered by the teacher. According to Bushimakina's research, Non-kanji Japanese learners believe kanji learning

is difficult; however, their views on what makes kanji learning difficult varies.

In this regard, to investigate the difference between the performance of Japanese language learners in kanji and non-kanji areas (groups) regarding kanji reading and writing, Machida (2013) stated that the one's performance in recognizing the voice of previously trained kanjis is not influenced by the group that they belong to. But one's performance differs based on the group to which they belong in the case of recognizing unlearned kanji voice and kanji writing. Also, people belonging to the kanji language group do better in recognizing unknown kanji sounds and they have better kanji writing in particular. Because of their experience studying kanji in their mother tongue, learners from kanji-speaking countries are familiar not only with the phonetic and semantic elements of kanji, but also with the rules of kanji's writing system. Accordingly, these learners are able to visually recognize kanji without knowing the meaning and pronunciation by introducing a new kanji. Learners of non-kanji languages, on the other hand, have no idea what the newly presented kanji is unless they have encountered anything like it before. Learners of Japanese may have tremendous worry and difficulty as a result of this.

Novarida (2011) conducted an introductory survey of Indonesian students in a questionnaire to determine the level of

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awareness in learning kanji by Japanese language learners. As a result, it was discovered that starting students find the kanji shape appealing, resulting in a favorable attitude toward kanji study. Knowing kanji, on the other hand, permits them to read and write Japanese books. Of course, these students were aware that no matter how many kanji they read, if they do not use them, they rapidly forget them, and no matter how many kanji they read, they will not be able to memorize them correctly. Although the general understanding of Indonesian students at the introduction level concerning kanji learning was investigated in the Novarida study, the negative view of kanji learning failure in beginner students was extremely clear. To acquire more accurate results, language learners of various language levels must be evaluated in order to compare and evaluate their propensity and level of understanding about learning kanji in relation to their language knowledge and Japanese language learning experience.

Regarding the viewpoint of Japanese language learners on kanji teaching by teachers, Ikehara (2014) studied the students' participatory learning (PL) for learning kanji. She used this method to analyze the learning status of 10 English speakers who are learning Japanese in a class. In this method, students shared their own manner of learning kanji (self-reading) with their peers in groups of two or more. Language learners acquired kanji from each other in theory, without any formal teacher training. Most language learners stated that exchanging kanji self-reading strategies and information with classmates was more enjoyable than learning from the teacher by the conclusion of the semester. They thought this strategy would aid in the preservation of kanji. Also, rather than obtaining one-sided knowledge from teachers, learners use one other's expertise and self-reading knowledge about kanji learning they have already learned by sharing and exchanging information, allowing them to pursue learning more imaginatively.

In this regard, Hatotowa (2006) investigated Sri Lankan language learners' knowledge of kanji acquisition in another study. According to Hatotowa's findings, these students believe that learning kanji is tough, but they are typically optimistic about the importance of studying kanji. In terms of understanding of kanji self-learning, however, the findings reveal that Sri Lankan students rely more on teacher instruction and are less aware of kanji self-learning. These students believe that because thorough explanations regarding the aspects of kanji are offered while teaching the instructor, teaching kanji by the teacher and receiving feedback from the teacher makes kanji learning easier.

According to Ikehara's research, language learners who use the participatory method are able to continue learning kanji on their own. However, according to Hatotowa's research findings, because students' perspectives on individual preferences, cultural and educational background, and

learning style can affect the rate of learning, new methods of teaching kanji, such as the exchange of students' personal information, should be tested before being implemented. In addition to kanji self-reading, it appears that students' habits and intellectual perspectives on how kanji is learned should be examined.

In addition, in terms of learners' beliefs about kanji teaching and learning, in Okita's (1995) study on Japanese language students at the University of Hawaii, he found that most language learners believed that letters should be introduced from the beginning of learning Japanese and opposed the idea that learning conversation has priority on learning letters. Also, the findings revealed that even if the language learners can infer the meaning of a kanji, they become concerned about not being able to read it. Because the majority of the language learners in Okita's study had prior experience studying Japanese before signing up for the university, he believes that their beliefs can be influenced by their learning environment and prior experience learning Japanese.

Culture and cultural background, the characteristic of independence in language learning are influential in language learning (PayandehDariNejad & Habibzadeh 2021; Bagheri Nevisi & Fermoudi 2022). Despite some similarities in kanji learning among non-kanji language learners, factors such as learning environment, foreign language

learning experience, and learner's language competence have a major impact on learners' knowledge and belief in kanji learning, based on previous studies. As a result, given that the vast majority of Iranian language learners study Japanese professionally at university, it is vital to investigate Persian-speaking Japanese language learners' knowledge of kanji learning and their attitudes toward kanji instruction. It is recommended to study the effect of language proficiency on the knowledge and beliefs of language learners about learning and teaching kanji.

Research questions

The purpose of this study is to better understand the thoughts, views, and motivations of Persian-speaking learners of Japanese about learning kanji, as well as their beliefs about how kanji is taught to Japanese learners from non-kanji language regions, particularly in Iran. Since language proficiency is an important factor that affects language learning, it is assumed that students' points of view might get influenced by their language proficiency levels. In this study, therefore, we intend to see whether students with different language proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) have different views about learning and teaching kanji. The research questions for this study are as follow.

1. **What knowledge do Persian-speaking Japanese language**

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learners have about kanji and how to learn it?

2. **Is the knowledge of Persian-speaking Japanese language learners with different language abilities (elementary, intermediate and advanced) different from kanji and its learning?**

3. **What are the beliefs of Persian-speaking Japanese language learners about kanji teaching methods and how do their beliefs change at different language levels (elementary, intermediate and advanced)?**

3. Research methodology

Fifty-nine Japanese language students (female = 39, male = 20) attended randomly to this study from the University of Tehran. These pupils were all Iranian and spoke Persian, with an average age of 22.38. Their Japanese learning experience ranges from one to more than four years. Language learners with one year of experience were classified as elementary language learners (n=23), those with two and three years of experience as intermediate language learners (n=14), and language learners with four years of experience or more were classified as advanced level learners (n=22). Twelve percent of the elementary group students have JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test) N5 and N4, 10.2% of the intermediate students have N3, and about 9% of the advanced group have N1 and N2. The rest of the students did not take JLPT.

A two-part questionnaire was created to measure the knowledge and beliefs of Persian-speaking Japanese language learners about studying and teaching kanji (a total of 20 items). To create a thorough questionnaire in this respect, prior study questionnaires were evaluated, and items relevant to kanji learning knowledge and beliefs regarding kanji education were retrieved and categorized (Hamakawa (2017), Hatotowa (2006), and Bushimakina (2013 a, b)). The questionnaire is divided into two parts: The first section has 17 statements on a five-point Likert scale (5 = strongly disagree, 4 = disagree, 3 = none (do not know), 2 = agree, 1 = strongly agree). The second section consists of descriptive questions (three questions). Descriptive questions were created so that students could write freely and not be restricted to the first part's claims. The questionnaire's alpha value was calculated to be 0.82, indicating a strong reliability coefficient. The statistical analysis of the questionnaire statements was reduced from five to three alternatives to assess the answers more accurately, simply, and conceptually. The options "strongly disagree and disagree" equal one choice (3 = strongly disagree and disagree), "none (I don't know)" equals one option (2 = none (do not know), and finally "strongly agree and agree" equals one option (1 = strongly agree and agree). The responses to the descriptive questions were also analyzed using open coding. For each questionnaire item, answers frequency, and

considering relevant research question(s), the Kruskal-Wallis statistical test was applied.

4. Results

To determine the attitude of Persian-language Japanese learners towards kanji learning (research question 1), first, the questionnaire multiple-choice statements were analyzed and then the descriptive questions were explained regarding the components that make kanji difficult to learn.

Table 1 shows the level of understanding that Persian Japanese language learners have in learning kanji. More than 90% of Iranian language students believe that learning kanji will improve their Japanese language skills (96.6%) and enable them to read a variety of texts (94.9 %). More than 85% (86.4%) of Japanese language learners believe that learning kanji makes life in Japan easier. In contrast, 3.4 percent of Iranian language learners disagreed, while

others were unsure (10.2%). A text written in both kanji and hiragana is easier to read, according to more than half of language learners (64.4 %). Naturally, 22% of language learners disagreed. Despite the fact that it is possible to type kanji using a computer, 81.4% of language learners say that learning kanji is still vital. Despite the fact that many language learners believed in studying kanji while typing on a computer, 32.2% of language learners feel they no longer need to learn kanji writing on a computer. Of course, more than half of the language learners (55.9%) thought that mastering kanji writing was important. Finally, while 30.5% of Persian-speaking Japanese learners are frustrated because kanji learning has no end, 40.7 percent are not.

Table1
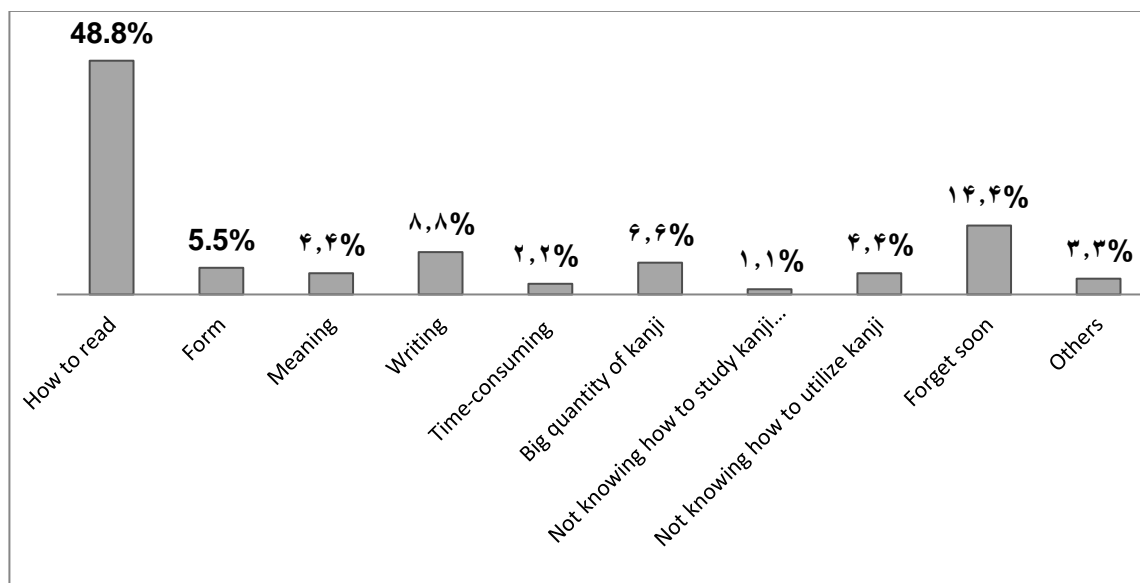*Awareness of kanji learning in language learners –frequency (n)*

Rank	Statements	Agree & Strongly agree	Neither	Disagree & Strongly disagree
1	2. It is necessary to study kanji in order to improve Japanese language proficiency.	96.6 % (57)	1.7 % (1)	1.7 % (1)
2	13. If I know kanji I will be able to read different materials.	94.9 % (56)	1.7 % (1)	3.4 % (2)
3	12. If you know kanji, it makes life easier in Japan	86.4 % (51)	10.2 % (6)	3.4 % (2)
4	10. It is easier to read a text which is written in both kanji and hiragana	64.4 % (38)	13.6 % (8)	22 % (13)
5	15. It is not necessary to study kanji because you can use a computer to type Japanese	10.2 % (6)	8.5 % (5)	81.4 % (48)
6	14. It is not necessary to learn how to write kanji because you can use a computer to type Japanese	32.2 % (19)	11.9 % (7)	55.9 % (33)
7	1. It is annoying because you feel that you will never finish studying kanji	30.5 % (18)	28.8 % (17)	40.7 % (24)

Learners were invited to write freely about what is difficult to learn kanji or what was tough for them personally to learn kanji in order to identify the challenging components of kanji learning for Persian-speaking Japanese language learners. After coding and categorizing the responses, nine factors that make kanji learning challenging for language learners were discovered (Figure 1). These include elements such as how to read kanji, kanji form, kanji meaning, kanji writing style, time-consuming kanji learning, a big quantity of kanji, lack of information about how to study kanji properly, not knowing how to utilize kanji, and forgetting kanji.

Three elements stood out among the rest. The first component that makes kanji learning difficult, according to nearly half of the language learners (48.8%), is "kanji reading". The following items are included in kanji reading. The huge number of various pronunciations (presence of onyomi and kunyomi for one kanji, existence of numerous onyomi for a kanji), different pronunciations of a kanji in different places,

lack of standards for employing pronunciations (irregular pronunciations), and the need to maintain them, recollection of all the onyomi and kunyomi pronunciations of a kanji at once, common pronunciations (the same pronunciation for multiple different kanji). The second factor is "forgetting learned kanji rapidly", which 14.4% of language learners said. Then there's the issue of "kanji writing", which was rated as the third most difficult component by around 9% of language learners. Following the order of the strokes (kakusū), observing the amount of kakusū, the intricacy and big number of kakusū, and the similar or identical bushu (radical) in different kanjis were all examples of kanji writing challenges.

Figure 1: Kanji learning challenges for Japanese Persian language learners

The Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to see if the degree of knowledge of Iranian Japanese language learners concerning kanji learning changes as their competence level

(elementary, intermediate, and advanced) increases (second research question). Table 2 summarizes the findings. The test results show that all three levels of learners

(elementary, intermediate, and advanced) agree on the following ($p >.05$). Learners at all three levels of elementary, intermediate, and advanced strongly agree that studying kanji is a requirement for increasing Japanese language skills (median = 1) and that knowing kanji will enable them to comprehend a variety of texts (median = 1). It will make life in Japan easier (median = 1). On the other hand, language learners at all three levels (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) firmly believe that learning kanji and knowing how to write kanji is necessary even if they use a computer to type Japanese that automatically converts Japanese letters into kanji (median = 3). Finally, their unwavering commitment to learning kanji does not deter them (median = 3).

Advanced language learners believe that including kanji in a document makes it easier to read than a text written entirely in Hiragana (median = 1). Intermediate language learners share this viewpoint (median = 1.5), whereas elementary language learners do not value the existence of kanji in Japanese texts and believe that kanji does not always lead to easier text reading (median =3). Although there is disagreement across learners of various levels in this situation, the difference is not significant ($p >.05$) (Table 2).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and Kruskal-Wallis test results for language learners at three levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced (regarding knowledge of kanji learning)

| | Language proficiency level | | | | | | Kruskal-Wallis test | | |
| | Elementary | | Intermediate | | Advance | | | | |
Statement No.	N	Median	N	Median	N	Median	*df*	X^2	*p*
1	23	3	14	3	22	3	2	2.11	.34
2	23	1	14	1	22	1	2	4.61	.09
10	23	3	14	1.5	22	1	2	5.23	.07
12	23	1	14	1	22	1	2	2.44	.29
13	23	1	14	1	22	1	2	2.47	.29
14	23	3	14	3	22	3	2	1.59	.45
15	23	3	14	3	22	3	2	1.64	.44

Note: 3 = disagree & strongly disagree; 2 = neither; 1 = agree & strongly agree
1 = It is annoying because you feel that you will never finish studying kanji
2 = It is necessary to study kanji in order to improve Japanese language proficiency
10 = It is easier to read a text which is written in both kanji and hiragana
12 = If you know kanji, it makes life easier in Japan
13 = If I know kanji I will be able to read different materials
14 = It is not necessary to learn how to write kanji because you can use a computer to type Japanese
15 = It is not necessary to study kanji because you can use a computer to type Japanese

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In answer to the third research question, which is a study of the beliefs of Persian-speaking Japanese language learners concerning kanji teaching techniques, the questionnaire's multiple-choice propositions are expressed first, followed by an analysis of the questionnaire's free questions.

In terms of teaching kanji (Table 3), about 90% (89.8%) of Iranian language learners agree that hiragana, katakana, and kanji should all be taught from the start of learning Japanese and that their education should not be separated. Furthermore, approximately 60% (59.3%) of language learners agree that hiragana, katakana, and kanji should be taught in Japanese before dialogue. More than half of language students (69.5%) agree that teaching kanji radicals is critical to effective kanji instruction. However, one-third of language learners (33.9%) disagree with this.

When comparing the three parts of kanji reading (sound), meaning, and writing, more than 80% of Persian-speaking learners say that reading takes precedence over writing (84.7%), whereas only about 10% (10.2%) believe that writing takes precedence. They would rather learn to write kanji than read it. In addition, only about a third (32.2%) of language learners preferred knowing the meaning of kanji to know how to read kanji when compared to reading and knowing the meaning of kanji. Despite the fact that nearly half of language learners

(42.2 %) still favor the kanji reading style, this is the case. About a quarter of language learners (25.4 %) did not have any preference for reading or understanding the meaning.

What's fascinating about kanji is that it can be learned independently. More than 80% of language learners believe they can study kanji on their own (81.4%), whereas only 6.8% do not. When it comes to learning kanji, 78% of language learners believe that anyone can learn it successfully on their own. Although about 10% of language learners felt the presence of a teacher to be crucial for learning kanji, about 70% (67.8%) of them claimed that they could learn kanji without a teacher and that kanji learning could be systematic (33.9%). To put it another way, the shape of the kanji and the juxtaposition of the kanji strokes follow a logical order that can aid self-study learning. The aforementioned result demonstrates Persian-speaking Japanese language learners' great conviction in kanji self-learning.

Table 3
Language learners' beliefs about kanji teaching methods based on multiple choice questions-frequency (n)

Statements	Agree & Strongly agree	Neither	Disagree & Strongly disagree
3. Kanji can be learned systematically.	33.9 % (20)	50.8 % (30)	15.3 % (9)
5. Radicals are useful for studying Kanji.	69.5 % (41)	23.7 % (14)	33.9 % (20)
6. Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji should be introduced from the beginning of learning Japanese.	89.8 % (53)	3.4 % (2)	6.8 % (4)
7. I want to study hiragana, katakana, and kanji after learning conversation.	30.5 % (18)	10.2 % (6)	59.3 % (35)
8. If I know the meaning, It is fine if I can't read Kanji.	32.5 % (19)	25.4 % (15)	42.2 % (25)
9. The ability to read kanji is more important than the ability to write kanji.	84.7 % (50)	5.1 % (3)	10.2 % (6)
11. Anyone can successfully learn kanji with an effort.	78 % (46)	13.6 % (8)	8.5 % (5)
16. I can't learn Kanji without a teacher.	10.2 % (6)	22 % (13)	67.8 % (40)

| 17. I can learn Kanji by myself. | 81.4 % (48) | 11.9 % (7) | 6.8 % (4) |

The Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to see if Japanese learners' beliefs on kanji teaching methods change as their language skills improve (elementary, intermediate, and advanced). The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that Japanese learners differed statistically substantially in four circumstances, as indicated in Table 4. (items 5, 8, 16, and 17). After using the Dunn procedure to compare each of the three elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels to each other, it was discovered that primary level language learners (median = 3) and advanced level language learners (median = 1) (p <.01) disagree on whether radicals are effective in kanji learning. Beginner learners place a higher value on kanji reading (median = 3),

while advanced learners place a higher value on kanji meaning (median = 1) (p <.001). Furthermore, elementary-level students believe that the presence of a teacher is required for learning kanji (median = 3) and that kanji cannot be learned without the assistance of a teacher (median = 3), whereas advanced language students believe that kanji does not require the presence of a teacher (median = 1) (p <.001) and that they can learn kanji on their own (median = 1). In this study, the adjusted probability value is equal to 0.016.

Table 4
Descriptive statistics and Kruskal-Wallis test results for language learners at three levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced (regarding language learners' beliefs about kanji teaching techniques).

| | Language proficiency level | | | | | | Kruskal-Wallis test | | |
| | Elementary | | Intermediate | | Advance | | | | |
Statement No.	N	Median	N	Median	N	Median	df	X^2	p
3	23	3	14	1.5	22	1	2	5.23	.07
5	23	3	14	1	22	1	2	9.91	.002*
6	23	1	14	1.5	22	1	2	5.34	.07
7	23	3	14	3	22	3	2	2.44	.29
8	23	3	14	1	22	1	2	9.86	.000*
9	23	3	14	3	22	3	2	1.59	.45
11	23	1	14	1	22	1	2	1.64	.44
16	23	3	14	1	22	1	2	9.99	.000*
17	23	3	14	1	22	1	2	9.98	.000*

Note: 3 = disagree & strongly disagree; 2 = neither; 1 = agree & strongly agree
* p < .05
3. Kanji can be learned systematically.
5. Radicals are useful for studying Kanji.
6. Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji should be introduced from the beginning of learning Japanese.
7. I want to study hiragana, katakana, and kanji after learning conversation.
8. If I know the meaning, It is fine if I can't read Kanji.

9. The ability to read kanji is more important than the ability to write kanji.
11. Anyone can successfully learn kanji with an effort.
16. I can't learn Kanji without a teacher.
17. I can learn Kanji by myself.

Students were encouraged to make open comments about kanji teaching methods and how they would teach kanji if they were

teachers. After coding and evaluating the responses, it was discovered (Table 5) that 26.4 percent of language learners believe that kanji should be taught through texts, sentences, and phrases. 16.5 percent of language learners believe that kanji should be taught in a precise order. They devised three sequences to accomplish this: 1) Presenting kanji and its radical history, followed by its meaning and relationship to radical, and ultimately its application in phrases and text. 2) Learn how to write kanji, how to pronounce it, and how to use it in sentences

and writings. 3) Reading texts containing kanjis, examining the sentences and meaning of kanji, and lastly, the way kanji is written. 15.4 percent of language learners believed that some aspects of kanji study should be left up to the students. Only 5.5 percent of language learners were entirely satisfied with the existing way of teaching kanji, according to the respondents.

Table 5
Language learners' beliefs toward kanji teaching methods, as determined by descriptive questions

Suggested ways for teaching kanji		Percentage
Using texts, sentences and phrases included Kanji		26.4%
Teaching Kanji and related information in a special order**:**		16.5%
Introducing the history of kanji, introducing radical, meaning, and its connection with radical, then using in sentences and text	50%	
Teaching how to write Kanji, pronunciation and meaning, then using in words, sentences and text	35.7%	
First start using text and sentences, then introducing kanji (meaning and then how to write)	14.28%	
Let learners teach some part of Kanji lessons		15.4%
• The current way is good • Holding frequent tests (quizzes) • Using teaching aids in the classroom (flashcards, applications, etc.)		5.5%
• Using while writing texts in Japanese. • Encourage language learners to learn kanji • Enhance student's visual memory		3.3%
• Cooperative learning • Active learning • Relating newly learned kanji to other kanji and other kanji components		2.2%
• Out-of-class kanji practice • Dedicate a portion of each class time to teaching kanji		1.1%

5. Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that Iranian language learners are enthusiastic about learning kanji. Persian language students of various levels of proficiency (basic, intermediate, and advanced) are well aware that developing kanji knowledge enhances Japanese language skills. This finding is somewhat consistent with the Bushimakina

(2013b) and Novarida (2011) study on Russian and Indonesian language learners. Furthermore, Iranian language learners believe that learning kanji is essential for living a comfortable (and hassle-free) life in Japan, as well as reading and understanding Japanese. This assumption can be found in language learners of all levels: elementary, intermediate, and advanced.

Advanced and intermediate language learners, on the other hand, are aware that texts using kanji are easier to read. The significance of kanji is one of the reasons behind this. These students understand that each kanji has a sound and a meaning. Thus, when compared to material written entirely in Hiragana, literature composed of kanji and kana is easier to read and comprehend (Yuki, 2009). However, elementary-level learners do not see the presence of kanji in the text as a reason to read it more easily. This could imply that novices are unaware of advanced level works, or that they learned Japanese using the Hiragana alphabet, and that, despite common practice, certain basic texts and textbooks put space between letters and vocabularies. They lack sufficient expertise in this sector.

Emphasis on the need of teaching and learning kanji despite the possibility of using a computer shows that contrary to the development of mobile cellphones, computer programs, and kanji writing software and the availability of these items, Persian-language learners are aware of the importance of kanji learning. The fact that most Iranian language learners are neither bored nor resentful of the enormous number of kanji can be linked to their positive attitude toward kanji learning. This finding shows the importance of Japanese language education among Iranian language learners.

Learning kanji has its own set of challenges. For Iranian language learners, the most difficult components of kanji acquisition are "kanji voice", "forgetting memorized kanji quickly", and "writing kanji". Persian-speaking learners of Japanese believe that reading kanji characters are more difficult than understanding their meaning. The reason for this is that Persian language learners are considered non-kanji language learners, and because their mother tongue has an alphabetic system, they rely on sounds rather than meaning. Regarding the early forgetting of kanji, it is clear that these students, as JFL students, do not have the opportunity to actively communicate with kanji letters in Iran and do not often have to write kanji in class. These factors have caused students to reinforce the negative belief that no matter how much they practice and repeat kanji, they will forget it because they do not use it every day. In terms of kanji writing difficulty, in addition to factors such as the number of large and similar kakusū, the way kanji is taught and the emphasis on writing all kakusū without increasing or decreasing and following the order of kanji writing (kakijun), compels language learners to write kanji completely and clearly so that all kanji kakusūs be clear. Furthermore, because the Persian alphabet makes no distinction between the sequences in which letters are written, the kakijun principle perplexes and slows down Persian writers.

Persian-speaking Japanese learners strongly agree that kanji should be taught with Kana letters from the start of studying Japanese. In other words, they believe that teaching Hiragana, Katakana, and kanji has no precedence or lag. Furthermore, the majority of them believe that teaching Japanese communication is easier after studying the letters Kana and kanji. This could indicate that Persian L1 learners prefer to acquire written the Japanese language before moving on to spoken language. This may reveal the significance of Iranian learners in reading and writing. Because one of the most difficult aspects of learning kanji is "kanji reading", it might be claimed that Persian-speaking learners believe they have acquired a language when they can read the script and write that line. Furthermore, Persian-language learners believe that "understanding how to read" is a vital ability in learning kanji, and that knowing the meaning of a kanji but not knowing how to read it is insufficient. As a result, it is reasonable to conclude that Iranian language learners devote more effort to increasing their ability to read kanji characters than to learning the meaning of kanji. This shows, as Okita (1995) points out, that learners who do not have kanji and semantic letters in their home tongue, that is, who do not have an alphabetic system, are largely reliant on sounds and have little experience with kanji graphic processing. However, not all language learners are like way. According to the findings of this study, as Persian-speaking

learners' linguistic expertise grows, their reliance on sounds decreases, their attention to form increases, and kanji processing and understanding improve. Therefore, it does not seem like a reasonable argument to say that just because the language learners are belong to a non-kanji language area, so they merely pay attention to sounds and ignore meaning. Meanwhile, the learner's linguistic skills can help them grasp kanji and strengthen their belief in kanji learning and teaching.

Iranian language students believe that the teacher's participation in kanji instruction is unnecessary because they believe that learning kanji can be done by self-reading and that studying kanji without the help of a teacher is a feature of kanji. In this aspect, Russian pupils had a negative attitude toward the teacher's involvement in kanji learning (Bushimakina, 2013b). According to studies, Sri Lankan students learn kanji better from their teachers because they believe the teacher provides a more thorough explanation (Hatotowa, 2006). As a result, not only the systematic structure of kanji and autonomous learning is a significant issue in kanji education, but the cultural significance of the teacher's presence when teaching kanji to Japanese language learners should also be considered. Another factor to consider is the learner's linguistic proficiency. According to the findings of this study, Iranian language learners at the elementary level regard the presence of teachers in kanji education to be necessary, whereas intermediate and

advanced language learners place a greater emphasis on kanji self-learning.

Radicals are kanji elements that can be useful in learning the characters (Hagiwara 2016, Rasiban 2018, Takahashi and Tsurumaki 2022). More than half of Iranian language students (intermediate and advanced) believe radicals play an important role in kanji study. However, elementary language students do not believe that radicals should be taught in kanji classes. The absence of appropriate knowledge of kanji structure and kanji learning methodologies among novice learners is the cause for this viewpoint. More attention to the educational aspects required in kanji education at the basic level could be beneficial in this regard.

It is vital to use a lot of texts and phrases using kanji in teaching kanji, according to Iranian language learners. This view can be explained by the cognitive processing of kanji. Kanji processing occurs based on phonological and visual information about the kanji. Kanji word identification is accessed from orthography (Chikamatsu, 1996; Komori, 2007) and phonology (Matsumoto, 2013). Alphabetic L1 learners identify kanji words in context if they can activate phonological coding related to the kanji words in a text. Also, they can better guess the meaning of kanji/kanji words when it appears in a text than when there is no text (Kondo-Brown, 2006). That is because they use contextual clues to find the meaning. On the other hand, research shows that learners with alphabetic background might also use visual coding in kanji word processing based on their language levels (Matsumoto, 2013). Therefore, putting kanji and kanji words in a text might benefits students in terms of learning kanji and help them to know the use of kanji in texts/sentences. Also, this could ease the settlement of the kanji meaning in the learner's mind. As a result, the introduction of how the kanji are used and the words containing those kanji in the form of text, in other words using kanji in a natural setting, can be considered a complementary aspect of the kanji training sequence.

6. Conclusion

Even though Persian-speaking Japanese learners, like other non-kanji language learners, see kanji learning as a major impediment to learning Japanese, they are aware of the benefits of kanji learning, and for this reason, they want to learn kanji in the very early stages of learning Japanese. Because the findings of this study show that Persian-language learners are completely aware of the benefits of learning kanji, it is crucial to investigate these findings from a cognitive psychology perspective.

Furthermore, Persian-language students believe that "reading" is a necessary skill for learning kanji. Although beginner-level learners are primarily concerned with "reading" kanji, the challenge for all Persian-speaking learners of whatever language level

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and knowledge is that they cannot readily read a kanji (or a Japanese term that includes kanji) even after understanding its meaning. Even after recognizing its meaning and form, it is a major issue and stressful factor in learning kanji. It can also be seen that Persian-language students are aware that no matter how much they practice and repeat kanji, they forget them when they are not used in their natural setting. Therefore, it is recommended to avoid teaching all kanji readings at once when introducing and teaching kanji and first, only important kanji readings should be introduced and practiced in the form of compound words or words/sentences.

Finally, due to the development of educational resources and kanji dictionaries, as well as access to educational sites, language learners increasingly tend to learn kanji independently. As a result, the traditional technique of teaching kanji should be changed. It is preferable to introduce and teach all kanji material, including kanji writing style, radical, reading, and history, only in the first semesters, and then, as the language level of the learners improves, instead of introducing single kanjis in the classroom, it is better for the teachers to leave this task to the learners themselves (self-learning) and introduce most of the Japanese sentences containing learned kanjis and read and practice kanji as a text in the classroom.

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Appendix
Questionnaire (English version)

Part1. Please write a number from 1 to 5 for each of the following statements.
(5 = strongly disagree, 4 = disagree, 3 = none (do not know), 2 = agree, 1 = strongly agree)

1. It is annoying because you feel that you will never finish studying kanji. □
2. It is necessary to study kanji in order to improve Japanese language proficiency. □
3. Kanji can be learned systematically. □
4. I am satisfied with my grades so far. □
5. Radicals are useful for studying kanji. □
6. Hiragana, katakana, and kanji should be introduced from the beginning of learning Japanese. □
7. I want to study hiragana, katakana, and kanji after learning conversation. □
8. If I understand the meaning, it is fine if I can't read kanji. □
9. The ability to read kanji is more important than the ability to write kanji. □
10. It is easier to read a text which is written in both kanji and hiragana. □
11. Anyone can successfully learn kanji with an effort. □
12. If you know kanji, it makes life easier in Japan. □
13. If I know kanji I will be able to read different materials. □
14. It is not necessary to learn how to write kanji because you can use a computer to type Japanese. □
15. It is not necessary to study kanji because you can use a computer to type Japanese. □
16. I can't learn Kanji without a teacher. □
17. I can learn Kanji by myself. □

Part2. Feel free to answer the following questions.

18. What are the difficult things about studying kanji?
19. If you were a teacher, how do you think kanji should be taught?

20. If you have something to say about learning or teaching kanji, please write.

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