TEACHING BEGINNERS KATAKANA WITH THE HELP OF THE 'IMAGE METHOD'

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Under the present conditions, when teaching letters to beginners learning Japanese, letting them master grammar takes priority. It is not easy to give enough time to teaching writing and reading in spite of their importance in learning letters. In the Japanese curriculum, insufficient teaching hours are spent on KANJI (Chinese characters), HIRAGANA (the rounded Japanese phonetic syllabary), and KATAKANA (the angular Japanese phonetic syllabary). Teachers only introduce them, and it is not easy for students to develop a good command of them. Thus, I think the time allotment is not appropriate, especially, in the instruction of KANA (the Japanese syllabary), HIRAGANA is given more importance than KATAKANA. For example, before teachers know whether students have mastered KATAKANA or not, they start teaching grammar using a textbook.

Considering the circumstances mentioned above, it's necessary to use the allotted time effectively in spite of limited hours, trying to make well-balanced curriculum. In order to do so, an improved teaching method is required. Under the current situation, teachers do no more than introduce letters and expect learners themselves to study further. Before teachers extract the students' interest in letters, they consider

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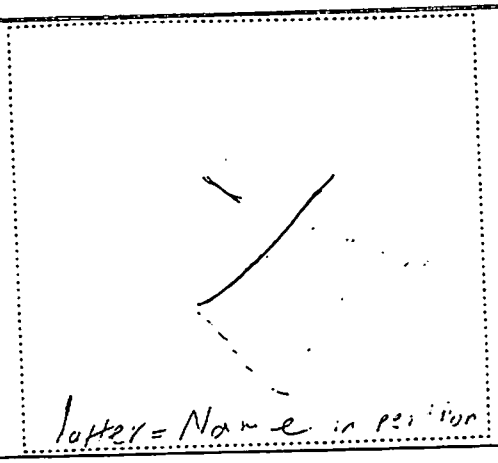

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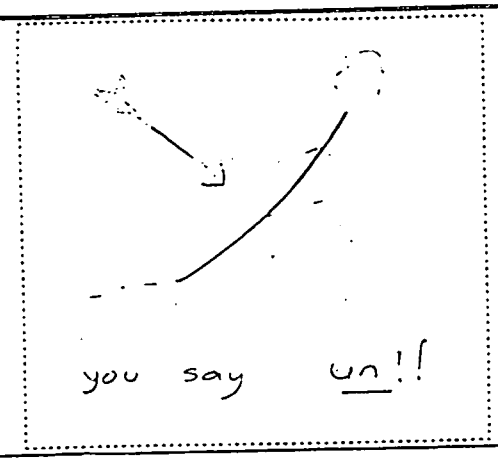

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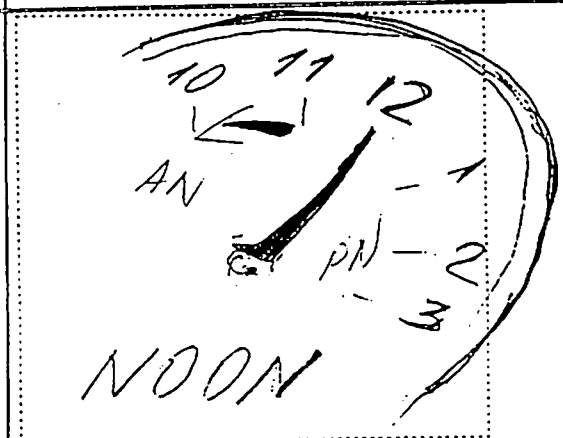

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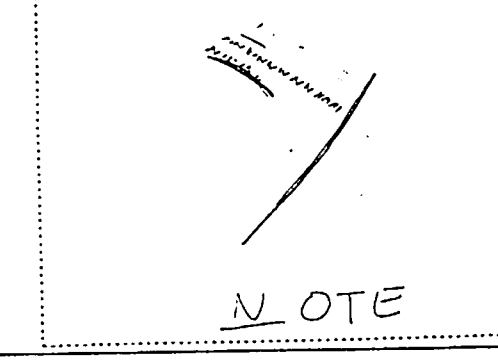

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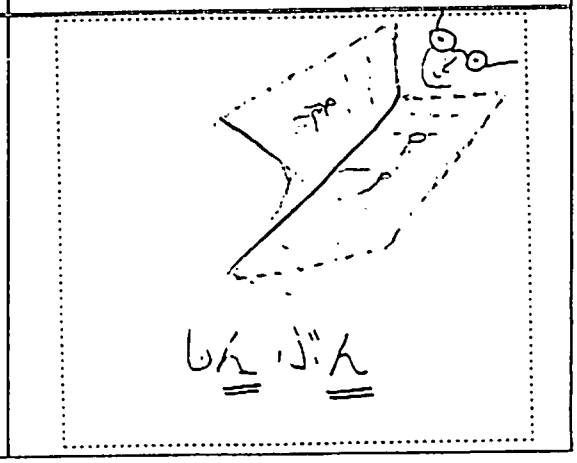

that the instruction has finished. To break the situation, I tried to introduce the 'learner-centered' instruction method to test a learner's positiveness toward learning letters, and also the teaching method for the purpose that students can make good use of them.

This time, as I give importance to letting students to recognize KATAKANA, focusing on a KATAKANA's form itself, I introduced the 'IMAGE METHOD'. In the method, learners recall images of letters they visualize in their mind, and they represent them on a sheet, that I made, to secure the image. This sheet was adopted as a side teaching material and used in introducing KATAKANA.