

# **Cognitive Processes of Kanji in Reading**

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It is broadly said that kanji hampers learners with alphabetical backgrounds from reading Japanese. The learners may have developed word recognition skills through reading their native languages, however, they cannot successfully process kanji-written words with the processing code with which they are familiar.

The paper argues the development of graphemic awareness is essential for learners of Japanese with no prior experience of learning a character-based language for successful processing of kanji. Graphemic awareness refers to an awareness that grapheme can be the unit of analysis.

In the paper, an analysis of the results obtained from kanji quizzes, which were given to assess learners' graphemic awareness after kanji was introduced with background information, is reported.

The study revealed that, even after having received explicit inputs of meaning and pronunciation symbols, 1) learners with alphabetical backgrounds may process kanji by visual association, 2) learners may not be good at segmenting kanji into each grapheme, and 3) learners may not be using meaning or pronunciation symbols for accessing lexical memory.

These findings imply that learners do not possess sufficient graphemic awareness, and that the awareness may not be developed easily.

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*Key words:* kanji recognition, reading processing, cognitive process, graphemic awareness, graphemic code