Second Language Learning Strategy for Young Learners: Learning Hiragana as A Process in Japanese Language Acquisition

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Abstract. Learning strategies in the Japanese language for young learners tend to be applied to children in Japanese mixed-married families or foreign children in Japan. However, this study tried to apply a learning strategy for a young learner who does not have a background in the Japanese environment or experience with Japanese people and culture. This study aims to describe a learning strategy by applying mnemonics to young learners in Japanese language acquisition, particularly in the Japanese character Hiragana. This research used qualitative descriptive design, with research instruments that include researchers, observation forms, and literature sources. The data collected in this study were analyzed using an interpretive approach. This study used a mnemonics-based digital tool application was used to assist the young learner in learning the Japanese character, Hiragana. This study shows that mnemonics can improve young learners' Hiragana acquisition. Learning strategy by applying mnemonics helps the young learner memorize each character and improves associative skills and Japanese vocabulary as a language acquisition process. Some characters are similar and confusing for beginners, and some Japanese characters do not exist in Indonesian, which makes it difficult for learners to pronounce them. The application greatly helps the subject memorize each character and improves associative skills and Japanese vocabulary as a language acquisition process. Through continuous reading practice, the subject can distinguish almost similar characters and help pronounce vocabulary. This application is very effective for parents who want to introduce Hiragana characters to young learners, with intensive reading practice and creating an environment that uses Hiragana.

Keywords: learning strategy, mnemonics, Hiragana, young learner, language acquisition

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INTRODUCTION

The learning strategy used by a teacher greatly influences the acquisition of a second language (L2). Strategies (referring to the techniques learners use to store, retrieve, and use acquired information) are very important in language acquisition, where they are chosen to make learning effective, easier, and more enjoyable (Bicaj & Shala, 2018). Therefore, the success or failure of learning is greatly influenced by the strategies used by the teacher. L2 learning strategies will be very different between adults and young learners. There are more challenges in young learners' learning because children's cognitive abilities develop. As stated by Wang and Wang, children learn through play, observation, and explicit teaching. In the cognitive development of young learners, some studies of cognitive development systematically vary the characteristics of the child and the environment (Wang & Wang, 2015). In addition, according to many research findings, the younger the child is when L2 acquisition starts, the better proficiency the child arrives at (Haznedar & Uysal, 2010).

The context in which L2 learning takes place is an important aspect to consider, given that L2 learning is influenced by internal (i.e., cognitive processes) and external (i.e., positive/negative inputs and outputs) factors (García Mayo & Hidalgo, 2017). In terms of language acquisition, the development of young learners will be very different depending on the environment around them, whether they live in a target language user environment (bilingual family) or not. The higher the intensity of a child’s contact with a language, the faster the language will be mastered by young learners. What if the language has never been in direct contact with the child? Will this make it an obstacle for children to master a language?

L2 acquisition in an environment that does not use the language as a daily language is challenging, just like learning Japanese characters in Indonesia, where Japanese characters are not used daily. Therefore, it is important to use a fun strategy when introducing Japanese characters, especially for young learners. In learning Kana characters (Hiragana and Katakana), the use of digital tool applications (applying mnemonic) makes learning easier, more interesting, and fun for learners (Usoh, 2016). Furthermore, the study found that in immediate recall, mnemonics had mixed effects for adult learners but were ineffective for delayed test results. However, it affects working memory and accuracy correlations (Saridaki, 2020). Using mnemonics helps learners connect what they will learn with their background knowledge. Thus, cognitive development will be further developed, especially for young learners making connections. However, what if mnemonics are applied to young learners, especially if mnemonics are given with the help of digital media, especially to young learners who have never had contact with the Japanese language?

Technology in education significantly contributes to the pedagogical aspects, where the usage of ICT will result in successful learning with the aid and assistance of ICT elements and components (Jamieson-Proctor et al., 2013). Children's learning is no exception, given that children are now accustomed to dealing with technology from birth. Today's technology-oriented children are considered iGeneration children. Children's growth, development, and learning are closely tied to electronic
media such as TV, video, electronic games, computers, and other technology at home and school (Morrison, 2016). The benefits obtained by children using technology are sometimes followed by negative impacts (Alghamdi, 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to assist in selecting content so that the technology can provide maximum benefits. Nowadays, teachers need to be able to integrate technology with classroom activities as it is proven that the proper use of technology can enhance the learning environment (Joshi, 2023).

In language learning, the use of technology has had a huge impact. Young learners learn a foreign language (English) from the input they receive through different media such as games (De Wilde & Eyckmans, 2017; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014), computer use (De Wilde & Eyckmans, 2017), and streaming (Puimège & Peters, 2019). Technology-based social media creates a highly interactive platform to facilitate communication, sharing, collaboration, and modification of learning content, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram (Martoredjo, 2023). The use of LINE as a language learning medium increased participants' motivation, made them more active in using idioms in class, and increased their idiomatic knowledge (Hsieh et al., 2017). Facebook can allow learners to produce text (Triana et al., 2019). Social media can provide collaborative learning and learner-social interactions (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017). Technology has also become commonplace in Japanese language learning, such as learning Basic Kanji using computers and mobile applications (Usoh, 2016). Social media can provide collaborative learning and social interaction of learners (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017), making learners do text production (Triana et al., 2019) and leading to better language learning performance (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017). Using social media can increase participants' motivation, make them more active in using idioms in class, increase their idiomatic knowledge (Hsieh et al., 2017), make learners do text production (Triana et al., 2019), and provide collaborative learning and learner-social interactions (Al-Rahmi & Zeki, 2017). For the use of applications, websites, digital cameras, or other digital tools to help educators, it is necessary to determine the learning objectives clearly in advance (Robb & Lauricella, 2015).

The use of mobile applications in learning has begun, given the ease of access for learners, such as the introduction of coding for young learners (Papadakis, 2022). Applications designed to foster active, engaged, meaningful, and socially interactive learning (the four "pillars" of learning) in a supported learning context learning objectives are considered educational (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015), such as the use of "Kahoot!" games in English learning that can reinforce academic learning and create better classroom dynamics (Husin & Azmuddin, 2022) and using mnemonics-based digital tool application to Japanese letters learning (Rasiban et al., 2019b; Sopaheluuwakan et al., 2023). Even developed applications can assist in language learning (Chachil et al., 2015).

In children's English learning, mnemonics are very effective because they can assist learners in associating between letters and objects that begin with those letters for easy recall so that the objects then serve as cues for a letter (Manalo et al., 2013), can enhance children's acquisition of new vocabulary words (Levin et al., 1982). Using mnemonics-based applications is very helpful in recognizing Hiragana in
beginner Japanese learners at the high school level (Rasiban et al., 2019c). It makes junior high school learners more motivated to learn hiragana and katakana letters easily and enjoy participating in the learning process (Sopaheluwakan et al., 2023). Using mnemonic strategies successfully improved university-level beginner learners' understanding of Japanese Kanji characters lexically and semantically and their ability to recognize them (Rasiban et al., 2019a). In the context of learning Hiragana for university-level learners, there is research that can demonstrate the effectiveness of digital media in addition to mnemonic-based applications, namely interactive courseware (Geraghty & Marcus Quinn, 2009). This teaching material includes sound files that show the pronunciation of each kana (Hiragana and Katakana) and simultaneous animations that show how to write each character. Peer learning approaches are also used to teach Hiragana to university-level learners. However, no reliable results have been obtained on using this strategy in the classrooms (Saito, 2022). From these previous studies, it can be seen how digital media can help in foreign language acquisition. Mnemonics-based applications are very effective for beginner Japanese learners (junior high school and high school) in learning Hiragana and college students in learning Kanji. While in children's English learning, mnemonics is also effective.

Based on the explanation above, using digital media, especially mobile applications based on mnemonics, is possible for young non-native learners outside Japan to learn Hiragana. Therefore, in this research, a study was conducted related to learning Hiragana for Indonesian children who do not have a Japanese user environment and do not come from bilingual families by applying mnemonics with the help of application tools. Learning is focused on mastering Hiragana characters, particularly in reading words to prepare subjects to learn autodidacts related to the Japanese language after character learning. Introducing Hiragana characters is the beginning of learning others and the Japanese language itself.

Japanese orthography includes three writing systems: Kanji logography and two types of syllabic kana (Hiragana and Katakana). Kanji generally represents meaning, while Hiragana and Katakana are phonological symbols; each kana representation corresponds to one or more phonemes. A Japanese syllable consists of five vowels /i, e, a, o, u/, where most syllables are open, and most kana represent a single syllable (e.g., hiragana き for [ki]; Katakana サ for [sa]) (Motohashi-Saigo & Ishizawa, 2020).

Mastery of Japanese characters is the first step for the subject to be able to read in mastering Japanese. Krashen said that mastery of a second language does not lie in the practice during the learning process but in the exposure to input received by language learners (Krashen, 1989). It is also emphasized that more reading results in better reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling, and grammar development (Krashen, 2004). Therefore, mastering Hiragana characters is very important as a basis for Japanese language acquisition. This research described how the subject carries out the learning process in Hiragana acquisition with the help of application tools. It also looks at the problems faced by the subject.
RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research used qualitative descriptive design to analyze how young learners carry out the natural learning process toward something unfamiliar. This research used several instruments, including researchers, observation forms, and literature sources. The researcher provided views related to natural phenomena that occur when the learning process has taken place, where these phenomena are recorded on the observation form. Then, in analyzing the phenomena, they are interpreted using literature sources as a comparison.

This case study analyzes how young learners master Hiragana characters. This study observed how the subject uses the application tool and the obstacles experienced during the learning process. In the learning process, the subject will learn independently. The teacher is only a facilitator who helped if needed. In the learning process, the subject sees the application tool until she can remember the character, then practice reading several words containing the learned character and characters that have been learned (vocabulary list). Therefore, the number of words in each lesson increases, considering the more characters she has learned. In reading words, the subject will be accompanied to determine whether what is read is correct. Learning time is adjusted to the subject mood, whether ready to learn or not. The length of time for one lesson depends on the length of time the subject memorizes the characters and the number of words given. The following is the material provided in each session.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>character introduced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First session</td>
<td>The subject sees the application tool in the introduction of characters. Then, practice reading vocabulary that contains these characters on the list prepared by the teacher.</td>
<td>あ/a、い/i、う/u、え/e、お/o、か/ka、き/ki、く/ku、け/ke、こ/ko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second session</td>
<td>The learning steps are the same as those in the first session.</td>
<td>さ(sa)/、し/shi、す/su、せ/se、そ/so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third session</td>
<td>The learning steps are the same as those in the first session.</td>
<td>た/ta、ち/chi、つ/tsu、て/te、と/to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth session</td>
<td>The learning steps are the same as those in the first session.</td>
<td>な/na、に/ni、ぬ/nu、ね/ne、の/no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth session</td>
<td>The learning steps are the same as those in the first session.</td>
<td>は/ha、ひ/hi、ふ/hu、へ/he、ほ/ho</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>character introduced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sixth session</td>
<td>The learning steps are the same as those in the first session.</td>
<td>ま/ma、み/mi、む/mu、め/me、も/mo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh session</td>
<td>The learning steps are the same as those in the first session.</td>
<td>や/ya、ゆ/yu、よ/yo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth session</td>
<td>There are the same learning steps as the first session.</td>
<td>ら/ra、り/ri、る/ru、れ/re、ろ/ro、わ/wa、を/wo、ん/n/m/ng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth session</td>
<td>The learning steps are the same as those in the first session.</td>
<td>だくおん/daku'on、はんだくおん/handaku'on、そくおん/soku'on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth session</td>
<td>The learning steps are the same as those in the first session.</td>
<td>ようおん/yoo'on, with examples of how the pronunciation of ようおん (using a small character) differs from the common pronunciation, such as びょういん/byooin (ようおん) and びょういん/biyooin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the tenth session, the practice of reading a variety of discourses is continued. The discourse reading exercise also introduced how to use Hiragana as a particle in a phrase. Especially particles whose character usage is different from their pronunciation, such as は[βa], を[ʔoʔ], へ[ʔeʔ]. In addition, create an environment that uses Hiragana, such as putting stickers with Hiragana that the subject is looking for, showing food wrappers with Hiragana, and showing the writings of people who use Hiragana on the internet and TV.

The application tool used is "Hiragana Memory Hint" (Figure 1), which applies mnemonics in Hiragana letter recognition, developed by The Japan Foundation. The tool application used in this study uses visual imagery strategies, especially Pictures, which are grouped by Baddeley (Amiryousefi & Ketabi, 2011). The application is the Indonesian version to facilitate the associations made by the subject. The selection of mnemonic media as a digital tool application makes it easier for the subject to relate/connect between images of objects and the shape of Hiragana characters. The application tool uses a mnemonic of the first syllable of an Indonesian word, pronounced the same as the Hiragana character. For example (figure 1), for Hiragana ゆ (yu), use the image of a crab (Yuyu in Indonesian). The shape of the Hiragana ゆ (yu) character also resembles the shape of the object (yuyu/crab) in Indonesian. This mnemonic draws a correlation between the image and the Hiragana character, leading the learner to recall what they have learned.
The application is used for character memorization, consisting of character recognition and character recall quizzes. For reading practice, the teacher creates a vocabulary list related to their daily life.

**Participant**

The subjects in this study were one 7-year-old Indonesian girl (not of Japanese descent) living in Indonesia. The subject is a quick learner with no background in the Japanese environment or experience with Japanese people and culture. From academic ability, the subject quickly mastered new concepts (such as math or biology) and used these concepts in task completion. In addition, when finding new vocabulary in English, the subject quickly understands and can use it.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

This research describes the learning process experienced by the subject in remembering Hiragana characters. Participatory observation is conducted to discover how the subject carries out the learning process, where the researcher acts as a teacher. Data for the study was collected at each learning session by recording on the observation form. The observation form recorded how long the process of memorizing Hiragana characters was carried out, how long it took to practice reading the vocabulary provided, and the problems that arose during the session. The data collected was then analyzed descriptively using interpretive approach, which offers a way to find useful interpretations of actions and meanings. Researchers often systematize or reduce the data in identifying patterns of human behavior, activity, and meaning (Furidha, 2023).

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Result**

Hiragana acquisition strategy in this research is limited to the ability to remember characters and then be able to read discourse without understanding the meaning or content of the discourse. In its implementation, the subject memorizes characters with the help of application tools, applications that use the concept of mnemonics in character recognition. According to Hensall (Usoh, 2016), Mnemonics is related to memory or can be defined as a memory aid. Thus, mnemonics is a way/strategy to memorize and recall something by connecting what will be learned with something already owned. The learning process consists of recognizing and remembering the characters using the application tool and reading vocabulary containing the characters learned. In vocabulary reading practice, the more
characters are learned, the more vocabulary is given. This drill is to train new characters and remind characters that have been learned before. A 7-year-old child is a child who still likes to play, and the learning process cannot be forced. Therefore, the learning time carried out always follows the subject’s mood.

The lesson lasted approximately four months until the subject could read a discourse with the correct pronunciation of long vowels and particles. In these four months, it was not carried out continuously daily because it depended on the subject’s condition and mood. The subject has remembered all the Hiragana characters in approximately two months. The first meeting took almost an hour, then in the following lessons, the time used was less and less. Even in the fifth lesson, the subject was able to remember the characters な (na), に (ni), ぬ (nu), ね (ne), and の (no) in just five minutes. However, the time was longer in the ninth and tenth lessons because the subject had difficulty remembering. At this meeting, a character was given that was a combination of two or more characters, so it took more time to memorize. In addition, the application was no longer used to remember these characters. Character recognition is only done by providing a list of characters and examples of their use in a word. Because the materials were quite difficult, there was assistance in remembering characters at the meeting. This process was different from the previous meeting, which was only assisted when reading vocabulary. After all the characters have been learned (for ten sessions), a drill is conducted to recall all the characters that have been learned several times. The subject then been reminded the pronunciation of ようおん (yoo’on) with long vowels written with the letter う (u) will still be read as the previous letter. For example, みょうじ (myooji (family name)) is spelled /mio:dʑi/.

After two months, the subject could remember all the characters and then continued at the next stage, namely discourse reading exercises, where the discourse given was still short. There were spaces after a phrase (to facilitate the decapitation of words and their particles). Every time she successfully reads a discourse, the subject is given a reward in the form of praise to increase her confidence. Thus, the subject will be confident in reading characters, satisfy the ego by completing the given task (Morrison, 2016), and remain motivated to read Japanese language materials. The drill continuously creates an environment supporting word-reading skills with Hiragana characters, such as reading other people's writings on the internet, reading vocabulary that appears on TV, reading vocabulary found on food packages, and being given a sticker-finding game. Stickers were placed around the house, and the subject was asked to find and read the vocabulary in Hiragana on the sticker.

The next stage of the drill uses more complex discourse (higher-level vocabulary), and there is no space between one phrase and another. It turns out that this causes problems because the subject has not mastered the meaning of words and sentence patterns, so there is a tendency to read two words/particles like long vowels, for example, ～があります (ga arimasu) read (gaa rimasu), あしたあいましょう (ashita aimashou) read (ashitaa imashou). To avoid stress on the subject because it is difficult to cut off the vocabulary in the discourse, the drill with discourse like this is stopped, followed by discourse with word beheadings. The drill continued
until the subject mastered the Hiragana characters and then continued with Katakana. After learning one time to remember Katakana characters with the same method, the subject was able to compare the difficulty of remembering between Hiragana and Katakana. According to the subject, remembering Hiragana characters is easier because there are grooves in Hiragana characters similar to Balinese characters (the subject is native Balinese and has learned Balinese characters). Thus, it can be seen that the subject has been able to evaluate her learning process and work with her sources of ability (Cognitivism).

During the learning process, the subject faced several problems. The subject also experienced errors in remembering characters in almost the same form as those experienced by adult learners (Mardani, 2012). Errors in reading characters that are often made by subjects on characters that are almost the same shape, such as ね with れ, わ with め. In addition to these characters, other errors occur when the subject has not practiced reading for a while. These errors occur between the letters は and け, さ and ち, ね and わ, と and ま. In addition to difficulties due to the shape of the letters that are almost the same, there is also confusion experienced by the subject due to the shape of the letters that change due to different font types, such as the example of the letter り which on the learning media letters are written disconnected. Sometimes the subject also had difficulty remembering the sokuon, such as the example of katta /ka.ta/ becoming katsuta [ka.tsita], this also appeared if the subject had not practiced reading for a while.

Apart from the shape of the characters, the subject experiences problems in pronouncing. Several pronunciations of Japanese characters are slightly different from Indonesian, causing several errors in the pronunciation of Japanese characters. For example, in Japanese, the letter し (shi) must be spelled with /ɕi/. In reading a sentence, at the end of a Japanese sentence, there is です (desu) • 〜ます (masu). At the beginning of the drill, the subject spells with [des] and [~mas], but after giving examples, in the next reading, the subject can spell [des] and [~mas]. Similarly, with particles, by giving examples, the subject can pronounce them correctly, such as は /βa/, and を /ʔoʔ/. The introduction of particles is done step by step, which starts with は, を, then continues with へ [ʔeʔ]、と [toʔ].

Discussion

Cook claims that children get to a higher level of proficiency in the long term than those who start L2 learning while older, perhaps because adults slow down (Cook, 2013). Stakanova and Tolstikhina claim that in foreign language learning for young learners, poems, songs, fairy tales, short plays, cartoons, and all kinds of visual aids are very important. Children can do things to the same object hundreds of times. Through the instruction of graphing objects, children will learn grammar through fun activities (Stakanova & Tolstikhina, 2014). Thus, using visuals to assist children's language acquisition is very important. How children learn their L1 cannot be transferred automatically to L2; some may work, and some may not (Cook, 2013), especially if the L2 has a very different writing system and grammar. Mastering Japanese orthography requires the appropriate strategy, especially for young learners who do not have a Japanese language environment. Thus, using visuals to
assist children's language acquisition is very important. In Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children can think logically, reason, and solve problems in various tasks. 6-12-year-olds' thinking is more fully logical and more systematic. So, their ability to make connections has developed (Shonkoff, 1984). Therefore, children aged 6-12 can use mnemonics.

Mnemonics can work effectively as a tool for instruction because they connect the material to other information the learner already knows, and they provide more reliable cues for later recall (Manalo et al., 2013). As mentioned earlier, Indonesian and Japanese have different sound units, such as the existence of the し (shi) syllable in Japanese. In the application used in this research, the mnemonic images used recode letter shapes into more recognizable objects, and these objects provide a connection to the sounds that need to be learned. However, the syllables that do not exist in Indonesia will still be problematic for learners, considering they are unfamiliar with them. For children to pronounce correctly, it is necessary to provide more examples and practice that reinforce them to remember the correct pronunciation.

The subject's ability to memorize Hiragana quickly during the session shows that the mnemonic set creates great focus and interest in Hiragana, especially the pictorial mnemonics, which can provide positive results (Saridaki, 2020). In Saridaki's research for adults (2020), it is known that the length of delay recall (the number of delay days) does not affect Hiragana's recall ability (delayed test scores) when using pictorial mnemonic. However, this study shows that the longer the delay training is carried out, there is a decrease in Hiragana recall, especially for syllables that have almost the same shape. Therefore, to maximize young learner's recall of Hiragana, providing continuous practice within a short period is important. In addition, it is important to create a Hiragana user environment so that young learners feel that the letters are around them, making them feel familiar.

There are problems in pronouncing the letter し (shi), which must be spelled with /ɕi/ but is pronounced [si] by the subject, and the pronunciation of yoo'on with long vowels. It shows how the speaker's native language, or L1 exerts an influence on the L2 being learned (Gorba & Cebrian, 2021). However, after being given an example of the correct pronunciation, the subject could pronounce it correctly in the next reading. The rapidity with which the subjects could change the production was due to the age effect of L2 acquisition. Late learners are deficient in L2 production because they are often unable to produce new L2 vowels or make much slower progress than young learners (Motohashi-Saigo & Ishizawa, 2020; Takahashi, 2023). In this case, not only vowels but even characters that do not exist in the first language can be pronounced by children precisely and quickly, such as sokuon, pronunciation of words at the end of sentences, and particles. Unlike adult learners who tend to forget the pronunciation of shi /ɕi/ and continue to pronounce [si] like Indonesian (Mardani, 2012).

Unlike adult learners, novice learners do not have the prior knowledge needed to build different knowledge structures to process newly presented information, so beginners may think they understand when they have missed something important (Manalo et al., 2013). Hence, explicit contrasting of cases is very important for young learners, especially characters almost the same shape and yoo'on, to draw their
attention to important details they may have missed, such as giving the syllables ね and れ, then わ and め in one word, and giving two examples of similar words (which use yoo'on and not) that have different meanings. In addition, giving the same syllable that is part of a word and functions as a particle in one sentence shows the difference in pronunciation of the syllable.

In reading practices, when beginning readers start reading a lot, they face the problem of not being able to continue reading due to a lack of vocabulary, and the process of vocabulary acquisition is also hindered. In addition, for beginning readers of Japanese, Hiragana sequences without space can be an obstacle to understanding grammar (Nakano, 2023). The lack of knowledge related to the vocabulary and grammar of the research subject makes it difficult to read texts/discourses with proper declamation whose Hiragana is written without spaces. In reading practice, it is important to provide space between phrases because, in this learning, the focus is on mastering letters, not yet on understanding vocabulary and grammar.

CONCLUSION

The learning in this study was carried out to prepare subjects to be able to read Japanese vocabulary and discourse using Hiragana characters. Learning is done using a digital tool that applies mnemonics, where the characters are associated with Indonesian vocabulary, and the initial syllables are the same as the Hiragana characters. In addition to remembering with the application’s help, planned drills are carried out according to the number of characters learned. Through memorization activities with the help of the application, reading practice can help the subject remember Hiragana characters. Then, discourse reading drills and creating an environment for using Hiragana helped the subject master reading skills well. Considering the different characteristics of Japanese and Indonesian, several things must be considered in the drilling stage. It is better to use a discourse reading drill that separates one phrase from another phrase/particle if learning letters is not followed by understanding the meaning of words and the content of the discourse.

Using this application to introduce Hiragana characters to young learners (especially non-Japanese descendants in Indonesia) is very effective, considering that the images used as reminders of Hiragana shapes are very interesting and familiar to children (around the children's environment). It is important to provide intensive reading practice and create an environment that uses Hiragana so children can master Hiragana characters more quickly. This study only focuses on recognizing and remembering Hiragana characters; it has yet to reach the stage of learning Katakana characters, so it cannot compare the process of remembering Hiragana and Katakana. Therefore, future research is directed at comparing the process of recognizing and remembering Hiragana and Katakana characters.
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