

Teaching and Learning Chinese Characters: The Advantages and Disadvantages of Japanese Students

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Abstract

The unique historical relationship between Chinese characters and Kanji suggests that there are a lot of similarities between them. In fact, although the Japanese also use Chinese characters to record their language, they understand and use Chinese characters in a way that is essentially different from that of the Chinese.

The fact that Chinese characters are used in both China and Japan brings a lot of unique advantages to the Japanese in terms of Chinese language learning. It is obvious it has “positive transfer” to Japanese students. Nonetheless, Chinese characters also come with “negative transfer” actors. Chinese and Japanese languages both use Chinese characters, but the completely different language systems and the evolvement of Chinese characters in China and Japan have caused many differences between them.

This article analyzes the similarities and the differences between Chinese characters and Kanji from the perspectives of shape, pronunciation and meaning, to prove Japanese students have both advantages and disadvantages in Chinese character learning.

In the last, some Chinese character learning tactics for Japanese students and some teaching tactics for teachers of Chinese are given. I believe that Japanese students may well increase the efficiency of Chinese learning by leveraging their advantages and minimizing the effects of their disadvantages on the basis of a clear understanding of the differences and similarities between Chinese characters and Kanji as well as their effects on Chinese learning.

Key terms: Chinese characters learning; Japanese students; advantages; disadvantages; teaching tactics

1. Background: Japanese Students Have Both Advantages and Disadvantages in Chinese Character Learning

Chinese character teaching is always a bottleneck in Chinese language teaching for foreigners, but it is believed by some that this problem is mainly with European and American students, as Chinese character learning is not a challenge for Japanese students who also use Chinese characters, known as Kanji in Japan. They believe that the only problem for Japanese students is that they are prone to confuse Kanji with Chinese characters. What exactly is the reality?

We have found a lot of Chinese character-relevant problems from the compositions written by Japanese students at different levels, their schoolwork and daily dictation. After analyzing such problems, we see that there are also many problems despite Japanese students’ advantages in Chinese character learning. There are actually similarities and differences between Chinese characters and Kanji. So, what are the similarities and differences? How do they affect Japanese students’ Chinese language learning? How can we use Chinese characters as a shared medium to enhance Chinese language teaching for the Japanese?

It is undoubtedly significant to answer these questions. We must identify the problems with Japanese students in terms of Chinese character learning. Only in this way can we identify their causes and the solutions to them.

2. Japanese Students’ Advantages in Chinese Character Learning

China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam are the main countries in the East Asian Confucian cultural circle, where Chinese characters were

shared for a long period of time. Among them, Japan still fundamentally maintains Chinese characters' position in its national characters. Chinese and Japanese belong to different language families, but Chinese characters as a writing medium has created close historical, linguistic and cultural ties between China and Japan. There are presumably few languages like Chinese and Japanese that are closely tied with each other because of Chinese characters as a shared medium despite the fact that they belong to different language families and however different their characters may be from each other. The unique historical relationship between Chinese characters and Kanji entails a lot of similarities between them.

We will analyze the similarities between Chinese characters and Kanji from the perspectives of shape, pronunciation and meaning.

2.1 Advantages in Character Shape Similarities

Some characters shared by China and Japan have completely identical shapes. There have been no stroke changes in these characters since they were included in the Japanese language system, despite some changes in terms of pronunciation and meaning.

Japan's new Joyo Kanji (literally "regular-use Chinese characters") lists 2,136 Chinese characters. Compare it with China's Table of Frequently Used Contemporary Chinese Characters and we see that the 2,500 frequently-used Chinese characters include 1,683 characters regularly used in Japan. These Chinese characters are still shared by China and Japan.

For example:人、工、士、元、古、石、手、耳、血、肝、
胸、笑、唱、教、熊、琴、建、健、原、源

- 中日共同使用的汉字,字形完全相同。(Some characters shared by China and Japan have completely identical shapes.)

In the above Chinese sentence, the 15 Chinese characters are almost all Japanese Kanji besides the “汉”, for which Japanese Kanji uses the traditional character “漢”.

More Chinese characters can be said to be shared by the two countries if traditional Chinese characters are also included. In other words, the Japanese who graduate from senior high schools have already mastered the shapes of the most frequently-used Chinese characters before formally learning the Chinese language.

Teaching tactic: Students should be informed of these shared Chinese characters during classroom teaching.

- This will reduce the difficulty of learning to a certain extent, encourage first-time Chinese language learners, lessen the anxiety of those who are afraid of difficulties in learning Chinese and increase their confidence in this area;
- This will let students learn about the historical ties between the two languages and become more familiar with the Chinese language;
- Identifying these Chinese characters will greatly increase the efficiency of Chinese learning and lessen students' efforts to memorize them;
- These Chinese characters will contribute to the accuracy of students' writing of Chinese characters.

2.2 Advantages in Pronunciation Similarities

The so-called “On reading” (On-yomi) in the Japanese language actually refers to the pronunciation that evolved from the Han and

Wu pronunciations in China. There have been changes in the pronunciations of most Chinese characters since the Japanese began using them a long time ago. Nonetheless, a small number of Kanji still have pronunciations similar or even nearly identical to those of their Chinese counterparts. As for most of these Chinese characters, the only phonetic difference lies in whether they are pronounced with tones or not.

To facilitate comparison, we use Pinyin to phoneticize Chinese characters and Roman letters to phoneticize Kanji in table 1.

Table 1

	马	夫	他	苦	始	利	因	衣	新	有
Japanese Pronunciation	ma	hu	ta	ku	si	li	in	i	shin	yu
Chinese Pronunciation	mǎ	fū	tā	kǔ	shǐ	lì	yīn	yī	xīn	yǒu

Teaching tactic: Students should be informed of these similarly pronounced Chinese characters during classroom teaching.

- Japanese students generally think that it is difficult to pronounce Chinese characters. These similarly pronounced Chinese characters will lessen the anxiety of students who are afraid of difficulties in pronouncing Chinese characters, reduce the difficulty of learning and increase their confidence of learning Chinese pronunciation;
- This will let students learn about the historical ties between the two languages and become more familiar with Chinese pronunciation;
- Identifying these Chinese characters will greatly increase the efficiency of Chinese learning and lessen students' efforts to memorize them;
- These Chinese characters will contribute to the accuracy of students' pronunciation of Chinese characters.

2.3 Advantages in Character Meaning Similarities

From the perspective of a single character's meaning, most of the characters shared by Chinese and Japanese, including many of the abovementioned characters, have consistent meanings without any obvious difference. As a result, there are numerous words with the same shapes and meanings. Monosyllables such as numbers, time, locations as well as the names of metals, natural objects, body parts and colors tend to be used in both countries.

There are also a lot of disyllabic words shared by the two countries, including those that Japan simply copied from China.

There are also many words that China learned from Japan when Chinese students went to Japan from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. They were invented using Chinese word-formation methods during the Meiji Restoration, a modernization process where Japan was learning from the West. Most of them are modern scientific and political words.

For example: 科学, 艺术, 学术, 美术, 哲学, 物理, 学校, 文学, 思想, 文化, 文明, 宗教, 社会, 经济, 外交, 政治, 民主, 法律, 交通, 国家.

Teaching tactic: Such words show the similarities of character meaning between the two languages in a most intuitive manner. It is advisable to identify these words for students, especially first-time learners, during classroom teaching.

2.4 Summary: Japanese Students' Chinese-character Advantages in Chinese Language Learning

2.4.1 The shared Chinese characters will familiarize the Japanese with the Chinese language and trigger their interest in learning it. Chinese characters constitute an important part of Japanese characters. Chinese characters and words represent at least 52% of the written Japanese language, according to the statistics of Professor Sun (2006). As a result, the Japanese will naturally become familiar with Chinese texts completely written in Chinese characters when they first read them, as if they had known them before. That compares with a sense of strangeness and alienation when they first learn English, French, German or other foreign languages. It is with this familiarity that a lot of Japanese become interested in learning the Chinese language, select it and become more confident of mastering it.

2.4.2 The shared Chinese characters make it easier for the Japanese to write and memorize Chinese characters.

Chinese characters are characterized by complex strokes, resulting in considerable difficulty in reading, writing and memorizing them. It is very difficult for European and American students to write and memorize Chinese characters, while it is much easier for the Japanese to do so. Although the number of frequently-used Chinese characters is several times that of frequently-used Kanji in Japan, the Japanese have already mastered the way of writing Chinese characters since they received training during their childhood. As a result, difficulties facing the Japanese are mainly in relation to pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, as it is relatively easy for them to write and memorize Chinese characters. This is an obvious advantage that the Japanese have in Chinese learning.

2.4.3 The shared Chinese characters facilitate the Japanese reading and comprehending the Chinese language.

Almost all the Kanji came from China and most of the characters and words have meanings similar to their Chinese counterparts. As a result, the Japanese can guess part of Chinese characters' meanings even if they do not know how to pronounce them. That compares with their reading characters and words of other foreign languages – they are unable to comprehend them if they have not learned them. This is very obvious during learning activities, as Japanese students read Chinese articles much faster than their European and American classmates. The Japanese who study other foreign languages never have such an advantage.

3. Japanese Students' Disadvantages in Chinese Character Learning

The fact that Chinese characters are used in both China and Japan brings a lot of unique advantages to the Japanese in terms of Chinese language learning. It is obvious that this fact usually has “positive transfer” on Chinese learning by the Japanese. Nonetheless, there are two sides to everything, as Chinese characters also come with factors unfavorable for Japanese students' mastering Chinese, or “negative transfer”.

The Chinese and Japanese languages both use Chinese characters, but the completely different language systems and the evolvement of Chinese characters in China and Japan have caused many differences between them.

3.1 Differences in Character Shapes

3.1.1 There are slight differences in strokes between some Chinese characters and Kanji.

These characters also came from China, but some small changes occurred when they were introduced to Japan. In addition, there are slight differences in simplification methods between the two countries and such differences are only about there being one stroke more or less or strokes longer or shorter. Such characters represent only about 5% of the frequently-used Kanji.

Table 2

Chinese	浅	真	角	臭	具	渴	别	决	步	周	效	包	宫	沿
Japanese	浅	真	角	臭	具	渴	别	决	步	週	効	包	宮	沿

In addition, numerous “components” (i.e. the Chinese Character Radical) have been simplified in China, while they are still in the traditional forms in Japan. Such differences are the most common ones.

Table 3

Chinese Radical	讠	饣	马	鱼	钅	车	门	贝	见	纟
Kanji Radical	言	食	馬	魚	金	車	門	貝	見	糸
Chinese Characters	说	饮	骑	鲸	镜	较	间	员	视	级
Kanji	説	飲	騎	鯨	鏡	較	間	員	視	級

3.1.2 Some Chinese characters have significant differences in strokes, including two scenarios:

Firstly, there are characters that are simplified in significantly different manners in China and Japan. Among the 233 pairs of simplified Chinese characters and Kanji, 67 pairs have the same strokes, 52 others have very similar ones and the remaining 114 pairs have quite different ones, or nearly half of the total, according to the statistics of Professor Sun (2006).

Table 4

Chinese	广	荣	围	县	营	图	释	价	实	应	乐	气	卖	传	俭
Japanese	広	栄	囲	県	営	図	釈	価	実	応	楽	気	売	伝	儉

Secondly, there are characters that were invented by the Japanese or that have been abandoned by the Chinese long ago. The Chinese do not know such frequently-used Kanji at all, as they are absent from the set of frequently-used Chinese characters.

Table 5

咲	雫	躰	働	辻	畑	榊	峠	畠
saku	Shizuku	Shitsuke	hataraku	tsuji	Hatake	Sakaki	Touge	hatake

3.2 Differences in Pronunciation

Phonetic changes are much greater than shape changes in Chinese characters as a consequence of their introduction into Japan.

Firstly, all the Chinese characters are monosyllabic, but most of them became polysyllabic after they were introduced into Japanese. Secondly, Chinese characters have four tones, while Kanji have no tone. Thirdly, and most intricately, there are not many Chinese characters with more than one pronunciation, as one Chinese character has two or three pronunciations at the most. In contrast, every Kanji character has at least two pronunciations – the On reading and Kun reading; many characters have three or four pronunciations; and some characters have even seven or eight pronunciations. Compare the pronunciations of Chinese and Kanji characters and we see the following two scenarios:

3.2.1 Some words have slightly different pronunciations

When it comes to On reading, most Kanji have pronunciations quite similar to those of the corresponding Chinese characters, in addition to a small number of characters with very similar pronunciations. Although they sound differently, their pronunciations are obviously affected by those of their Chinese counterparts. Their similarities with the Chinese characters' pronunciations allow students to correlate the pronunciations in the two languages.

Table 6

	区	球	字	夜	深	年	春	定	草	秋
Japanese Pronunciation	ku	kiu	ji	Ya	shin	Nan	Shun	Tei	so	shu
Chinese Pronunciation	qū	qiú	zì	Yè	shēn	Nián	Chūn	Dìng	cǎo	qiū

3.2.2 Some words are pronounced very differently

This mainly refers to the Kun reading of Kanji. Unique to Japanese, it has nothing to do with the original pronunciations of the corresponding Chinese characters.

Table 7

	本	国	中	手	人	口	绿	大分
Japanese Pronunciation	moto	kuni	naka	te	hito	Kuchi	midori	Oita
Chinese Pronunciation	běn	guó	zhōng	shǒu	rén	Kǒu	Lǜ	dàfēn

3.3 Differences in Meaning

From the perspective of a single character's meaning, the vast majority of Chinese and Kanji characters are consistent with each other without any obvious difference. This is true with many of the abovementioned characters. The situation becomes much more complex, however, once they are combined into compound words. Compare Chinese and Japanese compound words consisting of identical or similar characters and we can see that there are roughly two scenarios – different shapes with the same meaning and the opposite:

3.3.1 Same shape, different meanings

There are Chinese and Japanese words that consist of Chinese characters, that have the same Chinese morphemes but that have different meanings. The following Japanese words, for example, also exist in Chinese, but they have totally different meanings. Such words are prone to cause ambiguity or even jokes.

Table 8

	丈夫	下流	勉強	切手	愛人	手紙	汽車
Japanese meaning	durable	downstream	study	stamp	Mistress	Letter	train
Chinese meaning	husband	dirty	reluctantly	cut hand	Wife	toilet paper	car

Teaching tactic: These words may be separately explained during classroom teaching.

- Use the interest brought by such differences between Chinese characters and Japanese Kanji to attract students;
- Trigger their interest in continually paying attention to and finding out such interesting differences, thereby opening their eyes during the comparative Japanese and Chinese studies;
- Draw sufficient attention to such differences during the later use of the Chinese language, thereby minimizing the negative effects of Japanese words;
- Make timely corrections to students' writing mistakes caused by the use of Japanese words.

3.3.2 Different shapes, same meaning

Different shapes, same meaning is also a common scenario. In other words, although some Chinese and Japanese compound words use different Chinese morphemes, they have identical or similar meanings, according to literal parsing.

Table 9

Japanese	洋服	辞書	宿題	割引	値段	家族	部屋	水道	庭
Chinese	西服	词典	作业	打折	价格	家人	房间	水管	院子
	Suit	dictionary	homework	discount	price	families	room	water pipes	courtyard

Teaching tactic: the Chinese and Japanese languages use the same Chinese word-formation methods, but they select different morphemes (or Chinese characters). From the perspective of the Chinese language, some Chinese and Japanese words have identical or similar meanings. Such words may be separately explained during classroom teaching.

- Such explanations are helpful for studying Chinese words with similar meanings. Some of these words may also constitute coordinate compound words in the Chinese language;
- Draw students' attention to the differences in expressing the same thing between the two languages, thereby minimizing errors caused by the negative effects of the mother language;
- Make timely corrections to errors caused by students confusing Japanese words with Chinese ones.

3.4 Summary: Obstacles Caused by Chinese Characters to Chinese Learning by the Japanese

3.4.1 The fact that Chinese characters are used in both Chinese and Japanese makes Japanese students pay insufficient attention to the difficulty of learning Chinese.

After seeing that Chinese characters are used in the two languages and that a lot of Chinese words also exist in Japanese, many Japanese have a sense of familiarity and often think that Chinese is different from any other foreign language as it is not a "pure foreign language" or is only a "half foreign language", which is easier to learn and master. Consequently, they do not make as great an effort to study Chinese as they do to other foreign languages. Instead, they tend to overlook the foundation and be anxious to finish the learning process, as is exemplified by their guessing the meaning of a character or word at the sight of it with no further efforts to understand its exact meaning.

Consequently, it seems that Japanese students learn Chinese relatively easily at the beginning, but they will find it increasingly difficult to learn it. That is because Chinese and Japanese belong to two different language families with very different grammar and pronunciation, despite a lot of Chinese characters being shared by them. Some students will lose confidence in mastering the Chinese language when they are faced with increasing difficulties, since they have no clear knowledge of its nature and are not mentally ready for the difficulty of mastering it. As a result, the learning process is anticlimactic, just like how people describe the process where the Chinese learn Japanese: "they start it with a smile and end it with a cry."

3.4.2 The shared Chinese characters make Japanese students pay insufficient attention to the pronunciations of Chinese characters, leading to an imbalance between listening comprehension/speaking and reading comprehension.

There are significant differences in phonology between Chinese and Japanese, as the tones and some phonemes of the Chinese language do not exist in Japanese at all, making it very difficult for the Japanese to master the Chinese pronunciation. Since there are similarities in meaning between Chinese characters and Kanji, however, they can still understand the meanings of Chinese articles as long as they know the word meanings and the grammar, even though they have not mastered the Chinese pronunciation. It is for that reason that many Japanese do not pay sufficient attention to the Chinese pronunciation and are unwilling to make great efforts in this area, as some of them even skip the pronunciation learning stage and directly learn Chinese reading. This has led to a common phenomenon among the Japanese in terms of Chinese learning, that is, good reading ability and fast comprehension along with poor pronunciation, listening comprehension and speaking ability. This is a longstanding

phenomenon in Japan and, for many Japanese, remains an obstacle to fully mastering the Chinese language.

3.4.3. The shared Chinese characters make the Japanese prone to the “negative transfer” of the mother language when they are learning Chinese.

Since anybody’s foreign language-learning process will be interfered with by his/her mother language, the key issue is how to minimize such interference. And since there are many similarities in shape, pronunciation and meaning between Chinese and Japanese characters and words, it is unavoidable that, when they read Chinese information, the Japanese will think of identical or similar meanings and pronunciations in the mother language under the action of “conditioned reflex”. And it is such meanings and pronunciations that prevent them from correctly comprehending and speaking Chinese.

Consider two examples that we are familiar with. The noun “娘” exists in both Chinese and Japanese, but it means “mother” in Chinese and “girl” in Japanese, and it is pronounced “niáng” in Chinese and “musume” in Japanese, exemplifying the significant differences between the two languages. Nonetheless, the Japanese remain prone to interference. The other example is the word “汽车”(qì chē). It has the same shape and similar pronunciations in both Chinese and Japanese, but it means “automobile” in Chinese and “train” in Japanese. The Japanese are faced with stronger interference from the mother language when they see this Chinese word. In contrast, the European and the American are in a much better situation since they are like blank paper before they learn Chinese, despite certain interference from their mother languages.

4. Chinese Character Learning Tactics or Japanese Students

I believe that Japanese students may well increase the efficiency of Chinese learning by leveraging their advantages and minimizing the effects of their disadvantages on the basis of a clear understanding of the differences and similarities between Chinese characters and Kanji as well as their effects on Chinese learning. Below are four recommendations for their reference:

4.1 Change Their Mind to Eliminate the Interference

When they learn Chinese, the Japanese should first be presented with the overview of the Chinese language so as to realize that Chinese and Japanese belong to totally different language families with very different grammar and pronunciations, despite the fact that they both use Chinese characters and that there are a lot of similar characters and words. For their part, therefore, Chinese is like any other foreign language and it is not so easy for them to master this language. They must be perseverant and have a clear understanding of the amount of time needed to learn Chinese and its difficulty. While learning Chinese, they should pay extra attention to the interference from the mother language and endeavor to avoid confusing Kanji with Chinese characters.

4.2 Pay Sufficient Attention to Pronunciation

Learning any foreign language must start from pronunciation and a solid pronunciation basis is critical. “Reading by eyes” (Zhu, 2005) has a strong influence across Japan, where focusing on reading with insufficient attention to pronunciation is preventing the Japanese from comprehensively and deeply mastering Chinese. So they must rid themselves of this habit. If they are unwilling to lay a solid pronunciation basis, the Japanese can never go beyond the abovementioned restrictions and the imbalance between

Chinese reading comprehension and listening comprehension/speaking abilities.

4.3 Compare and Distinguish

To go beyond those restrictions and eliminate the interference, the Japanese should pay extra attention to comparing the Chinese and Japanese languages, especially their differences in character shapes, pronunciations and meanings. Although there are similarities in shape, pronunciation and meaning between Chinese characters and Kanji, it is not difficult to distinguish them if we compare them carefully. In this respect, the Japanese should put extra emphasis on consulting dictionaries. They should never guess the meanings of Chinese characters or words at the sight of them without making further efforts to understand their real meanings. They should carefully identify the differences between Chinese characters and Kanji in the process of learning Chinese. Only in this way can the Japanese leverage their advantages and minimize the adverse effects of their disadvantages, thereby greatly reducing the negative effects of Kanji on their learning of Chinese.

The teaching of Chinese in Japan, in particular, should focus on the similarities and differences between the Chinese and Japanese languages by making specific comparison during classroom teaching, thereby enabling students to gain a clear understanding of such similarities and differences.

4.4 Leverage Advantages for a Better Result

As is mentioned above, Chinese characters bring advantages to the Japanese when it comes to learning of Chinese. But it is important for the Japanese to leverage the positive effects of such advantages on their own initiative. As an example, there are a lot of characters and words with identical or similar shapes and meanings in the Chinese and Japanese languages. So it is easier to identify their similarities and differences and to facilitate memorization by sorting and comparing frequently-used Chinese and Japanese words by identical, similar or different meaning or other standards. As another example, a lot of Chinese and Kanji characters and words have similar or even identical strokes as well as similar pronunciations. Grouping them by certain categorization methods will also facilitate Japanese students' learning Chinese pronunciations through comparison.

5. Chinese Character Teaching Tactics for Teachers of Chinese

5.1 Teachers of Chinese for foreigners should also change their mind by paying sufficient attention to Chinese character teaching for Japanese students

It is believed by some teachers that the Japanese have unique resources in Chinese learning and that Japanese students can write Chinese characters correctly even if they are not taught how to write them. But this is not true according to the abovementioned examples. Japanese students do have certain advantages in learning of Chinese compared with European and American ones, but such advantages only lie in their familiarity with the shapes of Chinese characters as opposed to European and American students who treat Chinese characters as pictures.

They may also speculate about the meanings of the Chinese characters they see on the basis of corresponding Kanji characters, but there is no essential difference in the extent of understanding between them and European and American students when it comes to the structures and formation principles of Chinese characters, especially the relationships between Chinese characters and

the meanings they express.

We should know that there are essential differences in character writing between the Chinese and Japanese languages. Never think that Japanese students understand Chinese characters, as well as the relationships between their shapes and meanings, in exactly the same way as do the Chinese because they can write Chinese characters. That is not the reality, as the Japanese look at Chinese characters in a way different from the Chinese. They think that Chinese characters are nothing but writing symbols and that there is no essential difference between them and Kana (syllabic Japanese scripts). The shapes of most Kanji characters are still relevant to the meanings they express, but they are essentially used as phonetic writing in Japan, which is essentially different from the situation in China where Chinese characters are written to express both their pronunciations and their meanings. This fact must be realized.

5.2 Chinese character teaching should emphasize the correlations between characters and words and should be based on monosyllabic morphemes.

Given the characteristics of Chinese characters, a lot of Chinese language researchers (Du, 1994; LV, 1997; Sun, 2006) put forward the proposition mentioned in 5.2. This proposition allows for students' knowledge of Chinese characters while facilitating their understanding of the organic connections between Chinese characters and words.

This teaching method also suits Japanese students, because they also lack a rational knowledge of the relationship between Chinese characters and the Chinese language. A morpheme-based teaching method that combines characters with words is a powerful solution to this problem.

5.3 Chinese character teaching for the Japanese should start from component teaching.

I believe that Chinese character teaching for Japanese students may have a starting point higher than stroke teaching since they can write Chinese characters and know their structures. Instead, we should focus on the teaching of Chinese Character radicals, especially the principles in terms of component combination. That is very different from the teaching method for European and American students. When it comes to Chinese character teaching, therefore, we should teach students with country-specific methods.

5.4 Pinyin learning and pronunciation exercises should run through the entire process of Chinese learning.

Some schools provide only one- or two-week Pinyin teaching to first-time learners and seldom involve it in subsequent teaching activities. That is a totally wrong practice. For Japanese students, in particular, we should strengthen their pronunciation by taking pronunciation teaching as one of the major daily tasks in classroom teaching.

6. To sum up

The mistakes that Japanese students make in recognizing and writing Chinese characters are a reminder that Chinese character teaching is a critical matter. This is true for not only European and American students but also foreign students from any cultural background. Although the Japanese also use Chinese characters to record their language, they understand and use Chinese characters in a way that is essentially different from that of the Chinese.

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