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## THE FACTOR STRUCTURES OF JAPANESE KANJI ABILITIES, AND AGE AND COHORT EFFECTS ON THEM

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### OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study is to examine age and cohort effects on the factor structures of kanji abilities in the Japanese general population.

### METHODS

We investigated a large database of a popular kanji exam, the Japan Kanji Aptitude Test (Kanken), which a large number of Japanese take voluntarily or semi-voluntarily. From the entire dataset, this study focused on the level 2 data (mastery of kanji in everyday life usage) of 28,783 people aged 8-91 years in 2016, and 54,965 aged 9-106 in 2006. The Kanken was composed of ten subtests including reading and writing abilities of various facets. This study was approved by the Ethics Committee at Kyoto University.

### RESULTS / DISCUSSION

Exploratory factor analyses identified two factors labeled Semantic Comprehension and Correct Writing. Correlations between these two abilities increased from high school ( $r = 0.659$ ) to university age ( $r = 0.684$ ), as well as university age to early adulthood ( $r = 0.732$ ) in 2006. In the 2016 data, similar increase of the correlations was also observed from high school ( $r = 0.665$ ) to university age ( $r = 0.692$ ). However, in 2016, the correlation did not differ between university age and early adulthood ( $r = 0.710$ ). Additionally, though Correct Writing ability had reached a peak in early adulthood in 2006, further increase of the ability was observed from early to middle adulthood in 2016 ( $p < .01$ ).

### CONCLUSION

Our results suggest the possibility that the rapid spread of information devices in recent decades has been affecting the age-dependent acquisition of kanji abilities in Japanese.

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