

## Should English-based Japanese Loanwords be utilized for vocabulary teaching?

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### Introduction

The linguistic differences between a learner's first language (L1) and second language (L2) have an enormous affect on the rate at which the learner develops linguistic proficiency. It is no surprise that an L2 learner of English whose L1 is French (which is considered to have small linguistic distance from English) will have relatively less difficulty learning the language than a learner whose L1 is Chinese (which, on the contrary, is considered to have a very large linguistic distance from English). Although, scientifically quantifying the linguistic distances between any two given languages may be ultimately impossible because of the numerous factors that aggregate the concept of linguistic distance (see Chiswick & Miller, 2004), efforts have been made at this attempt.

Hart Gonzalez & Lindemann (1993) conducted a study to quantify the relative distance of 43 languages to English in terms of language scores. They found that Afrikaans, Rumanian, Norwegian, and Swedish had the shortest linguistic distance from English, followed by Dutch, Malay, Swahili, and so on. The languages with the greatest distance were Japanese, Korean, and Cantonese. I will base my assumptions about linguistic distance on the scores obtained in this study.

If we take it for granted that L2 learners of English whose mother tongues are Afrikaans, French, or Swedish (languages with small linguistic distance), will, in general, be able to learn faster than those learners of English whose mother tongues are Cantonese, Korean, or Japanese (large linguistic distance) because of the languages' relative linguistic distance from English, we can assume that the rare instances when linguistic similarities occur between these distant languages may be useful to highlight in some way.

As noted before, Japanese is one of the languages that are considered to have the greatest linguistic distance from English. Their syntactical nature is different: English is SVO, and Japanese is SOV; English prohibits the dropping of subject, but Japanese doesn't; English uses preposition, but Japanese uses postposition; etc. Their phonology are different: English has 23 consonant sounds and 14 vowel sounds (the two rhotacized vowels are included), whereas Japanese has 20 consonant sounds and 5 vowel sounds; English is syllable-timed, and Japanese is mora-timed; English allows consonant clusters, whereas Japanese doesn't, etc. Their orthography is different: English uses an alphabet (phonogram), and Japanese uses *kanji* (logogram), and *kana* (two distinct types of phonogram). As we can see, the fundamental properties of these two languages are extremely different, making their linguistic distance very great. However, there is one aspect of Japanese that has been shortening the linguistic distance between English and itself: Japanese has been importing and absorbing English words as loanwords at a very rapid pace ever since the end of WW2. As a matter of fact, one of the two sets of Japanese phonograms, called *katakana*, is reserved primarily for the use of expressing foreign ideas.

The idea of using English-based Japanese loanwords as a means of vocabulary instruction is often times negatively viewed by researchers, especially in Japan (i.e. Shepard, 1996; Rollins, 1999; Kobayashi, 1992). Shepard's (1996) paper, 'Loanwords - A Pitfall for All Students' explains English loanwords as being a 'serious problem' for students learning English, as Rollins (1999) also claims that loanwords undermine and impede language learning.

When we look at the source of data that many of the naysayers base their theories on, we find that many of them are based on examining errors; however, errors are only a fragment of the whole picture. Interference can cause errors, but it can also lead to positive transfer. In order to make a decision about whether or not loanwords are useful or harmful, we must examine both the degree of interference and positive transfer.

“...Mother-tongue influence is responsible not only for errors, but also for much of what is correct in an interlanguage. If we did not keep making cross-linguistic correspondences, we might never manage to learn new languages at all.” (Swan, 1997, p.167)

While it is evident from hearing the foreign accents of our learners that interference is definitely taking place at least at the phonological level, loanwords have more potential for positive transfers than interference. For this paper, I propose that, despite the recognizable

interference that loanwords create, the amount of positive transfer outweighs it; hence, explicit attention to loanwords is a beneficial approach to teaching vocabulary. This paper will begin with a general overview of English-based loanwords and statistics relevant to language teaching; the next section will briefly go over current research findings in this area, and the last sections will be a detailed analysis of English-based Japanese loanwords and a conclusion. The last section will give some examples of potential pitfalls that loanwords may create. By knowing the pitfalls that loanwords may create, we can better understand how we can approach loanwords in terms of pedagogy.

## **Analysis of English-based Japanese Loanwords**

### ***The varieties of words in Japanese***

The importation of loanwords, or *gairaigo* (which literally means 'words that come from outside'), in general, is not a new trend for Japanese. Japan has been borrowing words from outside sources throughout history. The vast majority of Japanese lexical items are comprised of words from three different languages: *wago*, which are words of Japanese origin; *kango*, which are of Chinese origin; and *gairaigo*, which come from the West. All *kango* and most of the *wago* are written using *kanji* (Chinese orthography, which was adopted by the Japanese), some content words and many functional morphemes (i.e. inflections and particles) are written in *hiragana*, and almost all western loanwords are written in *katakana*. Because of these distinctions, it is not uncommon to see texts that use all three sets of orthography within a single sentence.

### ***Number of English-based loanwords in Japanese***

Although it is virtually impossible to get an accurate account of how many English-based loanwords there are in Japanese, the number of entries in a *gairaigo* dictionary may give us a rough estimate. According to Daulton (2008), dictionaries specializing in *gairaigo* typically contain 20,000 to 30,000 loanwords (types) and some can come to exceed 50,000 entries. Macgregor (2003) also points out that one dictionary, published in 2000, contained 52,500 loanwords (45,000 of which were written in *katakana*, and 7,500 of which were written using the original Roman alphabet); the first edition of this dictionary, which was published in 1972, only contained 20,000. This fact illustrates the extremely high pace at which new loanwords are being imported into Japan: within thirty years, the number of loanwords in Japanese has increased by more than 30,000.

That the number of English-based loanwords in Japan is very high is a matter of fact;

however, we must also keep in mind that the majority of these loanwords are not adopted by the general public. This is because a large number of these English-based loanwords are technical terms that are being used in specialized areas of study, i.e. technology, science, medicine, etc. On top of that, Loveday (1996, p.78) explains that the two fates of loanwords are “... either integration and acceptance into the community code or rejection and oblivion.” This depicts the fact that, although, the number of loanwords being imported into Japanese is very high, many of them have an ephemeral nature. For this reason, the actual number of loanwords known by an average Japanese is not nearly as large as one may expect from the aforementioned statistics.

### ***English-based loanwords and high-frequency English words list***

Perhaps, as we examine the number and nature of Japanese English-based loanwords from a vocabulary-teaching point of view, a more important question arises. The question is, how many of the Japanese English-based loanwords correspond to words in the high-frequency English vocabulary list? If we were to assess the effectiveness, or the lack thereof, of using loanwords as a teaching strategy, this information becomes crucial. According to Daulton (2008), about half of the words from the British National Corpus (BNC) 3000 (Nation, 2004) were covered by the Japanese English-based loanwords. As the sources for identifying the correlation, Daulton used two *gairaigo* dictionaries alongside a frequency list of loanwords collected from the 2001 issues of the *Mainichi* newspaper and help from a native informant to fill in the gaps. Because of the high turnover rates of English-based loanwords in Japanese, there needed to be a native informant who had knowledge of trends in the use of Japanese *gairaigo* to compensate for the entries that had not been made in the dictionaries yet. We must keep in mind, however, that a single informant may not suffice to qualify as a reliable source of data because of the tendency for variedness concerning the knowledge of these loanwords amongst different individuals.

After he obtained the figure mentioned above, Daulton attempted to identify the familiarity of these English-based loanwords amongst Japanese college-aged students because it seemed to be that the Japanese misunderstood even many of the commonly used loanwords. A self-appraisal test was conducted using 140 Japanese university students to assess the familiarity of these loanwords. Through this test, 573 of the loanwords were eliminated because of the poor comprehension of these words by the Japanese students. Daulton went on to use the remaining words in the loanwords list to see the percentage of correspondence with the high-frequency words list. The results showed that 548 word families from the first 1,000 high-frequency words corresponded to the loanwords left from

the previous study. This was a 54.8% correspondence. From the set of the second 1,000 words in the high-frequency list, 492 word families had correspondence with the loanwords: a 49.2% correspondence. Finally, the third 1,000 high-frequency words contained 316 word families that corresponded to loanwords: a 31.6% correspondence. The overall correspondence of loanwords to the BNC 3,000 was 45.2%, or 1,356 word families.

### ***English-based loanwords and the Academic Words List***

Correspondence of commonly used, English-based loanwords and the AWL was also investigated alongside the high-frequency words list in a similar manner. Of the 570 word families categorized in this list, a total of 27% of the word families were found to have correspondence with the loanwords. It is also interesting to note that the percentage of correspondence saw a natural decline from 38% correspondence of sublist 1 to 7% correspondence of sublist 10. This tendency, along with the data acquired for the high-frequency words list, illustrates that the words of higher usage in English were more likely to be imported as loanwords in Japanese. All in all, the correlation between loanwords and high-frequency words + academic words were relatively high. Before jumping into research findings in this area, I'd like to devote the next section to linking loanwords with concepts of cognates. By doing so, classifications of English-based Japanese loanwords are possible to provide a more complete assessment of the nature of loanwords.

### **Loanwords as cognates**

The way linguists define and classify cognates may vary from person to person. Some say that in order for two words to be cognates, they must have derived from the same source and have kept their core meaning and form; whereas, some may extend their definition to encompass loanwords and words with semantic meanings that have diverged from each other. For linguists, the distinctions may be of controversy and topic of hot debate; however, from a pedagogical perspective, the term used for classification has little relevance in this case. Whether loanwords are technically cognates or not, in the mind of the learners, they have the same qualities as that of cognates: the original English forms and the loanword forms usually sound alike and/or mean alike. Carroll expresses this in simple terms by saying, "Words do not wear their historical origins on their sleeves" (Carroll, 1992, p.102). Hence, I'd like to continue to scrutinize the nature of loanwords from a cognate perspective.

The effect of L1 on the acquisition of L2 is an area in which various researchers have studied. Terms such as *interlanguage* and *lingua franca* are concepts that derive from the individual differences in the degree and areas of transfers that occur within the minds of the

learners. Concerning the phenomenon of transfer, Hammer & Giauque comments, “Learners do not need to build a conceptual framework totally separate from their first language; rather they can add to and integrate their first language system with the second language” (Hammer & Giauque, 1989, p.37). Cognates can come in several forms, or moreover, several types of relationships with its original form. Several attempts have been made at systematizing the classifications of cognates; for this paper, I use Uchida’s (2001, p.47) model for cognate relationships. Each type of relationship can be the cause of different types of transfers. The six basic types of (Japanese) cognates are *true cognates*, *convergent cognates*, *divergent cognates*, *distant false friends*, *close false friends*, and *Japanised English*.

### ***True cognates***

*True cognates* are cognates that share the exact same meaning (i.e. “table” and “*teeburu*”). There are no issues of interference with this type of cognate.

### ***Convergent cognates***

When there are more than one L1 words to express the concept of a single word in the L2, they are considered to be *convergent cognates*. An example of this is the word “*raisu*”, or “rice”. In English, “rice” refers to all states of rice as opposed to Japanese having the word “*raisu*” to describe cooked rice, and the word “*kome*” for the state before it is cooked. The main interference for this type of cognates happens with listening and reading: learners may assume that the meaning is restricted to one of the words in Japanese, where, in fact, it holds the meaning of two or more words.

### ***Divergent cognates***

*Divergent cognates* have the opposite characteristic as convergent cognates: One L1 word corresponds to more than one L2 words. “*Aisu*”, or “ice” is an example of this type of cognate. In English, “ice” refers to frozen water but not ice cream; however, the Japanese “*aisu*” refers to both. Errors with divergent cognates are likely to manifest during speaking or writing for the precise reason that the learner assumes that the word refers to both meanings and uses it to denote both meanings.

### ***Distant false friends***

When a loanword takes on a totally unrelated meaning, it is called a *distant false friend*. An example of this is the commonly used loanword “*tenshon*”, coming from “tension”. The Japanese “*tenshon*” is used to describe the level of enthusiasm or mood of a person and does

not carry the English sense of the word.

### ***Close false friends***

*Close false friends* are those cognates that have an overlapping semantic core but neither of the meanings fully covers the other. “*Baiburu*”, from the English “Bible”, in Japanese, is used to describe a book (or any kind of medium) that contains top-notch, useful information, but not the Bible itself. Granger considers this type of cognate as one of the worst, saying, “...One of the most enduring types of interference, giving rise to errors even in the most advanced learning stages” (Granger, 1993, p.49).

### ***Japanised English***

*Japanised English* are words that are created by the Japanese; thus, they have no English counterpart. Words such as “*sarariiman*”, or “*hotchikisu*”, “businessmen” and “stapler”, respectively, are creations by the Japanese and they do not even exist in English. Interference will likely occur in this area, but the obviousness of the error promotes correction, leading to heightened awareness amongst learners towards these cognates.

As we can see, cognates can come in many forms, and in the case of Japanese, there are six forms that they can take: true cognates, convergent cognates, divergent cognates, distant false friends, close false friends, and Japanised English. Now that the different types of cognates have been identified, I will examine what insights research has given us concerning English-based Japanese loanwords in the next section.

## **Research Findings on English-based Japanese loanwords**

In an earlier section, we saw that more than 50% of the 2000 most frequently used English words existed as commonly known English-based Japanese loanwords, and 27% for the AWL. Things seemed a little bit brighter back then. Despite the great overlap, there were many pitfalls. At this point, I'd like to turn to what research findings have to say about this matter.

### ***Dictation and spelling***

Hashimoto's (1992) study examined the differences in word recognition between loanwords and non-loan English words. She conducted a dictation test to find out whether the learners could aurally identify and spell more loanwords correctly than non-loan words, or vice versa. Her findings revealed that the loanwords were more easily recognized and more often spelt correctly than non-loan words. Counterintuitively, spelling performances on words

containing /l/ and /r/ were especially better with loanwords as well. We would have suspected that the *katakana* and its pronunciation would have hindered the learners' ability to distinguish. Hashimoto's (1993) and Daulton's (1998) study had similar outcomes concerning spelling: Learners performed better in spelling loanwords than non-loan English words.

### ***Listening***

Daulton claims, "As cross-linguistic similarity facilitates automatization, cognates are particularly useful for the oral skills of listening and speaking, where quick and efficient retrieval is needed" (Daulton, 2008, p.67). Brown and Williams (1985) conducted a test with second-year English majors to test the difference in listening comprehension with loanwords and non-loan words. The learners in this study listened to three tapes: tape A with no loanwords; tape B with loanwords but no additional instruction; and tape C with loanwords and instructions that revealed that the items were loanwords. For each tape, learners had to choose the correct Japanese translation of all the words on a monitor. The results revealed that learners comprehended better, both tapes B and C with loanwords than tape A with no loanwords. On top of that, surprisingly, learners performed best with Tape B when the fact that the words in the tape were loanwords was not revealed.

### ***Recognition and recall***

Daulton's (1998), study mentioned in the dictation and spelling section not only agreed with the other studies that showed positive correlation between loanwords and spelling accuracy, but it revealed a striking result in testing recognition and recall. A cloze test was conducted using students of three different age groups: junior high school students, high school students and university students. The results showed that all age groups recognized and recalled loanwords better than non-loan words in general; furthermore, as the age group became older, the difference in performance between loanwords and non-loan words became bigger. For example, junior high school students recalled and spelt loanwords correctly 11.1% of the time more than non-loan words; on the contrary, university students recognized and spelt loanwords correctly 13 times more often than non-loanwords. This result clearly indicates that loanwords can be recognized and recalled better than non-loan words at least until a certain point of linguistic development.

### ***Semantic quality of loanwords corresponding to BNC 3000***

We have previously established that 1,365 word families (45.4%) in the BNC 3000



corresponded with English-based Japanese loanwords. Daulton (2008) further researched the quality of these loanwords: He wanted to quantify the quality of the meanings of loanwords in this set by evaluating 68 samples using a point system. The points were calculated by first classifying them into types of cognates. At this point, true cognates, which have no interference effect, received three points, two points for divergent cognates, one point for convergent cognates, and zero point for distant/close false friends and Japanised English, which have strong interference effects.

The second step was to assign points by looking at where the loanword definition appears in a dictionary entry. If the loanword's corresponding definition appeared as the first entry in the dictionary, the word received three points. The number of points decreased by one until it reached zero points at the fourth entry. Any entries beyond that were considered a zero. Lastly, a similar 3-point system was employed to assign points regarding shortening. The more the loanwords were shortened from its original English forms, the fewer points they received. In this way, the point value for the groups of loanwords in the first 3,000 most frequently used English-based Japanese loanwords were determined. As a result, the research found that the semantic correlation between the cognates at the first 1000 word level was relatively high with a score of 4.3 (using a scale between 1 to 6), 5.1 for the second 1,000, and 5.7 for the third thousand.

So far, I have briefly explained some of the research findings we have obtained in the area of English-based Japanese loanwords and their relationship to learning English. There is more research that has been done in this area that has revealed similarly positive results. I am also sure that more and more research findings will be revealed in the near future. Nonetheless, the findings mentioned in this paper may suffice to get people to rethink about the idea of using loanwords as a part of the vocabulary-teaching curriculum.

However, we must further look into the nature of English-based Japanese loanwords to raise our awareness of more specific problems that lie within loanwords. Better understanding of the problems will not only raise our (the teacher's) awareness, but we can use our understanding to help raise our learner's awareness.

## **The transformations of English-based Japanese Loanwords**

### ***Phonological transformation***

As I have mentioned before, the phonological systems used for Japanese and English are quite different. Examples of some of the most notable differences between the two are listed below:

1. Japanese consonants are always linked with a vowel (except for /n/ (ん)).
2. Japanese makes no distinction between the phonemes /b/ and /v/, /r/ and /l/ (as a matter of fact, Japanese uses neither /r/ nor /l/; they use /r/) , /s/ and /θ/, /f/ and /h/, and /z/ and /ð/.
3. Japanese only has five vowel sounds as opposed to the 14 in English.
4. English is stress-timed and Japanese is mora-timed.

Because of these differences, when an English-based loanword is imported into Japanese, the pronunciation can become obscured. For example, a word such as “strike” is pronounced as “*sutoraiku*”. In this example, we see that an extra vowel is added on after the first and second sounds of the consonant cluster (this is called epenthesis) and the ending /k/. Also, the fact that Japanese is mora-timed, words like these also take considerably longer to pronounce in Japanese than in English; thus, the stress is also obscured. This example illustrates the phonological differences between the original form in English with its loanword counterpart in Japanese concerning #s 1 and 4 from the list above.

The lack of distinctions between certain consonants as mentioned in #2 above can be heard between such words like “best” & “vest” (both pronounced as “*besuto*”), “right” & “light” (both pronounced as “*raito*”), “sink” & “think” (both pronounced as “*shinku*”), “hood” & “food” (both pronounced as “*huudo*”) and “clothe” & “close” (both pronounced as “*kuroozu*”). With vowels, we can see the limitation of the Japanese phonological system in words such as “bowl” & “ball” (both pronounced as “*booru*”) and “hut” and “hat” (both pronounced as “*hatto*”). In most cases, if the loanwords were used in English conversation, the context will tell us which words are being used; however, when words like the ones above were to be pronounced in isolation, both distinction and intelligibility may be compromised.

The *katakana* writing system also plays a role in the word to sound association of loanwords in the minds of the Japanese. Most loanwords adopted by the Japanese were not familiar words to them prior to the borrowing. Quackenbush notes, “...Words like these do not ‘filter into’ Japanese – they are created deliberately and sprung on an unsuspecting public” (Quackenbush, 1974, p.66). This means that for the majority of the general public, the *katakana* form written in newspapers or news headlines are the first time to encounter these words (see also Daulton, 2004). Furthermore, in some cases, it will seem as though it is the persons’ first encounter even though they have used the word in English before. Due to the phonological transformation and that which is also brought on by the transcription into *katakana*, a syllable-based orthography, they do not realize the English form of the words.

Concerning intelligibility, Daulton claims, “It follows that for native speakers of English, English-based loanwords are indecipherable when written and typically incomprehensible when spoken” (Daulton, 2008, p.16). On this issue, Reischauer, a former Ambassador to Japan, commented, “It is pathetic to see the frustration of Japanese in finding that English speakers cannot recognize, much less understand, many of the English words they use” (cited in Shibatani, 1990, p.150).

As can be seen from above, phonological changes can create quite a serious problem for the learning and use of these loanwords. A phonological habit that is culturally ingrained in such a way can be very difficult to overcome for many Japanese learners.

Thus, I have given a rough sketch of some of the phonological transformations that occur within English-based loanwords in Japanese. Some of the changes are quite subtle, and others are more strikingly large. The next type of transformation that I’d like to talk about is the grammatical transformation of English-based loanwords.

### ***Grammatical transformation***

In most cases, the English-based loanwords imported into Japanese come in noun form or the base form of a word with no inflectional affixation. The morphological transformation of these loanwords is realized through the use of Japanese inflectional morphemes such as “-*suru*”, “-*na*”, or “-*ni*”. There are a notable number of adjectives and words of other parts of speech (although very few) that come into Japanese, but the majority of the loanwords are in noun form. As a result, Japanese use phrases such as, “*riidingu suru*” (to do reading), “*hotto na*...” (hot is treated as a noun, and the inflection “-*na*” transforms it into an adjective), and “*paafekuto ni*...” (perfect is treated as a noun, and the inflection “*ni*” transforms it into an adverb). For this reason, having multiple entries of derivations within a word family is not too common.

Several years ago, I saw a *manzai* (Japanese comedy routine, usually done as a group of two or more members) contest broadcast on Japanese TV. One of the groups on that show focused on the use of the Japanese inflectional morpheme “-(*su*)*ru*” for their “bit”. They captured the fact that many English-based loanwords are transformed into verbs by adding “-*suru*”, and in many cases, words can be transformed into a verb by just changing the last vowel of the word to “-*u*”. Furthermore, if a loanword ends with a “-*ru*” to begin with (for example, “*toraburu*” as in “trouble”), it can be transformed into a verb by shifting the stress to the second to last syllable.

The comedians used this nature of the Japanese language to their advantage to create their bit. In this routine, they used the word, “sandle”, “*sandaru*”, to create a verb that

means “to quickly walk to the convenient store late at night wearing sandals”, and the word “Francisco Xavier”, “*Furanshisuko Zabieru*”, to mean “to go bald”. Concerning this type of phenomenon, Daulton says, “Rarely loanwords are innovatively inflected in ways usually reserved for native words. This unorthodox suffixation is a favourite of non-standard registers such as youth slang” (Daulton, 2008, p.20). Indeed, this type of “word-play” is very common amongst teens and young adults, and some of these transformations receive national recognition from the youths.

The fact that the parts of speech of the loanwords are highly skewed deprives the Japanese of the sense of inflections and other derivational affixations and their meanings. I, personally, have felt frustrated when teaching affixes due to the students’ lack of sense for affixes, which often seems to be partially caused by their knowledge of English-based loanwords.

Other notable transformations that occur with English-based loanwords are *shortening*, *hybridization*, and *coinage*. Because of the fact that the Japanese forms of loanwords often become awkwardly long, they are often shortened, i.e. “*sutoraiku*” becomes “*suto*”. Often times, the original forms of such loanwords cease to be used, and the general public is left with access to only the shortened versions.

Hybridization can come in several forms because English-based loanwords can combine with any highly recognized words from various languages. Examples of two cases of hybridization are listed below:

- *Daihitto* - “*dai*” (Japanese for “big”) + the English word “hit” = “big hit”
- *Bakansu uea* - “*bakansu*” (Japanese loanword for the French “*vacances*”) + the English word “wear” = vacation wear

Although I am not aware of any research that tests the degree of interference that these words may cause, intuitively, I do not see these as having any considerable interfering affects on learners; however, until further research is done in this area, such assumptions should be taken with caution.

In terms of interference, coinage can be a more serious problem. Terms such as, “*salariiman*” (a Japanese coinage for businessmen in general), “*my hoomu*” (to mean “a house that you own” as opposed to a rented house), and “*sukinshippu*” (a term blending the concept of skin and kinship to approximately mean “an affectionate relationship with a loved one”, fall into this category. The problem that these terms create is that the Japanese are

often unaware of the nature of these terms. In another words, for the Japanese, there is little way to know what words are coinages and what words are not. These words can pop up in conversations with Japanese learners in both English and Japanese conversation, which implies that the learners are unaware of the register that these words belong to.

English-based loanwords, when adopted by Japanese, can go through several transformations. As I have illustrated, some of the transformations have relatively little interfering effect, whereas, others may have strong affects. Nonetheless, it becomes obvious that these loanwords cannot be assumed to be “known” by all Japanese learners in the real sense; therefore guidance in this area may help alleviate some obscurity.

### **Conclusion**

This paper dealt with the issue of English-based Japanese loanwords and their place in vocabulary learning/teaching. The theoretical framework for these loanwords clearly indicate that interference will occur at some level; however, the positive transfer promoted by these loanwords seem to outweigh the interference effect in the long run. Despite the positive implications we find from research in this area, an effective teaching method for this unique set of words has not been fully established. As a result, we must heavily rely on the teacher’s skills and knowledge of the English-based Japanese loanwords. Such a restriction makes the effective teaching of loanwords extremely difficult to conduct in reality.

Areas of future studies must address how loanwords can be effectively used to accelerate learners’ acquisition of at least the first 2,000 frequently used English words. Specific problems to be addressed in the areas should include that of pronunciation and semantics, for example. How can learners correct their image of sound to word correlation? How can they get a better understanding of the real meaning of the English counterpart of loanwords? These may be some broad questions to be addressed.

Lastly, I strongly believe that a 50% correspondence of common loanwords to the first 2,000 high-frequency words is just too big of a factor to overlook in terms of vocabulary teaching. If there were an effective way to learn these faster, the learner’s vocabulary size can significantly increase. I look forward to finding more concrete ways of utilizing loanwords in the teaching of vocabulary in general.

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