English Vocabulary Development Using Everyday Katakana Eigo Loanwords

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a semester-long project that utilizes *Katakana Eigo* loanwords, gathered by university students from their daily environment, as a tool for developing English vocabulary. The exercise begins by demonstrating the futility of relying upon *katakana* for English vocabulary recognition, correct spelling, or proper pronunciation. Students then discover firsthand their imperfect, *katakana*-based knowledge of a large number of English words. They activate this latent vocabulary pool by collecting *Katakana Eigo* words, determining their real English equivalents, and producing sentences using these English words. The vocabulary generated is used in real-world communication (albeit in corrupted *katakana* form) and thus represents a unique, context-rich class of "authentic materials." Learner autonomy and critical awareness are fostered by the fact that students are free to choose words expressing their individual out-of-class interests in food, fashion, sports and entertainment. Students also learn how to extend their vocabulary base by adding affixes to certain root words, and to use dictionaries more creatively. To date, 429 students have participated in the ongoing project. A vocabulary master list, consisting of hundreds of English words arranged by various categories, currently is being compiled.

INTRODUCTION

Project Description

This paper describes a semester-long project that utilizes *Katakana Eigo* loanwords occurring in university students' everyday environment as a tool for developing English vocabulary. Early in the semester, students are given a list of English words, the *Katakana Eigo* equivalents of which they may be expected to already know, and asked to provide definitions using *katakana*. Most students have considerable difficulty with this preliminary non-graded exercise; answers are then provided. The purpose is to demonstrate the futility of relying upon *katakana* for English vocabulary recognition, correct spelling, or proper pronunciation. At the same time, students receive encouragement and typically express surprise regarding their imperfect, *katakana*-based knowledge of a relatively large number of English words. But this knowledge, it is stressed, can be activated only by moving beyond passive reliance upon *Katakana Eigo* as a substitute for real English. Students also learn how to extend their vocabulary pool by adding prefixes and suffixes to certain English basewords, and to use dictionaries more creatively.

As an individual assignment, students during the course of the semester are required to collect *Katakana Eigo* words personally encountered in their daily lives, and to provide the corresponding English words – not always a straightforward process. They must also produce original sentences using these English words. The vocabulary words generated by students are used in real-world communication (albeit in highly corrupted *katakana* forms) and thus represent a unique, context-rich class of "authentic materials." Learner autonomy is fostered by the fact that students are free to choose words expressing their individual out-of-class interests in food, fashion, sports and entertainment. Toward the end of the semester, students are required to turn in their English vocabulary words,

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along with any related words they have found. Ideally, student awareness of these words is new and/or more completely internalized. Despite the exercise's use of *katakana* to spur vocabulary acquisition, the goal is for students to realize for themselves that *Katakana Eigo* at the college level is a counterproductive and unnecessary crutch. Instead, students are urged to proactively take charge of the vocabulary-building process even during their off-campus hours, and to cultivate a sense of critical awareness in the world around them. To date, 429 students (388 first-year students and 41 second-year students) have participated in the ongoing project. A vocabulary master list, consisting of hundreds of English words arranged by various categories, currently is being compiled. Specific challenges involved in compiling the word list are discussed below. Using the Internet to present the word list as an interactive World Wide Web site, with an audio component that would allow users to confirm native speaker pronunciation, might be one way to meet these challenges and maximize the list's effectiveness.

Loanwords in Japan

The basic reason for the existence of *Katakana Eigo*, as well as *katakana* versions of words from other Western and non-Western languages, is the introduction into Japan of foreign "loan" words and terms for which the Japanese language possesses no ready equivalents. (This paper defines "*Katakana Eigo*" as any word that originates as English but is denoted, for purposes of either written or spoken communication, using the *katakana* phonetic script and pronunciation.) This process began occurring gradually hundreds of years ago and started picking up steam during the ardently pro-Western Meiji Era, at which time, for example, a large number of German medical terms were introduced into Japan. But the adoption of loanwords greatly accelerated following World War II, when English terms began entering the Japanese language on a massive scale. Because this process of linguistic importation continues to occur haphazardly and lacks any system of standardization, the usage of these words (collectively called *gairaigo*, meaning "words coming from outside") in their native countries is often very different from the usage of their *katakana* counterparts in Japan. Apart from this problem of non-standard usage, the *katakana* linguistic scheme is not capable of adequately reproducing English phonology. This is because the Japanese phonetic range of sound is both smaller and different than that of English, meaning that the same Japanese sound must sometimes serve for multiple English sounds (as in the familiar case of "r" and "l").

In the modern age, with the continuing worldwide spread of English and Anglo-American culture, Japanese people prefer to use non-translated *Katakana Eigo* for various social and cultural reasons, even when similar native Japanese expressions do exist. (For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Blair, 1997.) Against the backdrop of the postwar educational establishment's heavy emphasis on testing as a means for evaluating rote memorization and grammar-translation skills, *Katakana Eigo* has exerted a profound negative impact upon oral and aural English language ability among Japanese. More than a few Japanese educators use *katakana* for teaching English pronunciation to schoolchildren. The habitual, deeply ingrained use of *Katakana Eigo* by students at all levels has emerged as a major obstacle to improving English communicative proficiency in Japan today.

Interestingly, there has been a backlash against the widespread popular use of *gairaigo* in recent years. The Cultural Affairs Agency found that fully 90 percent of Japanese, especially those aged 60 and older, are "disturbed" by the burgeoning number of foreign loanwords in print and on television (Kyodo News, 1997). One municipal survey found large numbers of residents "puzzled" by the city's use of borrowed *katakana* terms, while 33 municipalities nationwide were working to standardize their *gairaigo* usage (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1998). The Health and Welfare Ministry went one step further, instructing its employees to actively reduce the number of *Katakana Eigo* terms in official reports (Talmadge, 1997).

Katakana Eigo as a Learning Resource

Given the ubiquity of the Japanese loanword lexicon, it is not surprising that *Katakana Eigo* has been variously employed as a second-language educational resource. Daulton (1998) found that Japanese junior college students recognized English words possessing commonly used *Katakana Eigo* equivalents with much greater accuracy than they did words without such equivalents, and recommended that students be made aware of this loanword vocabulary resource. As the reading comprehension of Japanese college students has been found to increase in direct proportion to increases in their vocabulary levels (Loucky, 1997), the potential benefits of drawing upon the *Katakana Eigo* reservoir are clear. There are also at least two World Wide Web sites dedicated to deciphering the tangled usage of *Katakana Eigo*: "Let's Find Janglish Words" (Sugimoto, 1998) and "Not Quite English" (Tompkins, 1998).

The study of *Katakana Eigo* has been undertaken in the opposite direction as well, for the purpose of broadening the Japanese language vocabulary of foreign residents studying Japanese (Gaston, 1993). In a separate adaptation, university students analyzed "Japanized English," the error-ridden form of "decorative" English found on countless street signs and clothing articles (Britten, 1998). Post and Rathet (1996) described a similar activity used in Japan and Italy wherein students collected examples of "local English." Ross (1997) studied the use of English street signs in Italy and concluded that they are intended to confer the prestige, style and modernity associated with Anglo-American cultures and lifestyles. It seems likely that a similar dynamic underlies the pervasive use of both English and *Katakana Eigo* throughout Japanese pop culture.

Haugen (1972), whose seminal research involved the use of loanwords among Scandinavian immigrants in America, analyzed the process of linguistic borrowing in terms of word importation and substitution, and proposed three classes of loanwords. Although such a discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, Fernandez (1983) applied Haugen's framework of analysis to a study of English loanwords among Spanish-speaking Cubans in Miami. The field of "linguistic ecology" is thus broad indeed, and words have flowed out of Japan and into the lexicons of other languages. The Oxford English Dictionary now lists 378 words of Japanese origin; among the newer listings are juku, karoshi, manga, and tamagotchi (Daily Yomiuri, 1998).

Vocabulary Learning and Learner-Centricity

Hunt and Belgar (1998) refer to incidental learning, explicit instruction, and independent strategy development as the three major approaches to vocabulary instruction and learning. The current project is most closely associated with incidental learning, in which students acquire vocabulary during the course of their daily reading and listening, although the project's opportunity for creative dictionary usage is more typical of an independent strategy. Other innovative approaches to vocabulary development may have some applicability to this project's word collection and vocabulary list components. Schmitt and Schmitt (1995) explored the use of student vocabulary notebooks and gave practical suggestions for organization. Their project involved construction of rather elaborate word cards including pictorial sketches, semantic maps, stylistic notes, and derivative information. Fengying (1996) used sets of concentric circles to diagram the process of "word meaning expansion," in which a word's concrete core meanings were listed in the inner circles and outer rings included more abstract word meanings and nuances.

Although these time- and labor-intensive approaches may yield deeper understanding of a smaller number of words, a simpler approach seems better suited to the needs of students involved in this project. Portfolios, collections of student work that can take many forms, have also been shown to enhance L2 learning (Gottlieb, 1995). This project's eventual word list may be viewed as a joint student portfolio. Among the most widely used vocabulary word lists are West's *General Service List* and Nation's *University Word List* (both cited in Hunt and Beglar). Within Japan, the Ministry of Education publishes lists of English vocabulary considered appropriate for students at various levels. Similar lists, including some devoted to *gairaigo*, are available from commercial sources. (It might be

worthwhile, at some point in the future, to compare the words comprising this project's word list with those on other word lists.)

Learner autonomy and the use of authentic materials, more generally, are both prominent aspects of the broad trend toward learner-centricity. Nunan (1995 : 154) proposed narrowing the gap between teaching and learning by making instructional goals explicit to students, allowing them to generate their own learning content, and creating "active links ... between the content of the classroom and the world beyond the classroom." Cotterall (1995) noted that learner autonomy, fostered in part by teacher-student dialogue regarding the learning process and its goals, may increase enthusiasm for learning. The use of authentic materials, Peacock (1997) found, increased both observed and self-reported student motivation. Authentic materials may be defined as "materials which are used in genuine communication in the real world, and not specifically prepared for the teaching and learning of English. ... Authentic materials are characterized by the genuineness of time, location, and people" (Wong et al., 1995 : 318). *Katakana Eigo* words, then, qualify as a unique class of authentic materials, although their connection to real English must be uncovered by the student. This indirect approach to vocabulary building emphasizes individual initiative and non-academic contexts familiar to students.

Project Goals

The project's main objectives may be stated as follows:

● To demonstrate, in a tangible way, specific reasons why using *Katakana Eigo* is ineffective and even counter-productive for purposes of communicating in English;

● To increase student motivation through use of authentic materials representing a large source of English vocabulary, and to present these vocabulary words in list form;

● To encourage a transition in student learning strategy from passive absorption to active exploration, a transition from reception to production.

Taking these objectives in turn, many students in their six or more years of English instruction have been informed by well-meaning teachers that relying upon *katakana* is a bad habit, perhaps a sign of laziness. (But the habit is certainly an insidious one, as common spiral notebooks for vocabulary self-study have separate columns for listing the *katakana* pronunciation of newly encountered foreign words. For decades, in fact, *Katakana Eigo* was pretty much the only variety of English heard in Japanese classrooms, as it was serviceable enough for grammar-translation reading exercises. This has been changing, thanks to the government's massive hiring of native English speakers, and to the growing number of Japanese teachers of English who have lived overseas and value communicative competency more highly.) The goal here is to allow students to discover firsthand that *Katakana Eigo*, due to its limited ability to represent English sounds and its convoluted usage, is essentially a "secret code" to which only other Japanese are privy. If students wish to use *gairaigo* to communicate with other Japanese, thereby lending a certain prestige or modernity to their speech, there is nothing wrong with doing so. The key point, however, is that students must realize *Katakana Eigo* is highly ineffective for communicating with non-Japanese who lack knowledge of this code. Moreover, *Katakana Eigo* can be counterproductive when it instills a false sense of English ability in its users and produces misunderstandings stemming from non-standard usage.

Katakana Eigo offers, and at the same time obscures, a large but latent source of vocabulary. The project's basic aim is to make constructive use of this singular brand of authentic materials. If students take the extra step of removing the *katakana* veil and exposing the actual English words, they can tap into this vein of "hidden" vocabulary. In Japan, as in no other non-English-speaking country, English exists as a potentially living language all around us every day - on every street corner, in every home and office, in every movie and television program. But access to this storehouse of real-world English is by no means automatic; it is up to students to bring these words to life. To

the extent that students come to reconceptualize *Katakana Eigo* as one possible bridge between the classroom and outside world, they may become self-motivated to make this jump and actualize this vocabulary knowledge. Presenting the words gathered by students in a centralized list form will offer a number of vocabulary teaching applications.

The third, subtler objective may have longer-term implications for learning. This project is being carried out primarily with first-year university students, most of whom are studying English with a native speaker on a weekly basis for the first time. Entrance exams have become a thing of the past for them. So it seems an opportune juncture to begin encouraging a break from their previous teacher-centered, classroom-centered learning strategies (that are of proven worth for maximizing performance on standardized tests, and therefore remain the high school norm). A learner-centered strategy not confined to the classroom, by contrast, is held to be more effective for improving communicative language ability and may be considered the university ideal. The project's flexible, open-ended nature may instill a sense of exploration, learner independence, and self-empowerment that most students have heretofore been denied. Obviously, such a fundamental shift toward making students "full partners" in their education is not to be accomplished in a single semester. But it is hoped that this modest project may help initiate this transition process among some students.

PROCEDURE

Phase 1 – Demonstrating Weaknesses of *Katakana*

Prior to entering university, most Japanese students are motivated to learn English in order to pass entrance exams. University students, the project begins by pointing out on the first day of class, have new and more practical reasons to learn English. Among these reasons: 75 percent of the world's mail is written in English; more than two-thirds of the world's scientists read in English; by the year 2000, more than one billion people will be learning English (British Council, 1997). Perhaps of more interest to engineering and computer science majors, 80 percent of the world's electronically stored information is in English (British Council), and 82.3 percent of all Internet homepages are in English (Alis Technologies et al., 1997). It is also noted that English is the main language of publishing, international business, diplomacy, advertising, sports, and pop music.
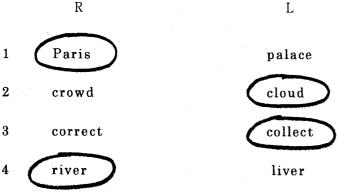
Having stimulated student motivation to some extent, the next step is to make clear specific shortcomings of *Katakana Eigo*. This is accomplished by means of a non-graded alphabet pronunciation quiz, parts of which can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1 :
Alphabet Pronunciation Quiz (answers)

Write the letter that Mr. Underwood says.

1 _B_

2 _R_

3 _L_

4 _V_

Circle the word that Mr. Underwood says.

R　　　　　　　　　　　　　L

1　　(Paris)　　　　　　　　palace

2　　crowd　　　　　　　　(cloud)

3　　correct　　　　　　　(collect)

4　　(river)　　　　　　　liver

Listen to Mr. Underwood and fill in his e-mail address.

williamu@cc. kurume-it. ac. jp

　　at　　dot　　　　hyphen　dot　　dot

Most students have at least some difficulty with this simple exercise. They internalize the impossibility of employing *katakana* for distinguishing between words expressing the "r" and "l" sounds, or for accurately indicating the "th" (θ or δ) sound, as this is beyond *katakana's* capabilities. Apparently, the quiz also marks the first time many students hear a native English speaker enunciate the "v" sound. And an e-mail message, they are reminded, becomes undeliverable if even one letter is incorrect. Except for its use among fellow Japanese, then, *Katakana Eigo* is insufficient for even the ABCs.

Figure 2 shows a portion of the self-diagnostic English Word Recognition Quiz that comes next. Students are given a total of 63 English words and instructed to write their *Katakana Eigo* equivalents.

Figure 2 :
English Word Recognition Quiz (answers)

Pacific League パリーグ゛   scenario シナリオ

theme テーマ   amplifier アンプ゜

vinyl ビニール   campaign キャンペーン

Pocket Monsters ポケモン   unique ユニーク

dilemma ジレンマ   volunteer ボランティア

aluminum foil アルミホイル   practical プラクティカル

    Working together in class, most students are able to fill in the *katakana* versions of roughly half the terms, and express considerable surprise when answers to the remainder are provided. That is, they "know" more of the English words than they think they do, but many words are recognizable only in their mangled *katakana* forms (which, in turn, are largely unintelligible to English speakers). Far from improving English ability, students find, *katakana* masks knowledge of English vocabulary to which they might otherwise have access. Correct pronunciation and usage are then covered in the course of describing the following four categories of *katakana* loanwords: "misspelled" words, compound shortened words, words with non-standard usage, and words with non-English roots.

    Because Japanese consists of monosyllabic "consonant-vowel" units of sound (e.g., *ka, ki, ku, ke, ko*), the process of "rephonalizing" English words into *Katakana Eigo* always produces phonetic distortion and usually produces an increased number of syllables (as in the case of the three-syllable "McDonald's" morphing into the six-syllable *makudonarudo* マクドナルド). Nevertheless, some words are "misspelled" worse than others, at least according to the North American pronunciation of which this instructor candidly concedes he is a proponent. Even within *katakana's* phonetic limits, *eneruGI-* エネルギー (energy) and *areruGI-* アレルギー (allergy) could be more accurately spelled as *eneruJI-* エネルジー and *areruJI-* アレルジー. *TereHOn* テレホン (telephone) and *HOiru* ホイル (foil) could be better rendered as t*ereFUOn* テレフォンand *FUOiru* フォイル, as in *KariFUOnia* カリフォルニア (California). *Aruko-ru* アルコール (alcohol) could be improved to *arukoHO-ru* アルコホール, while *HYU-zu* ヒューズ (fuse) could be written as *FYU-zu* フューズ. (Misspelled versions are often simpler to write, though, and sloppy rephonalization makes little difference as long as loanwords are being used strictly intra-Japanese.) Spellings like *uirusu* ウイルス (virus) and *Uiin* ウイーン (Vienna) are German-based and were never intended to approximate English pronunciation. Respelling these words as *bairasu* バイラスand *Bie-na* ビエーナ would certainly be unreasonable, although it would be preferable to the ears of English speakers. Students should realize, at any rate, that such

katakana-based pronunciations possess very limited usefulness outside of Japan.

Compound shortened words known as *Wasei Eigo* 和製英語 ("English made in Japan"), the second category of loanwords discussed with students, can be a plentiful but tricky source of English vocabulary. For example, the *kon* コン morpheme in *rimokon* リモコン (remote control), *bodikon* ボデーコン (body conscious), *mazakon* マザコン (mother complex), *zenekon* ゼネコン (general contractor), and *pasokon* パソコン (personal computer) stands for five different shortened English words. If students confine themselves to using *hansuto* ハンスト (hunger strike) or other compound *Katakana Eigo* terms without learning the full English words underpinning them, vocabulary-building opportunities become forfeited. In the category of non-standard usage, it is noted that requests for a bus "diagram" or a wall "consent" (even if these words were pronounced correctly) would not quickly produce a bus "schedule" or an "electrical outlet" from many Americans, although British listeners might comply. Few non-Japanese realize that "pocket bell," apparently a creation of the NTT phone company, is *katakana* code for telephone "pager" or "beeper." *Sa-bisu* サービス derives from the English word "service" but is used to mean "gratis," while *baikingu* バイキング corresponds to "Viking" but means "all-you-can-eat buffet." The English adjective "cunning" (*kanningu* カンニング) is used in *Katakana Eigo* as the verb "to cheat." (Among the numerous *gairaigo* dictionaries on the market, the best ones give not only a loanword's literal native equivalent, but also clarify its usage within Japanese society. See, among others, Kamiya, 1994.) Students also learn that *anke-to* アンケート (questionnaire) and *arubaito* アルバイト (part-time job) were never English terms; they stem from French and German, respectively. The net effect of this discussion of categories is to underscore that, for a variety of reasons, non-Japanese people find *Katakana Eigo* to be truly baffling.

Daulton (1998) described four distinct categories of loanwords based on the linguistic transformations they undergo in entering the Japanese lexicon: rephonalization, truncation (shortening), speech part modification, and semantic modification. However, the utility of this project's less arcane categories is that they more functionally display *Katakana Eigo*'s various quirks and – if the student's aim is to communicate with English speakers – manifest deficiencies. Yet rather than to intimidate, the purpose is to encourage students regarding the bumper crop of English vocabulary existing just beyond their grasp. In an effort to make students "equal partners" in this semester-long experience, they are kept abreast of the goals and reasoning behind each stage of the exercise as it unfolds. Phase 1 enables students to convince themselves of the glaring weaknesses of *katakana* in terms of English vocabulary recognition, correct spelling, and proper pronunciation. They are also informed that their teacher himself collected all 63 of the *Katakana Eigo* words "incidentally," during his daily movements about town.

Phase 2 - *Katakana Eigo* / Real English Word Search

Assigned early in the semester and due at the end of the semester, the "*Katakana Eigo* / Real English Word Search" homework assignment makes up the heart of this exercise. Student "vocabulary detectives," working individually, are required to gather at least five *Katakana Eigo* words encountered during their daily lives and to find the corresponding English words. These English words must then be used in sentences, a production activity that promotes word understanding and recall. There are two ways to earn extra credit: first, by finding other English words related to these real English words, and using the related words in sentences; second, by finding more than five words. Figure 3 shows the directions and format for completing the assignment.

Figure 3 :
Katakana Eigo / Real English Word Search (directions, example)

Find 5 *Katakana Eigo* words. For each word, answer these questions:
1. What was the KATAKANA WORD you saw ?
2. WHERE did you see the *Katakana* word ?
3. WHEN did you see the *Katakana* word ?
4. What is the REAL WORD in English ?
5. MAKE a SENTENCE using the real English word.
Extra Credit: List other related English words. Make sentences.
Extra Credit: Find MORE than 5 *Katakana Eigo* words.

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Example:
1. フエステイバル
2. in an advertisement at Z-Side department store in Tenjin
3. April 25, 1998 (Saturday)
4. *festival*
5. Let's go to the Mount Aso Balloon *Festival* tomorrow !
   festive-Everyone was in a very *festive* mood on New Year's Eve.
   festivities-Fred was sick, so he could not attend the O-bon *festivities.*

In this example, the two extra credit words "festive" and "festivities" are considered derivative forms of the real word "festival," and would have been located in a dictionary. Students are given wide latitude in finding these derivative words. "Exterior" is related to "interior," "unappealing" is related to "appeal," and "scenery" is related to "scenario." Closer examination of specific types of word derivations and affixes, as well as possibly grouping the types together, will be included as part of the project's culminating phase.

Because the intent is for students to generate as large a pool of vocabulary as possible, they are free to find their *katakana* words anyplace: restaurants, offices, train stations, department stores, books, newspapers, TV, radio, food packages, clothing. The only restriction is that words like *kamera* (カメラ camera), *taiya* (タイヤ tire), and *petto* (ペット pet) are too easy. Instead, students should try to find *katakana* words for which they do not already know the English counterparts. The directions for this mandatory homework assignment are explained a total of three times during the semester, and numerous examples are passed around the class on each occasion. When turning in the assignment, students use one small rectangular piece of paper (one-fourth the size of a B5 sheet of paper) for each word, and staple together their five or more pieces of paper. Students write their names and student numbers on the back of each piece of paper, and are told that the ultimate aim of the project is the creation of a running master list of English vocabulary words. This gives students a sense of contributing to a larger joint effort.

Phase 3 - Vocabulary Master List, Baseword Expansion

This final stage involves the compilation of a master list of vocabulary words, representing the cumulative results of student search efforts. A variety of approaches for organizing the list currently are being considered. The least imaginative method of arranging the words alphabetically, for example, might also be the least productive. Likewise, the rationale behind grouping words according to parts of speech might be lost on many students. Instead, categorizing words by theme according to where they were found (e.g., entertainment words, sports words, food words) might

better promote retention. Word list organization could also be based on the *Katakana Eigo* categories outlined in Phase 1 above. For example, compound shortened words (like *sekuhara* セクハラ in Figure 4) could be grouped together, as could terms with non-standard usage or non-English roots.

A list arranged by affix (prefix or suffix) or derivative type might lead to the elaboration or expansion of a baseword's related forms, one of the project's more promising possibilities. Closer inspection, followed by effective presentation, of certain words found by students might produce recognition and understanding of structurally similar words they encounter elsewhere later on. (This is also the reason why students search for the "related words" in their dictionaries.) Figure 4 illustrates one way that study of *Katakana Eigo* words can lead to more deeply internalized knowledge of actual English words whose form and meaning might, in turn, be "expandable."

Figure 4 :
Vocabulary Baseword Expansion

(*Katakana* word→	English baseword→	Structurally similar words)
ステンレス	stainless steel	cordLESS
		powerLESS
-LESS suffix		useLESS, hopeLESS
can be contrasted with *-FUL* suffix: powerFUL … useFUL … hopeFUL		

マイクロバス	microbus	MICROeconomics
		MICROscope
MICRO- prefix		MICROsurgery
contrasted with *MACRO-* prefix: MACROsystems … MACROeconomics		

セクハラ	sexual harassment	
yields verb "harass" / *-MENT* and *-UAL* suffixes: visUAL, consentUAL		

It may be most effective to organize the word list using more than one approach. Potential problems include devising a system for cross-referencing the various word categories or sublists. One way to solve this problem might be to post the word list online as a World Wide Web site. This would make cross-referencing the list a straight-forward, and potentially interactive, process. (This electronic avenue has been explored in a limited way through a restricted-access WWW site on this university's server that tests the user's English word recognition, as in Phase 1 above.) Another challenge involves emphasizing the importance of correct English pronunciation in using the words orally. This challenge might be overcome by incorporating a sound component into such an interactive website, which would allow users to confirm and practice "native speaker" pronunciation.

But whatever forms of organization the word list eventually takes, the risk of "cross-association" resulting from the "principle of interference" must be considered (Schmitt and Schmitt, 1995). The principle holds that it can be counterproductive to teach at the same time words that are too similar or too closely related to each other. For example, teaching word pairs like "left" and "right," or "affect" and "effect," or "averse" and "adverse" together can lead to confusion of meaning and difficulty of recall. For this reason, it will be wise to include pattern sentences, preferably those sentences produced by students themselves, showing proper in-context word usage. It is clear that much work remains to be done in this key area of the project.

RESULTS

Nearly all of the students who passed this instructor's oral English course also successfully completed the *Katakana Eigo* word collection assignment. Out of the 445 students who passed the course, 429 students handed in sets of *Katakana Eigo* words, for a 96.4 percent rate of return. (It was not to be expected that students who failed the course, in nearly all cases due to excessive truancy, would complete the assignment.) The majority of participants (339 students) attended Kurume Institute of Technology; the remainder (90 students) attended Fukuoka University. Except for 41 second-year students (at Fukuoka University), the rest of the students were all in their first year. The project's very high rate of completion may have been because students found the exercise interesting, as well as because it was stressed that this was a mandatory assignment and instructions were discussed three times during the semester. A sizeable majority of students earned extra credit in both possible ways, by finding words related to the real English words and by finding more than five *Katakana Eigo* words. A few students collected up to 20 *Katakana Eigo* words each. Words were found in a full range of locations.

It is difficult to choose a representative sample of the words gathered by students. But the among the several hundred English words turned in are those randomly listed in Figure 5, with related words shown in parentheses.

Figure 5 :
Sample of English Words (and Related Words) Gathered by Students

delicacy (delicate, delicately)

power steering, umpire, symposium

planetarium (planet, planetology)

variation (various, vary, variable)

illustrator (illustrate, illustration)

scandal (scandalous, scandalize)

fiction (fictional, fictionalize, fictitious)

taste (tasteful, tastefulness)

idea (ideal, idealism, idealist)

business (busy, businesslike, bustle)

instructor (instructive, instruction)

controller (control, controllable)

memorial (memory, memorize)

generation, handicap, wizard

image (imagine, imaginative)

assistant (assist, assistance)

clearance, nuance, revolution

unit (unite, United States, unity)

imitation (imitate, imitator, imitative)

panic (panicky, panic stricken)

amateur (amateurism, amateurish, professional)

simple (simplicity, simple-minded, simplify)

sense (senseless, sensible, sensitive, sensibility)

camouflage, auction, Santa Claus, jinx, Titanic, renaissance

narration (narrative)

technique (technical)

normal (normally, norm)

charisma (charismatic)

familiar (familiarity)

approach (approachable)

Christmas (Christian)

deodorant (deodorize)

mannequin, croissant

inflation (deflation)

judge (judgment, judicial)

pure (impure)

advise (advisement, adviser)

A relatively small number of less ambitious students, some of whom apparently completed the assignment at the last minute, located overly simple words like clean, glass, beer, door, bed, game, coat, bike, drive, taxi, curry, dog, bell, cake, oil, and parking. A quite small number of students completed the project incorrectly, by failing to provide sentences using the English words, or by copying each other's work and submitting identical sets of words.

However, the most disappointing result involved the large number of students who failed to compose their own original sentences to demonstrate contextual usage of the English words. Instead, they copied sentences directly out of dictionaries. To combat this problem, current instructions have been fine-tuned to now stress that only sentences with original content are acceptable for credit. Some students also listed extra credit words with "illusory" relationships to their real English words, meaning that they found words that at first glance appeared related but actually were not. This development seemed to occur mostly among students who did not allow sufficient time for careful dictionary investigations. This point, too, is now being clarified in the course of explaining project directions.

DISCUSSION

Strong Points and Weaker Points

Strong points and weaker points of this vocabulary development approach may be summarized. Starting with positive characteristics, the out-of-class project is learner-centered in comparison to the classroom-confined lessons to which students have previously been exposed. Learner autonomy and independent self-expression are fostered by allowing students free rein to choose words and create sentences. The approach makes use of authentic materials as defined and qualified above, and because students encountered the words in their daily lives to begin with, the potential for ongoing in-context reinforcement is high. The project is also flexible and open-ended in that the two ways for earning extra credit take into account different levels of student ability and motivation. Any student can locate five words with little trouble, while for more ambitious students there is no limit. (Such features are generally in line with Ministry of Education prescriptions for educational reform.) Although the project is being conducted with non-English majors, it is "tailorable" and could be adapted for use with English majors or in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. The approach may be especially applicable in technical fields involving a great deal of *Katakana Eigo*, such as computer science, medicine, or aviation. The opportunity to explore the more creative use of dictionaries is another benefit, while the word list may offer spin-off applications for vocabulary learning.

Foremost among the project's weaker points is the risk of cross-association of vocabulary words due to the principle of interference, discussed in Phase 3 above. In addition, as mentioned in the Results section, some students listed extra credit words with "illusory" relationships to their real English words; apparent word relationships were in fact false. Rather than broadening the student's vocabulary base, these problems - stemming from the approach's unrestricted nature - could instead sow serious confusion. The remedy will be judicious teacher oversight during the actual compilation of the vocabulary word list, in order to weed out falsely related words. This process of putting together the master list, unfortunately, promises to be much more teacher-centered than the project as a whole. The problem of unoriginal sentences, copied by students directly from dictionaries, is being mitigated by stressing the requirement for original and individual sentence creation.

At the risk of constructing a "straw person" argument, some educators may object that the approach is too open-ended and unstructured for Japanese students. But if students are to cultivate critical awareness and independent thinking skills, as Monbusho says they must in order to ensure the nation's vitality in the 21st century, more such projects should be introduced. And while some instructors may argue that "all katakana is bad katakana" and seek to ban it from the classroom outright, this project accepts the pervasive reality of *gairaigo* in Japan today. The intent is for students to fully appreciate the specific inadequacies of *Katakana Eigo*, and then to proactively wield it as one more tool for building vocabulary.

At present, the project lacks any component for quantitative testing. It might be possible, as part of a substantially different project, to randomly assign students into test and control groups and pretest their knowledge of certain vocabulary. The test group might then gather words and create sentences as in the current project, while the control group might be passively shown the same words and sentences. Word recognition and retention rates for the two groups might be quantitatively compared in post-tests. But as designing such an experiment to control for all extraneous variables could prove problematic, the incorporation of a testing component is not being pursued at this time. Qualitatively, it would be relatively easy to survey student attitudes regarding the "worth" or "efficacy" of the approach in terms of motivation or perceived acquisition of vocabulary. But the significance of ascertaining such student attitudes may be questionable. Neither is such a survey being planned.

CONCLUSION

This approach appears to be meeting its objectives reasonably well and is being continued. The assignment is not oriented toward any particular model or theory of vocabulary acquisition, but it involves elements of both the incidental and intentional vocabulary learning conditions. *Katakana Eigo* words are encountered incidentally, while determining their English meanings and producing sentences entails a more intentional process. *Katakana Eigo*, in one sense, represents an ingenious and highly functional linguistic system that continues to evolve in response to specific needs within Japanese society. It supplies Japanese people with an effective medium for communication, among themselves, on a broad range of topics in a manner that the indigenous Japanese language cannot. But that is where *Katakana Eigo's* usefulness stops, unless it can be utilized in new ways such as those described herein. This assignment will not dramatically improve student vocabulary levels over the course of a single 13-week semester, and students will not entirely wean themselves overnight from years of dependence upon *Katakana Eigo*. But for some students, the project may help plant the seed of intellectual curiosity and produce a higher level of critical awareness in the world around them.

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