

## **Learner Perceptions on *Gairaigo*: Relations between Word Familiarity and English Vocabulary Sizes**

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This study attempted to investigate how college students perceived *Gairaigo*, loanwords, often seen and heard in our daily lives, and how their perceptions related with loanword familiarity and their English vocabulary sizes. A total of 88 students responded to 23 questions adapted from a national report by NINJAL (2004). Thirty-seven less frequent loanwords were selected from the Japanese corpus *Shonagon*, and their familiarity examined. Results showed that approximately 80% of the students felt that loanwords were frequently seen and heard today, and 67% of them said they often used loanwords themselves. Nearly 70% of the students thought the increase of loanwords was favorable, which was almost two times the overall average in the national report.

Regarding perceived good points of loanwords, students found loanwords to be fancy, intellectual, and fresh. Concerning bad points, they indicated that loanwords sometimes hindered communication and caused misunderstanding and misleading of meaning. Unlike those college students in the national report, our students did not feel that loanwords would destroy Japanese culture. The overall average for good points was significantly higher than that for bad points. Students showed that the biggest problem of loanwords was a disparity of pronunciation between *katakana* loanwords and the original English words.

Results for loanword familiarity did not correlate with the questionnaire items except for students' use of loanwords. Student vocabulary sizes correlated with overall good points for loanwords, a liking for English, and being good at English. Based on these findings, a variety of pedagogical suggestions are made.