Gairaigo in Japanese Foreign Language Learning: A Tool for Native English Speakers?

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Abstract

There is considerable academic literature on the usefulness of loanwords to Foreign Language (FL) learners. This literature, based on empirical studies conducted among learners of various language backgrounds and learning various target languages, indicates that cognates shared by the first language (L1) of the learner and the target language are generally a positive learning resource in Foreign Language Learning (FLL) contexts. This study extends the current literature by its examination of the specific context of English speakers learning Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL). It takes both qualitative and quantitative approaches to the investigation of teaching practices related to the use of loanwords borrowed from English into Japanese, known as gairaigo. A quantitative analysis of three series of JFL textbooks reveals that gairaigo nouns are used in introductory texts at an unrepresentatively high proportion. While there is currently no empirical basis for this strategy, qualitative interviews with teachers give some support to the strategy of using gairaigo in preference to words of Japanese origin in introductory courses to assist learner comprehension and production. This study identifies a number of variables driving teachers' use of gairaigo that have so far not been articulated in the literature.

Keywords

JFL classroom; JFL learning; L1; loanwords; native English speakers

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Introduction

It is well established that a learner's first language (L1) is fundamental in determining the course and speed of acquisition of subsequent languages. The role of the L1 is important as it provides a knowledge base upon which Second Language Acquisition (SLA) can occur. Due to considerable linguistic, orthographic and cultural differences between the Japanese language and European languages, Japanese language learning appears to be more difficult than European languages for English speakers. At the introductory stage, Japanese language learning is heavily based upon memorising a large amount of new vocabulary, script and grammatical patterns.

However, due to the recent large-scale borrowings of European loanwords (*gairaigo*) into Japanese, many cognates with English roots are frequently used in the Japanese language. Extensive research across several different languages has demonstrated the effectiveness of cognates as useful tools for assisting vocabulary acquisition in a Foreign Language (FL).² As researchers believe that communicative competence is heavily based on the lexicon,³ the importance of vocabulary learning and acquisition cannot be underestimated. It is clear, therefore, that the vocabulary base of cognates that have originated in the learner's L1 has the potential to be a useful tool for quick and massive vocabulary extension, thus expediting subsequent language acquisition.⁴

Students are highly dependent upon teachers at the beginning levels of language learning; hence, it is important that teachers use a range of strategies to assist learners. Since the use of *gairaigo* in the Japanese Foreign Language (JFL) classroom has this potential for facilitating learning and motivation, it is worthy of investigation. As a result, this study investigates, from a teaching perspective, the use of *gairaigo* by JFL teachers and in Japanese language textbooks. This is done by conducting semi-structured interviews with seven teachers from the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. In addition to eliciting a range of teacher ideas and views on the use of *gairaigo*, this study also investigates how textbook developers use *gairaigo* in elementary-level and subsequent textbooks in three Japanese language textbook series.

Despite being small-scale in nature, various aspects of the qualitative and quantitative data collected and analysed during this research project support and contribute new findings to the field of SLA and, more specifically, JFL learning.

¹ Daulton, Japan's Built-in Lexicon of English-based Loanwords; Ringbom, Cross-Linguistic Similarity in Foreign Language Learning; Kellerman and Smith, Crosslinguistic Influence in Second Language Acquisition.

² Laufer, 'What's in a Word that Makes it Hard or Easy'.

³ ibid

⁴ Daulton, op. cit.; Uchida, 'The Use of Cognate Inferencing Strategies by Japanese Learners of English'; Kay, 'English Loanwords in Japanese'; Brown and Williams, 'Gairaigo: A Latent English Vocabulary Base?'.

The interviews conducted with experienced JFL teachers provide additional insight into the variables that influence teachers' decisions to use or not to use *gairaigo* in their teaching. The study finds that while some teachers support the potential for *gairaigo* cognates to assist learners to learn, teachers hold a range of views on the efficacy of *gairaigo* and take a strategic contextually based approach to its use. Such findings have so far not been articulated in the literature. Textbook word counts have confirmed previous findings in the field and contributed new findings.

This article will firstly review the literature on English loanwords in Japanese society and language, how they are integrated, and the changes which result during this process. In addition, literature regarding the effects of cognates on SLA is discussed. Next, the methodology of the study is outlined and the use of *gairaigo* in Japanese language textbooks and in JFL classrooms will be examined and discussed.

Loanwords in Japanese Language and Society

Like the lexicons of many other languages, the Japanese lexicon has developed through the borrowing and use of words from different languages throughout the centuries and has undergone several periods of massive borrowing.

A salient feature of modern Japanese is the use of numerous loanwords derived from European languages.⁵ Such loanwords, named *gairaigo* (literally 'words coming from outside'),⁶ have become such an integral part of the Japanese language that they constitute more than 10% of the total Japanese lexicon nowadays.⁷ Furthermore, a large proportion of *gairaigo* (94.1%) are of English origin.⁸

Due to the considerable linguistic distance between English and Japanese, English loanwords often undergo a process of phonological change to facilitate their usage by Japanese native speakers. These processes may include shortening and other morphological, grammatical and semantic transformations.

In order to adapt to the Japanese phonological system, English vowel and consonant sounds which do not exist in Japanese are represented by rough Japanese equivalents. As a result, the word 'taxi' becomes ' $\cancel{\beta} \cancel{D} \cancel{>} - (takush\bar{\imath})$ ' and 'bus' becomes ' $\cancel{/} \cancel{>} (basu)$ ' once transliterated. Although these changes may render such loanwords unrecognisable

⁵ Tomoda, 'The Impact of Loan-Words on Modern Japanese'.

⁶ Loveday, Language Contact in Japan.

⁷ *ibid.*; Honna, 'English in Japanese Society'.

⁸ Stanlaw, Japanese English.



In addition, many English loanwords are used to create compound words such as hybrids or innovative terms and expressions (coined words). Hybrids, also known as loan blends in English and *konshugo* (混種語) in Japanese, are formed by combining *gairaigo* and *wago* (native/non-borrowed Japanese) or *kango* (Chinese-borrowed) words. Many expressions coined in Japan using English loanwords are known as 'waseieigo (和製英語; English words made in Japan)' and include coinages such as 'サラリーマン (sararī-man; 'salary man', or male office worker)' and truncations such as 'オムライス (omu-raisu; omelette rice)'.

As previously mentioned, semantic changes also occur during the borrowing process of loanwords. These can be classified into the categories of semantic shift, semantic narrowing and semantic broadening. Quite often there is a natural tendency for English speakers to expect the meaning of loanwords in Japanese to be identical with that of their source words in English. This, however, is not always the case and subtle changes in meaning and use often occur. Generally, *gairaigo* take on a narrower meaning in Japanese than their original form, with their semantic range being restricted to modern, Western-style situations in contrast to already existing Japanese words. The word 'ライス (*raisu*; rice)' is an obvious example. In English, 'rice' is a general term; however, in Japanese it denotes boiled rice served Western-style (i.e., on a plate). This differs from '二飯 (*gohan*; rice)', which denotes rice served in a bowl.

Due to rapid borrowing and many nonce borrowings, studies have shown that it is common for new *gairaigo* to be unrecognisable or misunderstood by native Japanese speakers.¹² It is important therefore, to define what is classified as *gairaigo* for the purposes of this study. Here, *gairaigo* are European loanwords which have, to some degree, been restructured—whether it be in a semantic, grammatical or phonological sense—into the Japanese language and, according to Umegaki's definition of *gairaigo*, have been 'socially constitutionalised' or 'accepted by society'.¹³ In other words, only

⁹ Tomoda, op. cit.

¹⁰ Fromkin, An Introduction to Language.

¹¹ Backhouse, The Japanese Language.

¹² Tomoda, op. cit.

¹³ Umegaki, Nihon gairaigo no kenkyū, pp. 7-9.

established *gairaigo* which are recognised and well-known in Japanese society will be considered as *gairaigo* in this study.

Arguments For and Against the Use of Cognates in SLA

As has been mentioned, language teachers have long recognised the importance of cognates and there are several studies on the possible role of the 'potential vocabulary' of second-language words across Western European languages.¹⁴ More recently however, several studies have provided empirical evidence on how the rich source of English loanwords in the Japanese language can assist vocabulary learning and subsequent language acquisition in Japanese students of English.¹⁵

However, not all researchers have a positive disposition towards the use of cognates and some consider them to be a great pitfall for SLA.¹⁶ This opposing view originates from the fact that cognate pairs are by no means always identical in form or meaning. Consequently, errors can result from the variances between the original word and the loanword. Lexical errors,¹⁷ spelling errors and issues with learners' pronunciation and overuse of cognates have been previously reported in studies.¹⁸

Despite some of the negative influences cognates can have on second-language learning, cognates are believed to have a positive effect on SLA overall. Daulton tries to resolve the 'paradox of cognates' by explaining that the possible errors which may occur as a result of negative L1 influence should not be regarded as a negative issue, as the use of cognates in SLA still encourages language production. This increased language production creates valuable feedback and internal correction, which impels language learners along the interlanguage continuum. Daulton also bases his arguments for the pre-established bias against cognates on the failings of theoretical foundations to accurately capture the nature of the errors in studies. Examples include the failure to distinguish between true and false cognates in addition to studies that often overlook the individual characteristics of learners (i.e. the students' age, L1, stage of learning and their individual learning styles).

¹⁴ Banta, 'Teaching German Vocabulary'; Hammer and Monod, The Role of English-French Cognates in Listening Comprehension; Pons-Ridler, 'Oral Comprehension'.

¹⁵ Daulton, op. cit.; Daulton, Gairaigo: The Built-In Lexicon?; Uchida, op. cit.

¹⁶ Frantzen, 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors that Contribute to the Difficulty of Learning of False Cognates'; Granger and Swallow, 'False Friends'; Hasselgren, 'Lexical Teddy Bears and Advanced Learners'.

¹⁷ Ringbom, The Role of the First Language in Foreign Language Learning.

¹⁸ Ellis, Understanding Second Language Acquisition; Hasslegren, op. cit.; Granger and Swallow, op. cit.

¹⁹ Brown and Williams, op. cit.; Daulton, Japan's Built-in Lexicon of English-Based Loanwords; Daulton, Gairaigo: The Built-in Lexicon?; Daulton, 'Loanword Cognates and the Acquisition of English Vocabulary'; Kay, op. cit.

²⁰ Daulton, Gairaigo: The Built-in Lexicon?



Studies by Uchida and Kato,²¹ for example, find that the level of the learner is an important factor in students' ability to identify (and therefore use) cognates. Both studies reported that advanced learners could identify and use cognates more accurately than beginner learners. However, despite reports of beginner learners having more difficulties with the identification and correct use of cognates, it is beginner learners who benefit the most from their use. According to Uchida,²² although these errors are most abundant at beginning levels, it is at this time when cognate identification skills improve the most as well. As a result, the large number of errors is only temporary and the positive effects of cognate familiarity are stronger than the inhibiting effects of these errors. Daulton supports this argument by stating that these errors should be looked upon as developmental errors in the learning process rather than as a source of error, interference or negative transfer.²³

In addition to the level of the learner, Uchida found that the L1 proficiency of the learner was an important consideration with regard to how well students were able to identify and use cognates.²⁴ According to Uchida, learners with high L1 proficiency are able to identify more cognates than those with low L1 proficiency. Given this information, this study is aimed towards assisting beginner students whose native language is English in the learning of the Japanese language, rather than English speakers in general.

Studies Investigating the Effects of Gairaigo in Japanese Students of EFL Learning

Due to the large linguistic distance between English and Japanese, cognate pairs are seldom identical in several aspects. Consequently, the effect of the resulting transfer is multi-faceted, resulting in different levels of facilitation or interference depending on the degree of similarity of the cognate words.

Despite the extra difficulties which arise from the different writing systems, Japanese students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) appear to be quite capable of recognising the similarities between their L1 and English. In fact, *gairaigo* have shown largely positive effects in a multitude of areas of English-language acquisition for Japanese language learners.

According to Daulton and Uchida, the 'built-in lexicon' created from English word borrowings is considered a powerful tool for Japanese students of English language

²¹ Uchida, op. cit., Kato, 'Chūgokugo bogowasha ni yoru nihongo no kango shūtoku'.

²² Uchida, op. cit.

²³ Daulton, Gairaigo: The Built-in Lexicon?

²⁴ Uchida, op. cit.

learning and is recommended to be used to their advantage for vocabulary learning and thus communication.²⁵

Several studies have shown empirical evidence of the positive effects of this 'built-in lexicon' on English-language learning in Japanese students in many different areas of language acquisition. Improvements in word recognition,²⁶ listening comprehension,²⁷ written production,²⁸ spelling²⁹ and spoken and written English³⁰ have been reported.

The Potential Benefits of Gairaigo for JFL Learning

Despite the vast depth and number of studies regarding *gairaigo* in assisting EFL learning for Japanese students, very few studies have examined the possible benefits of *gairaigo* for assisting English speakers with Japanese second-language learning and acquisition. In a review of the literature, only one study which investigated the L1 transfer from English to Japanese by Australian JFL learners was found.³¹ This report however did not discuss the effects of English loanwords on JFL learning.

As a result, there is a clear gap in the literature regarding the use of English loanwords in the Japanese language as a resource for assisting JFL learning. However, despite this gap in the literature, many authors and researchers in the field of Japanese language studies have suggested the possible benefits of this latent vocabulary base to English students of Japanese.³² The general statements and suggestions made by these authors regarding the possible benefits of *gairaigo* are side issues to their writings and appear to be based more on beliefs and assumptions than on empirical evidence.

Although language transfer can be asymmetric,³³ these authors suggest that English loanwords in the Japanese language may be of use to English-speaking students of Japanese in the same way they are for Japanese students of EFL.

Brown and Williams state that 'once some of the regular phonological changes are understood it may be relatively easy to make *gairaigo* a passive and active part of one's

²⁵ Daulton, Japan's Built-in Lexicon of English-Based Loanwords; Daulton, Gairaigo: The Built-in Lexicon?; Daulton, 'Loanword Cognates and the Acquisition of English Vocabulary'; Uchida, op. cit.

²⁶ Hashimoto, English Loanword Interference for Japanese Students of English.

²⁷ Brown and Williams, op. cit.

²⁸ Brown, 'Is Gairaigo English? II'.

²⁹ Hashimoto, The Influence of English Loanwords on Japanese Natives' Spelling Accuracy of the English Model Words; Daulton, 'Loanword Cognates and the Acquisition of English Vocabulary'.

³⁰ Brown and Williams, op. cit.; Kimura, The Effect of Japanese Loanwords on the Acquisition of the Correct Range of Meanings of English Words.

³¹ Stephens, 'Transfer from English to Japanese by Australian JFL Learners'.

³² Backhouse, op. cit.; Brown and Williams, op. cit.; Daulton, Gairaigo: The Built-in Lexicon?; Neustupný, Communicating with the Japanese.

³³ Arabski, Cross-Linguistic Influences in the Second Language Lexicon.



Japanese vocabulary. In a similar manner, Neustupný suggests that the presence of an extensive English vocabulary in Japanese creates very favourable conditions for communication for English speakers. 55

Neustupný also states that 'introductory textbooks of Japanese usually present a simplified neutral form of the standard language'. If this is the case, it is possible that *gairaigo* could be being used as a strategy in Japanese language textbooks. No empirical evidence of the use of *gairaigo* in this way has been presented and thus should be investigated. This study therefore aims to fill the gap in the literature by investigating the use of *gairaigo* in Japanese language textbooks and by Japanese language teachers.

In a study by Uchida, it was found that spoken cognates are easier for Japanese students of EFL to recognise than written cognates.³⁷ Due to the use of *katakana* and the transliteration process that occurs during borrowing, it is assumed for this study that spoken cognates will be easier to recognise than written cognates for JFL learners, as they are for Japanese EFL learners. It is for this reason that this study focuses on how spoken *gairaigo*, rather than written *gairaigo*, can assist JFL learning.

Issues Involving Katakana in JFL Learning

In reviewing the literature, one can expect that the use of English loanwords for JFL learning has the potential to be highly useful for English-speaking students. As previously mentioned, however, the use of *gairaigo* is not entirely without problems, as difficulties in processing and comprehending as well as reading and writing *katakana* have been reported for English-speaking students.³⁸ The main reason for this is the fact that the rules for transliterating from English to Japanese have not been consistently applied, as only general rules and guidelines are given.³⁹ Consequently, it is difficult to predict the actual shape of loanwords with certainty as the rules of transfer have changed over time, and established loanwords may have been borrowed under different rules.⁴⁰ In addition, as most *katakana* words are English loanwords, many teachers assume that English L1 students will find them easy and little time, if any, is spent educating students on the transliteration process in JFL education.⁴¹

³⁴ Brown and Williams, op. cit., p. 131.

³⁵ Neustupný, op. cit.

³⁶ ibid., p. 163.

³⁷ Uchida, op. cit.

³⁸ Kobayashi et al., 'Gairaigo ni mirareru nihongoka kisoku no shūtoku'; Ohso, 'Eigo no otokata no nihongoka'.

³⁹ Backhouse, op. cit.

⁴⁰ ibid.

⁴¹ Lovely, 'Learners' Strategies for Transliterating English Loanwords into Katakana'.

A study investigating reasons as to why learners have difficulties comprehending *katakana* was conducted by Igarashi. The study measured the number of words using *kanji* (writing script which uses Chinese characters), *hiragana* (writing script used to write native Japanese words for which there is no *kanji* alternative) and *katakana* in beginner- to advanced-level Japanese textbooks. The study revealed that, as the level of the language in the textbooks increased, *kanji* usage increased while *hiragana* and *katakana* usage decreased. In other words, it was found that the lower the level of the learner, the more *kana* was used. Igarashi concludes that one reason learners find it difficult to comprehend *katakana* is that students are unable to familiarise themselves with *katakana* due to its infrequent use in textbooks. However, Igarashi does not explain why the ratio of *katakana* usage (namely, *gairaigo*) decreases as the proficiency level of the student increases. It is possible that the higher ratios of *katakana* in the early stages of learning could be being used as a strategy to reduce the learning burden for beginner students. This study addresses this phenomenon.

In this section of the literature review, it can be seen that words written in *katakana* are treated differently in different Japanese language textbooks. Although English loanwords are a welcome presence in the language for English-speaking students, there are some issues regarding *gairaigo* usage by these and other students. Most of these issues are linked to poor instruction on their use and could be easily resolved by making pedagogical improvements.

Gairaigo and SLA Theories

According to one SLA theory, the main issue for second-language learners is the difficulty they have in paying attention to linguistic form and meaning simultaneously. According to researchers, in order for language acquisition to occur, learners need to consciously notice a certain form in the input in the process of converting input into intake.⁴³ However, Schmidt explains that due to limited working memory, simultaneous attention to form and meaning is cognitively a dual task for learners and is therefore difficult for learners to successfully accomplish.⁴⁴

According to VanPatten, learners process content words in the input before anything else as they tend to rely on lexical items rather than grammatical form to extract meaning.⁴⁵ In order to focus on form, therefore, VanPatten suggests using lexical items which are easier and which have already been incorporated into the students' developing

 $^{{\}it 42}\quad {\it Igarashi, The Changing Role of Katakana in the Japanese Writing System}.$

⁴³ Schmidt, 'The Role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning'.

⁴⁴ ibid.

⁴⁵ VanPatten, Processing Instruction.



linguistic system. In a similar manner, Koyanagi suggests that teaching instruction should be manipulated to allow students to focus on form and meaning simultaneously to promote language acquisition.⁴⁶ However, Koyanagi does not provide any suggestions for how this should be done. Given that the majority of *gairaigo* are English loanwords and thus cognates for English students, these lexical items could be easier for students to process, which may allow them to focus on form and meaning simultaneously.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Furthering research on the role of *gairaigo* in JFL learning is the main purpose of this study. In order to achieve this, an investigation of how *gairaigo* is used by teachers of Japanese and in teaching materials in the Japanese language classroom was carried out. The overarching research question and the subsequent specific questions pertaining to this study are:

- 1. What is the role and usage of gairaigo in the JFL classroom?
- 2. What is the occurrence of gairaigo in teaching materials?
- 3. How, in general, do teachers consciously use/avoid using *gairaigo* in the classroom?
- 4. What are teachers' views and practices on the use of *gairaigo* in aiding acquisition through focus on form?
- 5. Does the use of *gairaigo* change according to the language level of the student?

With regard to the use of *gairaigo* in Japanese language textbooks, based on the findings from Igarashi's study,⁴⁷ it is hypothesised that the proportion of *gairaigo* will be higher in beginner-level textbooks than advanced-level textbooks, as *gairaigo* may be being used as a strategy to assist language learning in beginners.

⁴⁶ Koyanagi, 'Daini gengo shūtoku katei ni okeru ninchi no yakuwari'.

⁴⁷ Igarashi, op. cit.

Methodology

A case study approach was taken for this study. Although largely qualitative in approach, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in data collection.

In order to address the research questions, three main components were used. These were the measurement of *gairaigo* proportions in three popular Japanese language textbook series, and in the vocabulary lists of Levels 1 to 4 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (as revealed in the Test Content Specifications).⁴⁸ The other component of this study was a set of individual semi-structured interviews with seven teachers from the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland.

As the study focuses on exploring and discovering teaching strategies regarding *gairaigo* usage rather than learning strategies, teacher interviews and textbook word counts were considered the most effective strategy for providing a range of information and views on the use of *gairaigo* in the Japanese language classroom. The small-scale data collection conducted in this research aims to provide insights into the usefulness of *gairaigo* in JFL teaching and learning, and these will become a basis for hypothesis formation and larger-scale empirical research. Further, by contrasting with existing literature on the use of lexical cognates in other FL learning situations, it will also indicate whether the situation of *gairaigo* use in Japanese is comparable.

Measurement of Gairaigo Proportions in Japanese Textbook Series and JLPT Vocabulary Lists

To address research questions one, two and five, the relative proportions of *gairaigo* to the total number of nouns were measured in three popular Japanese language textbook series. In each series, the introductory (zero beginner) level text and subsequent to middle beginner or low-intermediate level text were analysed. This quantitative approach was used to answer research question five. The relationship between the proportion of *gairaigo* found in textbooks and the learning level indicated for the text was correlated. These results were further compared with the findings from similar research conducted elsewhere on textbooks and proportions of *gairaigo* used in the JLPT at different levels.⁴⁹ The textbook series and JLPT guide used were:

• Situational Functional Japanese: Drills (Volumes I and III)⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The Japan Foundation and Association of International Education, Japanese Language Proficiency Test: Test Content Specifications.

⁴⁹ Igarashi, op. cit.; Nakayama, 'Nihongo kyōkasho no gairaigo to shinbun no gairaigo'.

⁵⁰ Otsubo et al., Situational Functional Japanese, Volume 1: Drills; Otsubo et al., Situational Functional Japanese, Volume 3: Drills.



- Japanese for Busy People (Volumes I and II)⁵¹
- Shin Bunka Shokyū Nihongo II and Bunka Chukyū Nihongo II⁵²
- Vocabulary lists of Levels 1 to 4 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, taken from the *Test Content Specification Guide*⁵³

In order to measure the proportions of *gairaigo* to total nouns in a consistent and methodological manner, certain rules were applied for the word counts. Firstly, *gairaigo* from the textbook vocabulary lists were chosen according to a definition. According to this definition, *gairaigo* are European loanwords (i.e., loanwords which have generally been borrowed from foreign languages other than Chinese) and have to some degree been restructured in a semantic, grammatical or phonological sense into the Japanese language. As a result, more complex *gairaigo* such as those which have been truncated, and compound loanwords such as hybrids and innovative compounds, were measured in the study.

Interviews

In order to address research questions one, three, four and five, seven individual semistructured interviews were conducted with Japanese language teachers at the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. This qualitative research strategy allowed data which is difficult to quantify—such as feelings, beliefs and opinions—to be analysed and explored.

The purpose of these interviews was to elicit teacher beliefs regarding *gairaigo* in the JFL classroom. This was particularly effective in addressing how teachers consciously use or avoid *gairaigo* in the classroom (research question three) and in understanding teachers' views on the use of *gairaigo* to aid acquisition through focus on form (part of research question four). Interviews lasted between 20 to 30 minutes and were a particularly effective method because such views and opinions cannot be directly observed.

Ethical clearance to conduct the interviews was applied for and granted according to guidelines of the ethical review process at the University of Queensland. All participants had around 20-30 years' teaching experience and had experience teaching beginning to

⁵¹ Kokusai Nihongo Fukyū Kyokai, Japanese for Busy People; Kokusai Nihongo Fukyū Kyokai, Japanese for Busy People II.

⁵² Bunka Gaikokugo Senmon Gakkō, Bunka Chūkyū Nihongo II; Bunka Gaikokugo Senmon Gakkō, Shin Bunka Shokyū Nihongo II.

⁵³ The Japan Foundation and Association of International Education, op. cit.

advanced levels of Japanese. Six of the seven participants were native Japanese speakers and one participant was a native English speaker. All participants were female.

Four of the seven participants had experience teaching in a non-English speaking country, such as Japan (three participants) and Taiwan (one participant). Below is a table of the participants' L1 and teaching experience.

Table 1. Participant Information Profiles

Participant	L1 of the participant	Teaching experience	Levels of teaching	Taught in countries whose L1 is not English
Participant One	English	30 years	Introductory - Advanced levels	N/A
Participant Two	Japanese	30 years	Introductory - Advanced levels	29 years in Australia, 1 year in Taiwan
Participant Three	Japanese	20 years	Introductory - Advanced levels; more experience with Introductory - Pre-Intermediate students	19 years in Australia, 1 year in Japan
Participant Four	Japanese	22 years	Introductory - Advanced levels	N/A
Participant Five	Japanese	27 years	Introductory -Advanced levels	N/A
Participant Six	Japanese	30 years	Introductory - Advanced levels; more experience with advanced learners	27 years in Australia, 3 years in Japan
Participant Seven	Japanese	19 years	Introductory - Advanced levels	13 years in Australia, 4 years in New Zealand, 2 years in Japan



Prior to the interview, teachers were sent a list of sample questions containing open and closed questions. This allowed teachers to prepare themselves prior to the interview if they wished, and acted as a general guide for conducting the interview. Due to the flexibility of the interview, participants had the opportunity to discuss any points they felt were necessary regarding *gairaigo* and/or its usage in the JFL classroom. All interviews were audio recorded and conducted in English.

Data Analysis

Once the ratio of *gairaigo* to total nouns was determined, the *gairaigo* proportions were quantitatively analysed. If the proportions of *gairaigo* were greater at beginner levels than at more advanced levels, it was inferred that the Japanese language textbooks were possibly using *gairaigo* as a strategy to assist learning at the early stages of language development.

Audio recordings of each interview were transcribed in full, which provided accurate transcriptions and consequently ensured data reliability. The analysis of the transcriptions was conducted using a bricolage approach.⁵⁴ Commonly used in qualitative research, this eclectic approach identifies common patterns and themes in teachers' use of and beliefs about *gairaigo* in the JFL classroom.

Teacher Beliefs

It is important to mention the role of teacher beliefs and teaching behaviour in SLA. Although suggestions for improvements in second-language teaching practices can be made, teachers' beliefs about what is effective in teaching and learning ultimately drive teaching practice. Practices are formed through teachers' personal experiences of language and teaching. Consequently, if an understanding of teachers' current beliefs is gained, the reasons for the current teaching practices should also be revealed. Once understood, researchers are able to question these beliefs and create new, well-informed practices.

Results and Discussion

In this section, the findings for *gairaigo* proportions in the textbook series and in JLPT vocabulary lists are presented in order to address the research questions. This will be followed by an analysis of the teacher interviews.

⁵⁴ Taylor and Bogdan, Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods.

Textbook and JLPT Vocabulary Lists: Results and Discussion

The purpose of the analysis of *gairaigo* proportions found in the textbooks and JLPT vocabulary lists was principally to address research questions two and five, and the overarching research question of this article (research question one).

The results for the *gairaigo* proportions for the two books chosen in each of the three textbook series are as follows.

Table 2. *Gairaigo* proportions for Book 1 in the textbook series (Zero-beginner to elementary levels)

Textbook series (in order of highest to lowest gairaigo proportions)	Gairaigo percentage found in textbook (i.e., number of gairaigo nouns divided by total nouns)
Situational Functional Japanese I	86/369 = 23.3%
Shin Bunka Shokyū Nihongo II	267/1187 = 22.5%
Japanese For Busy People I	80/422 = 19.0%

Table 3. *Gairaigo* proportions for Book 2 in the textbook series (Intermediate - advanced levels)

Textbook series (in order of highest to lowest gairaigo proportions)	Gairaigo percentage found in textbook (i.e., number of gairaigo nouns divided by total nouns)
Situational Functional Japanese III	248/1114 = 22.3%
Japanese For Busy People II	284/1858 = 15.3%
Bunka Chūkyū Nihongo II	133/881 = 15.1%

Table 4. *Gairaigo* proportions found in the vocabulary lists for Levels 1-4 of Content Specifications for the JLPT

JLPT Level	Gairaigo found in level (i.e., number of gairaigo nouns divided by total nouns)
Level 4 (Elementary level)	54/342 = 15.8%
Level 3	20/310 = 6.5%
Level 2	317/2991 = 10.6%
Level 1 (Native-like proficiency is expected)	356/3478 = 10.2%



From the above figures, it can be seen that the proportion of *gairaigo* decreased as the textbooks moved from the zero beginner level to subsequent volumes of the same series. This trend is apparent in all three Japanese language textbook series. A similar trend was found in Igarashi's study which measured the ratio of *katakana* words in textbooks used in Canada. Although Igarashi measured *katakana* words, not *gairaigo* words specifically, the general trend in the data is still meaningful given that the majority of *katakana* words are *gairaigo*. However, Igarashi does not provide evidence to explain why the number of *katakana* words decrease as the learner's level increases.

Based on the textbook results, it appears that there are two factors which determine the proportion of *gairaigo* found in textbooks. The most influential factor determining the proportion of *gairaigo* is the learner level to which the textbook is aimed. The second most influential factor is the teaching approach of the textbook.

Situational Functional Japanese is a textbook series which is communicatively oriented. This is also the textbook series which used the highest proportion of gairaigo overall in comparison to the other textbook series. As explained in the literature review, gairaigo is useful for communication, and as a result, it would not be surprising to find a higher proportion of gairaigo in a textbook using such an approach. Japanese for Busy People I was found to contain the lowest number of gairaigo proportions in comparison to the introductory texts of the other textbook series. The Japanese for Busy People textbook series appears to encourage a teaching style which is based on a behaviourist approach to language teaching. The note to users at the start of the textbook suggests certain behaviours which are characteristic to this approach, such as 'memorisation' and 'repetition of sentence patterns'. 57

The topic content of a textbook could significantly influence the number of *gairaigo* introduced. However, as it is impossible to control this factor (i.e. to find different textbook series which cover the same topics to the same extent), the results of the textbook analysis conducted in the current study are compared with the proportions of *gairaigo* in the vocabulary lists of the JLPT Test Content Specifications (出題基準; *shutsudai kijun*). By referring to the results in Table 4, one can see that the analysis of the proportions of *gairaigo* to total nouns in the JLPT vocabulary lists confirmed the textbook results. Similar to trends shown in the textbooks, there is a decrease in *gairaigo* proportions with the increasing proficiency of the student between Levels 4 and 3, with *gairaigo* proportions decreasing from 15.8% (Level 4) to 6.5% (Level 3). This is a significant drop which clearly demonstrates different usages of *gairago* according to the learning level of the student.

⁵⁵ Igarashi, op. cit.

⁵⁶ Backhouse, op. cit.

⁵⁷ Kokusai Nihongo Fukyū Kyōkai, op. cit., p. 9.

The change in *gairaigo* proportions as proficiency increases between Levels 3 and 2 needs explanation. This change is due to the different learning goals of the students and the different sources from which the vocabulary lists of the JLPT tests for these levels are derived. The purpose for Levels 4 and 3 of the JLPT is to measure learning achievement and the vocabulary lists are based upon vocabulary found in 11 different textbooks. Meanwhile, in Levels 2 and 1, the focus of the test is to measure the general proficiency of the learner rather than their level of achievement. Consequently, the vocabulary lists are drawn from the 11 textbooks in addition to outside sources which use everyday Japanese vocabulary. This can change, as the proportions of *gairaigo* for these lists are 10.6% and 10.2%, which is very similar to the average percentage of *gairaigo* found in the Japanese lexicon (10 per cent).⁵⁸

It was hypothesised in this study that deliberate selection and use of *gairaigo* may be a strategy in Japanese language textbooks to assist learner comprehension and production at the introductory level. If the proportion of *gairaigo* is higher in beginner-level textbooks than at more advanced levels, it is inferred that the textbooks could be using *gairaigo* as a strategy to assist language learning in the elementary levels. The trend of decreasing *gairaigo* proportions from introductory volumes to subsequent volumes and levels of the textbooks supports this hypothesis. These results were further confirmed by the findings for the JLPT vocabulary lists. This study indicates that the phenomenon of using an unrepresentatively large proportion of *gairaigo* nouns to assist learners is most prevalent in texts at the introductory (zero-beginner) level.

Further studies are required to validate the trend and the reasons for the decreasing *gairaigo* proportions found in textbooks. However, the opinions expressed by the teachers in the interviews to be discussed below shed light on this issue.

Teacher Interviews: Results and Discussion

The main purpose of the interviews was to elicit teacher ideas on the role of *gairaigo* in the JFL classroom and to gain an understanding of its use in the JFL classroom. By qualitatively examining and categorising the teachers' use of and thoughts about *gairaigo* from the interview transcripts, research questions were answered and an understanding of the role and usage of *gairaigo* in the JFL classroom was developed. As a result, five major themes emerged from the data.

⁵⁸ Honna, op. cit.



The themes are as follows:

- Gairaigo and student comprehension
- Gairaigo as a teaching strategy
- The relationship between *gairaigo* usage and the proficiency level of the learner
- Teachers' impressions of students' perceptions and use of gairaigo
- Pedagogical issues regarding gairaigo

The interviews revealed that teacher beliefs and use of *gairaigo* are varied and complex and that the way in which teachers use *gairaigo* in the classroom is influenced by several different factors. These factors will be discussed according to the themes below.

Gairaigo and Student Comprehension

A question asked during the interviews was whether or not the teachers thought *gairaigo* was useful for fostering student comprehension of Japanese in the classroom. Out of the seven participants, three thought *gairaigo* was useful, two thought it was sometimes useful and one thought it was largely influenced by factors such as the type of loanword used and the background and learning level of the student. One participant did not think it was useful in fostering comprehension. However, in general, teachers were keen to qualify their responses to this question and the dependant factors are explained below.

In the interviews, six participants explained that *gairaigo* which was phonologically and semantically closer to the original English word was easier for students to understand than those which were not. Similar results were found in a study with Japanese students learning English.⁵⁹ However, Participant Six brought up the fact that individual differences between learners also affect *gairaigo* comprehension. These individual differences include learner's background (i.e., whether or not English is the student's L1), and the level of the learner in terms of their Japanese language development.

⁵⁹ Daulton, Gairaigo: The Built-in Lexicon?

Participant Six explained that beginner learners may find comprehension of *gairaigo* difficult if they are not well acquainted with Japanese phonology. Uchida demonstrated this phenomenon in a study which found that more advanced learners were able to identify cognates better than beginner learners.⁶⁰ Uchida explains that this is due to the improvement of students' strategies for identifying cognates over time. However, Participant Two explained that this can be overcome by teacher instruction.

Another variable which affected student comprehension according to the teachers is the form in which the *gairaigo* is presented to students. Two participants made special note of the fact that student comprehension varies according to whether students encounter the *gairaigo* in a written or spoken format. Teachers noted that spoken *gairaigo* is more easily understood than written *gairaigo*, which supports the literature.⁶¹

Gairaigo as a Teaching Strategy

The second topic discussed in the interviews was the use of *gairaigo* as a teaching strategy. Out of the seven participants, four teachers thought *gairaigo* was useful in reducing the processing load when introducing new sentences. Of these four participants, three teachers actively used *gairaigo* as a tool for reducing the learners' cognitive load when introducing new sentences. The remaining participants claimed they would not particularly seek out *gairaigo* to use in new sentence patterns but would instead use simple vocabulary which was appropriate to the context. Two participants had never consciously thought about *gairaigo* as being a useful tool for reducing the cognitive load on students.

On the basis of the teachers' answers, it is clear that some teachers have a highly refined approach to using *gairaigo* in the classroom, whereas others do not consciously use it as a strategy to assist Japanese language learning at all.

Participant One uses *gairaigo* as a teaching strategy to reduce cognitive load and motivate students. The participant explained that this helped to make classroom goals achievable and to retain student comprehension in beginner learners:

Motivationally I think if you introduce to beginners, well, just constantly bombard them with new vocabulary that they don't know, can't remember and need to learn, I think motivationally it's a downer for them. [Gairaigo] reduces the drag element of the new language, in a way it's kind of a false thing

⁶⁰ Uchida, op. cit.

⁶¹ ibid.



limiting the amount of vocabulary but if learners are exposed to too much, they just drop the baton, get overwhelmed, think that they'll never be able to do it, so you have to make whatever you do in each class achievable and that's a way of doing it.

Participant One explained that she would use *gairaigo* to balance the amount of new vocabulary when introducing a new pattern to reduce the learning burden. For example, the participant explained that she might use a couple of sample sentences to demonstrate the new pattern and of those she would use a mixture of new Japanese words, *gairaigo* words or brand names which the teacher was confident the students would know.

However, Participant Three would have a lexicon-specific approach to using *gairaigo*. Participant Three explained that when introducing new sentence patterns to beginners, words such as 'つくえ (*tsukue*; desk)' and '喫茶店 (*kissaten*; coffee shop or café)' would be replaced by the *gairaigo* words 'テーブル (*tēburu*; table)' and 'カフェー (*kafē*; café)', respectively. The reason for this was because beginner students 'find [the original Japanese words] difficult' (Participant Three), and often become distracted trying to work out the meaning of the word rather than focusing on the sentence pattern.

Participants Four and Five described the issues that can occur due to slight semantic differences between *gairaigo* and the original English word. As a result, these teachers would not actively seek to use *gairaigo* unless the context permitted, as they were concerned that students may begin using the word incorrectly.

The interviews showed teacher limitations to be a factor which affects *gairaigo* usage in the classroom. Factors regarding the length of time they have lived in Australia and how confident teachers are in using English also influenced how much *gairaigo* is used in the classroom. For example, Participant Three described how she '[doesn't] really do well with code-switching [between English and Japanese]' because she 'normally pronounces English words with a Japanese accent to some degree.' The participant explained that 'students can become confused when I use English words as they are not sure if I'm speaking Japanese or English.' Consequently, the teacher explained how this can limit the number of *gairaigo* she uses in class.

Moreover, Participants Two and Five explained that as they have been living in Australia for a long time, they are not confident that they have a grasp on the latest developments in Japan in terms of *gairaigo* and explain that their *gairaigo* usage is becoming 'slightly outdated':

It's hard because I have been teaching in Australia for a long time, so [I] don't really have a grasp of what's happening now so [my *gairaigo* usage is] slightly outdated. (Participant Two)

The Relationship Between Gairaigo Usage and the Proficiency Level of the Student

The third topic that emerged from the interviews was whether or not teachers varied their use of *gairaigo* according to the language proficiency of the students. The way in which the teachers varied their usage differed among four of the teachers. For example, Participant One recounted that in advanced-level classes she gauges learners' comprehension and gradually moves from more complicated Japanese expressions to *gairaigo* if possible, and then to English if students don't understand a particular concept. Similarly, Participants Three and Seven stated that they use *gairaigo* to aid comprehension and to reduce the learning burden for beginner students but do not continue doing this for advanced learners as they should have a larger vocabulary base. Participant Two explained that their use of *gairaigo* changes according to the type of course they are teaching. If the course is a more academically oriented course, they try to use or introduce more *kanji*. However, if it is a discussion-based course where developing oral skills is more important than learning sets of *kanji*, then in this circumstance, *gairaigo* is easier to use and more fun for the students.

Teachers' Impressions of Students' Perceptions and Pedagogical Issues Regarding Gairaigo

It was very common for teachers to refer to students' perceptions of *gairaigo* as being 'fun' (Participants One, Two, Three and Seven), 'interesting' and a source of 'motivation' and 'confidence' for students (Participants One and Two). However, an interesting issue brought up by six of the participants was students' difficulties in correctly writing or pronouncing *gairaigo*. Teacher participants suggested that this may be due to their difficulties in understanding the Japanese phonological system. As previously noted, Participant Two held the view, also articulated by Lovely,⁶² that teaching instruction is required for students to understand the Japanese phonological system. Participant One also recommends this, but explained that this is often difficult as it takes up class time that can otherwise be spent on learning the language, rather than learning about the language. Participant Two suggested that a greater volume of established *gairaigo* should be used in textbooks, as they find that *gairaigo* is introduced as if it is 'second-class vocabulary'. Participant One also refers to students' perceptions of *gairaigo* in a similar way, describing students' opinions of it as 'second-rate vocabulary'.



Conclusion

This study extended the current literature on the use of cognates and loanwords in the JFL classroom by its examination of the specific context of English speakers learning Japanese. The data collected supports the findings of existing research into the efficacy of strategic uses of cognate lexical items in the learning of various languages. This was most apparent in the teacher interviews as the research revealed that JFL teachers have similar views on the positive and negative issues surrounding the use of *gairaigo* as a tool for assisting JFL. These findings often mirrored the thoughts and opinions found in the literature; notably, those which are associated with EFL in Japanese students.

The teacher interviews revealed that the majority of teachers had a refined understanding of the uses and effects of *gairaigo* in the JFL classroom. Like cognates in general, most teachers find that *gairaigo* is useful in assisting language comprehension and production by students. However, they also noted that individual learner differences affect the usefulness of cognates. Teachers expressed concern about the difficulties students frequently encounter as a result of the transformation process from English to *gairaigo* and suggested that students should be taught the transliteration process in order to allow students to better comprehend and use *gairaigo*. However, one teacher explained that this is often difficult as classroom contact time is limited, and they questioned whether teaching this system should be a high priority.

Consequently, this study clearly confirms previous studies regarding the benefits of cognates and demonstrates that *gairaigo* has the same effects as cognates do in many other languages. The teachers' views in many areas reflect principles identified elsewhere. However, this study also identified a number of variables driving teachers' use of *gairaigo* that have so far not been articulated in the literature. These issues include those of teachers' personal limitations. Such factors include how confident teachers are in using English and how up-to-date their use of *gairaigo* is.

In order to address such issues, it is suggested that improvements could be made to Japanese language teacher training programs. Adjustments to the syllabus of teacher training programs which aim to create an awareness of the benefits of *gairaigo* usage in the classroom and build teacher confidence regarding *gairaigo* are suggested. More specifically, teacher training programs demonstrating how *gairaigo* can be used in the JFL classroom would be beneficial. It is also recommended that professional development programs and on-line teacher forums should be created to assist practising teachers to keep abreast of new *gairaigo*. Lastly, it would be beneficial if teacher training programs contained explicit instructions on established transliteration rules as this would assist students' comprehension of *gairaigo*. This supports suggestions made in the literature

to assist JFL learning.⁶³ Findings not previously revealed include issues in the classroom regarding teachers' impressions of students. Teachers described students' perceptions of *gairaigo* as 'second-class vocabulary'.

Furthermore, teachers explained that textbooks did not contain enough *gairaigo*. This is an interesting finding because the study demonstrates a higher proportion of *gairaigo* in earlier stages of learning in textbooks than subsequent stages. However, this disproportionally high level of *gairaigo* usage drops below the average in subsequent levels. Previous literature has also found that the number of *gairaigo* in textbooks is insufficient for everyday communication. His was concluded by Nakayama who identified and compared high-use loanwords in Japanese textbooks and newspapers in a study. Nakayama considered frequently-used words in newspapers as words which are necessary for daily communication. However, in spite of this, it was found that the number of frequently used loan words had low possibilities of being taught in Japanese textbooks, thereby making JFL students loanword-disadvantaged. In order to address this issue, it is suggested that textbooks should contain frequently used *gairaigo* in proportions which parallel the levels of *gairaigo* in general use. Not only would this help to prevent JFL students from being loanword-disadvantaged, but it would also assist in solving issues regarding teacher limitations concerning *gairaigo*.

The word counts in this study confirmed the hypothesis that *gairaigo* is being used as a strategy to assist language learning, particularly in entry level texts. These findings correlated positively with similar studies on other textbooks conducted elsewhere. However, in order to prove that *gairaigo* is deliberately being used in this way to aid English speakers, further research is required. Although the textbooks chosen for the study varied in topics, pedagogical styles and target learners (factors considered to affect the number of *gairaigo*), a comparison of *gairaigo* proportions in Japanese-language textbooks for English speakers and for non-English speakers is required. This is necessary as it is possible that the higher proportion of *gairaigo* may simply be due to textbook authors introducing and practising *katakana* script in the early stages of learning.

The findings from this research provide a springboard for future research in the field. Teachers' beliefs based on their education and individual teaching and learning experiences play an important role in driving the teaching and learning of their students. The current study has shown that, although the use of *gairaigo* is not a prominent issue in JFL teacher training or pedagogical research, teachers are highly articulate on a range of issues related to using it in teaching and learning. This wealth of experience

⁶³ Lovely, op. cit.

⁶⁴ Nakayama, op. cit.



by practitioners should be valued and further tested through formal research to benefit other practitioners. Despite the small scale of this study, the data has confirmed findings in the field and contributed new findings. Suggestions for further research include the design of a larger-scale study to further investigate the strategic use of *gairaigo* by teachers in JFL learning. Research addressing the sudden drop in *gairaigo* proportions in post-beginner textbooks should be also be undertaken by comparing *gairaigo* proportions in Japanese-language textbooks for English speakers and for speakers of languages other than English. Where teachers identified that more *gairaigo* in commercial learning resources would be useful, answers to the questions 'How much?', 'What kind?' and 'In what ways could these be introduced to learners?' would be useful. Furthermore, as this study focused on teacher beliefs, future research on learner beliefs would be useful.

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