# High-frequency English-based Loanword Cognates for EFL in Japan

Frank E. DAULTON
*Ryukoku University, Japan*

*This article examines the loanwords in Japanese that are based on high-frequency English vocabulary, and it assesses their quality as cognates in EFL. The first part shows that members of around half of the high-frequency word families of the British National Corpus have become commonly known loanwords in Japanese. Next the author evaluates certain aspects of semantic similarity (i.e., semantic type; dictionary definitions) and formal similarity (i.e., shortening) that are highly salient in language transfer and easily assessed, as well as other limitations on loanword usage (e.g., being a bound morpheme). The results suggest that this loanword-based cognate resource is not only large but of good quality. The article concludes by discussing some implications and directions for future research.*

## Introduction

Common among EFL educators in Japan is the belief that English-based loanwords (LWs; known as *gairaigo* in Japan) are a hindrance to language acquisition. Many or most teachers avoid LWs in the classroom (see Uchiwa, 2007), and when mentioning them, emphasize their dangers. This approach is largely based upon the ludicrous or otherwise memorable errors that *false friends* (or *faux amis*), such as *konsento* for an electrical outlet, can produce.

In EFL academic discussion, the criticism of English-based LWs in Japan relies upon descriptions of interlingual differences and transfer errors. For example, both Simon-Maeda (1995) and Sheperd (1996) catalog various LW "pitfalls"; while Simon-Maeda advocates discussing LWs in class, Sheperd recommends shunning them and furthermore claims that LWs are detrimental to Japanese society—a common theme