研究論文

The Characteristics of Basic Words Difficult for Japanese EFL Learners to Acquire through High School Education

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高校修了時点において習得しづらい 基本語の特定とその特性

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Abstract

The study examines the Japanese EFL learners' vocabulary at the elementary 1,000- to intermediate 2,000-word levels, using a vocabulary estimation test. The data are analyzed according to participants' grades and schools. The study attempts to identify words difficult to acquire even for advanced learners (third-year senior high school students). Results show that there are a few words difficult for them to acquire even at the elementary 1,000-word level. There are four or five words at the E1,000-word level whose success rates are worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students whilst there were only one or two words at the I1,000-word level whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. There are only a few words whose success rates were worst 10 regardless of school grades except third-year students. I conclude that educators should recognize the fact that the words difficult for third-years to aquire are also difficult for first- and second-years to acquire and that they should teach vocabulary to their students, taking the nature of a word into account.

Introduction

Educators need to determine students' vocabulary size to help them develop their English skills. Yashima (2004) estimated the vocabulary of Japanese EFL high school and university students, using the Vocabulary Estimation Test (VET) at $1,000$- to $4,000$-word levels. The test was a multiple-choice test with 100 items at each level, an appropriate number to test receptive knowledge (Schmitt, 2000, p. 166). The average vocabulary for first-year students was $1,458.92$ words while third-year students' was $2,826.95$. However, the vocabulary at $5,000$- to $6,000$-word levels were not measured, so Yashima (2005) estimated the vocabulary size of Japanese EFL learners, using a revised VET at $1,000$- to $6,000$-word levels. The means in estimated vocabulary size (EVS) for first-year students was $2,025.23$ words while those of third-year students was $3,630.32$. The study also showed four words difficult even for sophomores to learn at the $1,000$-word level, while there were four words whose success rates for first-years were over 70 percent at the $6,000$-word level. This showed a need to reclassify all the target words and distractors into six word levels, not according to frequency of students' success rates in answering. Yashima (2006, 2007b) examined the success rate of all these words. According to the results, Yashima (2007a) re-classified $1,800$ words used in the VET at the $1,000$- to $6,000$-word levels into six word levels: elementary $1,000$-, intermediate $1,000$-, intermediate $2,000$-, advanced $1,000$-, advanced $2,000$-, and advanced $3,000$-word levels (E$1,000$, I$1,000$, I$2,000$, A$1,000$, A$2,000$, and A$3,000$ respectively) and examined participants' vocabulary. The results seemed to show that there were some words at the E$1,000$-word level difficult even for third-year students to acquire. This paper attempts to find these difficult words for them to acquire at the E$1,000$- to I$1,000$-word levels.

The study

Purpose

The study attempts to clarify how well Japanese EFL learners acquire the receptive knowledge of E$1,000$- to I$2,000$-word levels. I also examine (1) words difficult even for third-year students to acquire at E$1,000$- to I$1,000$-word levels, and (2) how well Japanese EFL learners except third-years acquire these words. I also examine what are the most difficult ten words for these learners to acquire at these two levels.

Hypotheses

 With the above points in mind, I have constructed the following hypotheses:

 (1) There are some words at the E1,000- to I1,000-word levels difficult for third-
   year students to acquire.

 (2) There are many of the above words which are also true of Japanese EFL
   learners other than third-year students.

 (3) There are some common words which are the most difficult ten words for the
   above learners to acquire at these two levels respectively.

Participants

 Participants in this study were 280 first-year students from two Tokyo high
schools (Schools A and B), 283 second-year students from one Tokyo high school and
one Saitama high school (Schools A and C), 247 third-year students from one Tokyo
high school (School A), and 42 sophomores from a science university. They had been
learning English for 3 to 7 years.

Materials

 In Yashima (2006, 2007b), participants were tested on 1,800 words used in the
VET at the 1,000- to 6,000-word levels taken from the *JACET List of 8000 Basic Words*
(JACET 8000). All words were re-classified into six word-levels according to the par-
ticipants' success rates: E1,000-, I1,000-, I2,000-, A1,000-, A2,000-, and A3,000-word
levels. Each word level had 300 words and their success rates were 90.61 percent or
more, 70.20 to 89.66 percent, 50.07 to 69.79 percent, 30.22 to 49.75 percent, 21.83
to 30.12 percent, and 21.54 percent or less respectively. Each target word had two
distractors at each level, based on Shizuka's (2003) study. Words which were almost
the same in percentage terms at each level were selected as a target word and its two
distractors, and words whose percentage was in the middle of the three words were
selected as target words in principle. Only nouns, verbs, and adjectives were used. In
this study, all the target words were re-classified into six word-levels according to
Yashima (2008).

Procedure

 This study required one 50-minute session. Participants were given the test at the
E1,000- to I2,000-word levels. Participants answered as many questions as possible in
order of numbers and levels.

Scoring

If participants could answer 1 question at each level, they were regarded as having 10 words regardless of levels. However, there were two cases where participants could choose the correct answer if they didn't know it. Therefore, if participants put a circle round the number at the side of the item, they could answer it at a guess with a probability of one in three, so they were regarded as having 3.3 words. Moreover, if they put a triangle round it, they could answer it because they knew the other two options, so they were regarded as having 6.7 words.

Results

Words at the E1,000- to I1,000-word Levels Difficult for Third-year Students to Acquire

Table 1 shows the ranges of success rates of 100 target words for first- to third-year senior high school students and sophomore university students at the E1,000- to I2,000-word levels according to Yashima (2008). The success rate of all the target words at the E1,000-word level was more than 95 percent, at the I1,000-word level, more than 80 percent, and at the I2,000-word level, more than 61 percent. The test where all the target words had been re-classified into six word levels according to the results was used in this study. Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations in success rates of 100 target words for first- to third-year senior high school students and sophomore university students. There is little difference among school grades at the E1,000-word level. The means in success rates of 100 target words were more than 95 percent regardless of school grades. Moreover, the means in success rates of 100 target words at the I1,000-word level were more than 80 percent regardless of school grades and as for third-year students, the means at the E1,000- to I2,000-word levels were more than 90 percent. Table 3 shows the ranges of success rates of 100 target words for first- to third-year senior high school students and sophomore university students at the E1,000- to I2,000-word levels in this study. The figure was much lower than Yashima (2008). As mentioned above, all the words were re-classified into six word levels according to the previous data, but there were not a few words which were not true of them.

Table 1

Ranges of Success Rates of 100 Target Words for First- to Third-year Senior High School Students and Sophomore University Students According to Yashima (2008)

Word level		1st years	2nd years	3rd years	Sophomores	Total
E1,000	MAX	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
	MIN	90.17	95.26	93.23	86.47	95.00
I1,000	MAX	99.55	99.61	100.00	100.00	94.51
	MIN	58.13	76.92	78.68	55.19	80.91
I2,000	MAX	93.95	88.35	95.23	97.94	79.40
	MIN	27.95	37.12	47.64	39.56	61.04

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations in Success Rates of 100 Target Words for First- to Third-year Senior High School Students and Sophomore University Students

Word level		1st years n=280	2nd years n=283	3rd years n=247	Sophomores n=42	Total n=852
E1,000	Mean	97.66	99.44	99.81	97.99	98.51
	SD	2.47	.82	.52	2.99	1.50
I1,000	Mean	80.51	86.41	98.01	90.44	87.05
	SD	9.37	7.74	2.41	7.01	5.83
I2,000	Mean	45.49	74.13	90.46	77.16	71.81
	SD	20.31	13.95	7.13	11.24	9.30

Table 3

Ranges of Success Rates of 100 Target Words for First- to Third-year Senior High School Students and Sophomore University Students

Word level		1st years	2nd years	3rd years	Sophomores	Total
E1,000	MAX	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
	MIN	86.51	95.69	95.82	84.93	92.81
I1,000	MAX	98.46	99.31	100.00	100.00	98.20
	MIN	55.92	60.92	85.81	65.86	70.29
I2,000	MAX	96.15	97.31	99.05	97.62	93.14
	MIN	9.90	27.95	66.64	30.95	40.57

Table 4 shows the worst 11 words in success rates at the E1,000-word level for third-year high school students and the situations where these words were answered. There was only one word, "quick," at the E1,000-word level whose answer column five of them or more left blank or whose meaning five of them or more didn't know.

The same was true of the case of the word they could answer at a guess or in elimina-tion. "Quick" was the only word five or more students could answer at a guess or in elimination. Moreover, there was only one word, "curve," where the sum of blanks, mistakes, inference, and elimination was five or more. Table 5 shows the worst 10 words in success rates at the I1,000-word level for third-year high school students and the situations where these words were answered. All the words were the words at the I1,000-word level whose answer columns five of them or more left blank or whose meanings five of them or more didn't know. And seven words in ten were the words whose answer columns ten or more of them left blank or whose meanings ten or more of them didn't know. Moreover, there were nine words in ten five or more students could answer at a guess or in elimination. And six words in ten were the words ten or more students could answer at a guess or in elimination.

Table 4

Worst 11 Words in Success Rates at the E1,000-word Level for Third-year High School Students and the Situations Where These Words Were Answered (n=247)

	Correct answers	ªS.R. w I/E	Blanks (B)	Mistakes (M)	Inference (I)	Elimination (E)	Success rates
*quick (adj)**	234	94.74%	0	8	2	3	95.82%
main (adj)	243	98.38%	0	4	0	0	98.38%
***curve (n)	242	97.98%	0	3	1	1	98.38%
photography	243	98.38%	0	3	1	0	98.51%
collection	245	99.19%	0	2	0	0	99.19%
chef	244	98.79%	0	1	1	1	99.19%
plate (n)	245	99.19%	0	2	0	0	99.19%
nail	244	98.79%	0	1	0	2	99.33%
wish (v)	245	99.19%	0	1	0	1	99.46%
paradise	245	99.19%	0	1	0	1	99.46%
tradition	245	99.19%	0	1	0	1	99.46%

Note. ª S.R. w I/E stands for success rates without inference or elimination.
* shows that the sum of blanks and mistakes was five or more in the word.
** shows that the sum of inference and elimination was five or more in the word.
*** shows that the sum of blanks, mistakes, inference, and elimination was five or more in the word.

Table 5

*Worst 11 Words in Success Rates at the E1,000-word Level for Third-year High School
Students and the Situations Where These Words Were Answered (n=247)*

	Correct answers	ªS.R. w I/E	Blanks (B)	Mistakes (M)	Inference (I)	Elimination (E)	Success rates
*bronze (n)**	206	83.40%	2	23	14	2	85.81%
*sleeve**	204	82.59%	2	15	15	11	87.58%
*galaxy**	218	88.26%	2	14	10	3	90.41%
*toss (v)**	225	91.09%	4	11	5	2	92.30%
*attendant (n)**	225	91.09%	3	9	9	1	92.57%
*presentation**	228	92.31%	1	4	11	3	94.59%
*wagon**	229	92.71%	0	5	12	1	94.59%
*license**	233	94.33%	0	10	4	2	94.87%
*feather**	232	93.93%	1	7	6	1	95.00%
*pearl	234	94.74%	2	9	1	1	95.14%

Note. ª S.R. w I/E stands for success rates without inference or elimination.

* shows that the sum of blanks and mistakes was five or more in the word.

** shows that the sum of inference and elimination was five or more in the word.

Success Rates of Target Words for Japanese EFL Learners Which Third-year Senior High School Students Could Answer Least Successfully

Table 6 shows success rates of 11 target words at the E1 ,000-word level for Japanese EFL learners which third-year senior high school students could answer least successfully. There were four or five words whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. Although students in each grade could answer almost all of these words unsuccessfully as in the case of third-year students, they could answer some of them quite successfully. As for "main" and "tradition," for example, only second-year students could answer them successfully. Table 7 shows success rates of 10 target words at the I1 ,000-word level for Japanese EFL learners which third-year senior high school students could answer least successfully. There were only one or two words whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. As at the E1 ,000-word level, although students in each grade could almost all of these words unsuccessfully as in the case of third-year students, they could answer some of them quite successfully. As for "galaxy," for example, only second-year students could answer them successfully.

Table 6

Success Rates of 11 Target Words at the E1,000-word Level for Japanese EFL Learners Which Third-year Senior High School Students Could Answer Least Successfully

	3rd years	2nd years	1st years	Sophomores	Average
quick (adj)	95.82%	98.20% (92)	94.41% (92)	96.83% (76)	95.93% (94)
main (adj)	98.38%	100.00% (1)	94.50% (91)	88.10% (99)	95.10% (97)
curve (n)	98.38%	99.46% (53)	92.92% (96)	97.62% (58)	96.26% (90)
photography	98.51%	96.60% (98)	97.14% (70)	90.48% (96)	95.97% (92)
collection	99.19%	99.28% (75)	97.35% (67)	100.00% (1)	98.64% (61)
chef	99.19%	98.75% (87)	98.30% (51)	100.00% (1)	98.91% (52)
plate (n)	99.19%	99.28% (75)	94.37% (93)	100.00% (1)	97.44% (80)
nail	99.33%	98.03% (95)	96.06% (76)	93.64% (89)	96.62% (88)
wish (v)	99.46%	99.10% (90)	95.47% (82)	90.48% (96)	96.00% (91)
paradise	99.46%	98.39% (91)	95.71% (81)	100.00% (1)	97.85% (75)
tradition	99.46%	100.00% (1)	86.51% (100)	96.83% (76)	93.86% (99)

Note. The number in parentheses shows the rank of success rates of the target words.
The number underlined shows the target words whose success rates were worst 10 as in the case of third-year students.

Table 7

Success Rates of 11 Target Words at the I1,000-word Level for Japanese EFL Learners Which Third-year Senior High School Students Could Answer Least Successfully

	3rd years	2nd years	1st years	Sophomores	Average
bronze (n)	85.81%	74.81% (90)	70.46% (83)	92.05% (49)	78.07% (91)
sleeve	87.58%	78.41% (85)	66.69% (88)	81.74% (89)	76.58% (93)
galaxy	90.41%	95.97% (5)	64.33% (94)	88.88% (59)	83.32% (78)
toss (v)	92.30%	81.93% (76)	77.83% (68)	87.29% (67)	83.18% (80)
attendant (n)	92.57%	83.42% (73)	79.81% (58)	90.48% (53)	84.92% (68)
wagon	94.59%	85.69% (63)	80.05% (56)	94.43% (36)	86.75% (55)
presentation	94.59%	80.27% (79)	72.56% (81)	84.90% (77)	80.86% (87)
license	94.87%	84.06% (72)	78.29% (65)	95.24% (27)	85.80% (63)
feather	95.00%	66.59% (99)	55.92% (100)	81.74% (89)	70.29% (100)
pearl	95.14%	91.42% (30)	80.42% (54)	100.00% (1)	89.80% (37)

Note. The number in parentheses shows the rank of success rates of the target words.
The number underlined shows the target words whose success rates were worst 10 as in the case of third-year students.

Success Rates at the E1,000-word Level for First- to Third-year Senior High School Students and Sophomore University Students

Table 8 shows the worst 10 words in success rates at the E1,000-word level for first- to third-year senior high school students and sophomore university students. It

shows the variety of the worst 10 words according to school grades. There was only one word, "tear," whose success rate was worst 10 across school grades except third-years. There was also only one word, "grade," whose success rate was worst 10 across school grades except third-years and sophomores. Moreover, the success rates of half of the worst 10 words for first-years and the worst 12 words for sophomores were 100 percent for third-years, and the success rates of three of the worst 10 words for second-years were also 100 percent for third-years. In addition, all the worst 10 words for first-years were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 and half of them were at the 1,000-word level, which means that first-years could answer high-frequency words unsuccessfully. It is almost true of second-years and sophomores. Seven of the worst 10 words for second-years and 10 of the worst 12 words for sophomores were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 and nine of them for sophomores were at the 1,000-word level though only two of them for second-years were. It is also quite true of third-years. Seven of the worst 11 words for third-years were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 but only two of them were at the 1,000-word level.

　　Table 9 shows the worst 10 words in success rates at the I1,000-word level for first- to third-year senior high school students and sophomore university students. It shows the much more variety of the worst 10 words according to school grades than E1,000-word level. There were no words whose success rates were worst 10 across school grades except third-years. As mentioned in previous section, there were at most two words whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. However, there were three words, "accept," "remain," and "empty" whose success rates were worst 10 across school grades except third-years and sophomores. Moreover, the success rates of two of the worst 10 words for second-years and sophomores were 100 percent for third-years, whilst there were no worst 10 words for first-years whose success rates were 100 percent for third-years. In addition, nine of the worst 10 words for first-years were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 and four of them were at the 1,000-word level, which means that first-years could answer high-frequency words unsuccessfully as E1,000-word level. It is almost true of second-years and sophomores. Nine of the worst 10 words for second-years and seven of them for sophomores were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 and four of them for second-years were at the 1,000-word level though only two of them for sophomores were. It is, however, quite different from third-years. Only two of the worst 10 words for third-years were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 and none of them were at the 1,000-word level.

Table 8

Worst 10 Words in Success Rates at the E1,000-word Level for First- to Third-year Senior High School Students and Sophomore University Students

1st years	2nd years	3rd years	Sophomores	Average
tradition (2)	*grade (n) (2)	quick (a) (2)	*tear (n) (1)	*tear (n) (1)
*grade (n) (2)	tear (n) (1)	main (a) (1)	main (a) (1)	tradition (2)
fact (1)	photography (5)	curve (n) (3)	photography (5)	*grade (n) (2)
*tear (n) (1)	*comment (n) (2)	photography (5)	wish (v) (1)	main (a) (1)
*curve (n) (3)	*combination (2)	collection (2)	afraid (1)	fact (1)
*reach (v) (1)	nail (4)	chef (6)	*reach (v) (1)	*reach (v) (1)
*national (a) (1)	quick (a) (2)	plate (n) (2)	*mark (v) (1)	quick (a) (2)
plate (n) (2)	appear (1)	nail (4)	*snake (n) (3)	afraid (1)
quick (a) (2)	humanity (3)	wish (v) (1)	nail (4)	photography (5)
main (a) (1)	paradise (6)	paradise (6)	*national (a) (1)	wish (v) (1)
		tradition (2)	fact (1)	
			*secret (a) (1)	

Note. The number in parentheses shows the rank of the target words in the JACET 8000. For example, 1 means that the word is at the 1000-word level.
* shows that the success rate of the word for third-year students was 100 percent.
The word underlined shows that it was one of the worst 10 words across school grades except third-years.
The word underneath which a wave line is drawn shows that it was one of the worst 10 words for first- and second-years in common.

Table 9

Worst 10 Words in Success Rates at the I1,000-word Level for First- to Third-year Senior High School Students and Sophomore University Students

1st years	2nd years	3rd years	Sophomores	Average
feather (3)	accept (1)	bronze (n) (5)	dig (3)	feather (3)
various (1)	feather (3)	sleeve (4)	reply (v) (1)	accept (1)
accept (1)	reply (v) (1)	galaxy (5)	*suffer (1)	dig (3)
salary (3)	empty (2)	toss (v) (5)	perform (2)	empty (2)
remain (1)	*financial (2)	attendant (n) (6)	excite (5)	remain (1)
sight (n) (1)	explore (2)	wagon (6)	mat (6)	reply (v) (1)
galaxy (5)	remain (1)	presentation (3)	explore (2)	*financial (2)
dig (3)	domestic (a) (4)	license (5)	repetition (5)	sleeve (4)
empty (2)	*suffer (1)	feather (3)	equal (a) (2)	repetition (5)
illusion (3)	perform (2)	pearl (6)	*financial (2)	bronze (n) (5)

Note. The number in parentheses shows the rank of the target words in the JACET 8000. For example, 1 means that the word is at the 1000-word level.
* shows that the success rate of the word for third-year students was 100 percent.
The word underlined shows that it was one of the worst 10 words across school grades except third-years.
The word underneath which a wave line is drawn shows that it was one of the worst 10 words for first- and second-years in common.

Discussion

Table 4 shows there was only one word, "quick," at the E1,000-word level whose answer column five of third-years or more left blank or whose meaning five of them or more didn't know. "Quick" was also the only word five or more students could answer at a guess or in elimination. Moreover, there was only one word, "curve," in which the sum of blanks, mistakes, inference, and elimination was five or more. Table 5 shows all the words were the words at the I1,000-word level whose answer columns five of them or more left blank or whose meanings five of them or more didn't know. And seven words in ten were the words whose answer columns ten or more of them left blank or whose meanings ten or more of them didn't know. Moreover, there were nine words in ten five or more students could answer at a guess or in elimination. And six words in ten were the words ten or more students could answer at a guess or in elimination. According to Table 2, the difference in success rates between at the E1,000- and I1,000-word levels was only about two percent, but the number of the words difficult for them to acquire at the I1,000-word level is much larger than that of the words at the E1,000-word level. My first hypothesis could be accepted.

Table 6 shows there were four or five words at the E1,000-word level whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. Although students in each grade could answer almost all of these words unsuccessfully as in the case of third-year students, they could answer some of them quite successfully. As for "main" and "tradition," for example, all the second-year students could answer them successfully. There were four words, "collection," "chef," "plate," and "paradise" whose success rates for sophomores were 100 percent. Table 7 shows there were only one or two words at the I1,000-word level whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. As at the E1,000-word level, although students in each grade could almost all these words unsuccessfully as in the case of third-year students, they could answer some of them quite successfully. As for "galaxy," for example, almost all the second-year students could answer them successfully. There was one word, "pearl," whose success rate for sophomores was 100 percent. As there were four or five words at the E1,000-word level whose success rates were worst 10 across school grades whilst there were only one or two words at the I1,000-word level whose success rates were worst 10 across school grades, the second hypothesis could be partly accepted.

Table 8 shows the variety of the worst 10 words at the E1,000-word level accord-

ing to school grades. There was only one word, "tear," whose success rate was worst 10 across school grades except third-years. There was also only one word, "grade," whose success rate was worst 10 across school grades except third-years and sophomores. Moreover, the success rates of half of them for first-years and sophomores were 100 percent for third-years, and the success rates of three of the worst 10 words for second-years were also 100 percent for third-years. Table 9 shows the much more variety of the worst 10 words at the I1,000-word level according to school grades than at the E1,000-word level. There were no words whose success rates were worst 10 across school grades except third-years. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there were at most two words whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. However, there were three words, "accept," "remain," and "empty," whose success rates were worst 10 across school grades except third-years and sophomores. Moreover, the success rates of two of the worst 10 words for second-years and sophomores were 100 percent for third-years, "financial" and "suffer," whilst there were no worst 10 words for first-years whose success rates were 100 percent for third-years. As there were one to three words whose success rate was worst 10 across school grades except third-years and sophomores at these two levels respectively whilst there were no words at the I1,000-word level whose success rates were worst 10 across school grades except third-years, the third hypothesis could also be accepted.

In addition, almost all the worst 10 words across school grades except third-years were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 at the E1,000- and I1,000-word levels, and many of them were at the 1,000-word level. Moreover, seven of the worst 11 words for third-years were also at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 whilst only two of them were at the 1,000-word level. However, at the I1,000-word level, only two of the worst 10 words for third-years were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 and none of them were at the 1,000-word level.

Conclusion and implications

This study shows there was one word at the E1,000-word level whose answer column five of third-years or more left blank or whose meaning five of them or more didn't know. The word was also the only word five or more third-years could answer at a guess or in elimination. Moreover, there was one word in which the sum of blanks, mistakes, inference, and elimination was five or more. The results indicate there were ten words or more at the I1,000-word level whose answer columns five of them or

more left blank or whose meanings five of them or more didn't know. And there were seven words or more whose answer columns ten or more of them left blank or whose meanings ten or more of them didn't know. These findings suggest educators should recognize they should devise ways to have their students acquire words at these levels. Moreover, Nation and Waring's (1997) claims a vocabulary size of 3,000 words is the key to success in performing functionally in English. Therefore, acquiring a vocabulary size of 2,000 to 3,000 words is essential to Japanese EFL learners.

This study also shows there were four or five words at the E1,000-word level whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. It also shows there were only one or two words at the I1,000-word level whose success rates were worst 10 in each grade as in the case of third-year students. However, students in each grade could answer almost all of these words unsuccessfully as in the case of third-year students at these two levels whilst they could answer some of them quite successfully. Therefore, these findings suggest that educators should recognize the fact that the words difficult for third-years to aquire are also difficult for first- and second-years to acquire and that they should teach vocabulary to their students, taking the nature of a word into account.

The findings on words whose success rates were worst 10 according to school grades indicate that there were one or three words whose success rate was worst 10 across school grades except third-years and sophomores at E1,000- or I1,000-word levels respectively whilst there were one or no words whose success rates were worst 10 across school grades except third-years at either level respectively, which shows the variety of the worst 10 words at these two levels according to school grades. The results also show the success rates of half of them at the E1,000-word level for first-years and sophomores and of two of them at the I1,000-word level were 100 percent for third-years. The study also shows that almost all the worst 10 words across school grades except third-years were at the 1,000- to 3,000-word levels in JACET 8000 at the E1,000- and I1,000-word levels, and that many of them were at the 1,000-word level. Therefore, these findings suggest that educators should recognize the fact and should encourage their students to read and listen to additional materials, taking word frequency into consideration.

Notes

1. This paper is based on the contents of a presentation titled "The Characteristics of Basic Words Difficult for Japanese EFL Learners to Acquire through High

School Education" given at the 35th JASELE annual convention in Tottori. Some of the data has been updated since the presentation.

2. All participants gave the author their consent to use any information gathered in this study.

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