

## Japanese Loanwords Adopted into the Vietnamese Language by Vietnamese Students and Temporary Workers

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This study examines Japanese words incorporated into the Vietnamese language by Vietnamese students and temporary workers.<sup>1</sup> In the past, Vietnam War refugees dominated the Vietnamese community in Japan. However, since the mid-1990s, Vietnamese temporary visa holders have started to replace war refugees. From the early 2010s, the number of temporary visa holders, which consists mainly of technical trainees and students, has been increasing by two digits each year. They have incorporated a number of Japanese words into Vietnamese. By analyzing almost three thousand written texts, messages, emails, social media posts, conversations, and monologues created by Vietnamese workers and students in Japan, we have made a list of 61 frequently used Vietnamese words of Japanese origin. Furthermore, we have semantically analyzed the ten most frequently used loanwords. Our findings indicate that most of these loanwords are concepts that revolve around the daily lives of Vietnamese residents in Japan. Some of them do not have any equivalent in Vietnamese while others have a more limited meaning in comparison with their Japanese counterparts. Our study confirms that, at least to Vietnamese students and technical trainees in Japan, Japanese loanwords are new additions to the long list of loanwords in the Vietnamese language.

**Keywords:** loanwords, Vietnamese, Japanese, migrant workers

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we use the concepts of temporary workers and technical trainees interchangeably.

## 1. Introduction

From April 2016, while working as Vietnamese teachers for Japanese police interpreters, we have been collecting and analyzing pieces of written and oral communication among Vietnamese residents in Japan, in particular technical trainees and students, to teach them to our students. We have found that Vietnamese technical trainees and students in Japan have been using many Japanese words in their daily communication while unconsciously making semantic and phonetic changes to them. As not much has been academically documented about this phenomenon, we decided to take this opportunity to discuss our findings in the form of an academic paper.

There are three main sections in this paper. The first section provides a brief historical account of loanwords in the Vietnamese language, including what we refer to here as three “layers” of loanwords with Japanese origin. The second section discusses the background of the community of newly arrived Vietnamese technical trainees and students in Japan, the primary users of new Japanese loanwords. In the last section, we present the methodology and findings of our study, including a list of the most frequently used loanwords and their semantic analyses.

## 2. Loanwords in Vietnamese

This section provides a brief description of the Vietnamese language and its script as well as discusses the history of loanwords in Vietnamese and serves as a literature review of sorts.

The Vietnamese language belongs to the Austroasiatic language family and is spoken natively by approximately 76 million people (Ethnologue 2019). Until the late 19th century, Vietnamese people used classical Chinese in their official government affairs and formal literature. Between the 13th century and the 19th century, Vietnamese people also borrowed and modified classical Chinese to create a writing system of their own, *chữ Nôm*. The Vietnamese language was first romanized by European missionaries in the 16th–17th century, most notably the French missionary Alexandre de Rhodes (DeFrancis 2019). This Latin script-based alphabet is called *Quốc ngữ* (國語 in Chinese characters). The mandatory use of *Quốc ngữ* for government business was enforced under the French colonial rule. *Quốc ngữ* were adopted as the official writing system in both North and South Vietnam during the Vietnam War and in all of Vietnam after the country’s reunification in 1975.

As the Vietnamese language has been influenced by many foreign languages, loanwords are not an unfamiliar concept in Vietnamese. While the vast majority of loanwords in Vietnamese come from Chinese, western languages such as French and English have also made contributions.

Loanwords with Chinese origins were imported into Vietnamese, first in the one thousand years of Chinese domination, and then in the next thousand years of cultural influence. De Francis (2019: 8) estimates that 60% of the words commonly used in written Vietnamese are of Chinese origin. Tran Dinh (1999: 3) argues that Sino-Chinese vocabulary accounts for as much as 80% of modern Vietnamese vocabulary.

During the French colonial period, as influence from the French grew both politically, economically, and culturally, many French words were imported into Vietnamese. Nguyen Quang and Nguyen Duc (1992) have compiled a list of more than 2000 Vietnamese words of French origin. Due to the involvement of the United States in South Vietnam until 1975 and its later, deeper international engagement starting in the early 1990s, a significant number of English words has also been borrowed into Vietnamese. The English-Vietnamese Dictionary published by the Institute of Linguistics of Vietnam in 2000 lists more than 3000 Vietnamese words of English origin (Voice of Vietnam 2014).

Although not as numerous as Vietnamese words of Chinese, English, and French origins, a lexicon of approximately 350 Sino-Vietnamese words of Japanese origin has been in use in Vietnamese literature (Tran Dinh 1999). Interestingly enough, some of those words were not directly borrowed from Japanese but were borrowed through Chinese. During the Meiji Restoration, many new Kanji words were created by the Japanese to indicate Western concepts that were not readily available in Chinese and Japanese, such as 經濟 (*keizai*, economics), 組織 (*soshiki*, organization), and 革命 (*kakumei*, revolution). By the end of the 19th century, many of those concepts were then imported back to China. Such words resemble Chinese-made Kanji to the point that most Chinese native speakers would fail to acknowledge that they came from Japanese (Chung 2001). The Vietnamese, in turn, borrowed these concepts from Chinese literature, mistaking them as having been created by Chinese speakers. Despite their Japanese origin, such borrowed words are no different from words in native Chinese and are classified as Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary and not Japanese-Vietnamese vocabulary.

Due to the Japanese occupation of Vietnam from 1940 until 1945 and the growing Japanese cultural influence in Vietnam starting in the 1980s, the number of Japanese words introduced into Vietnamese has continued to expand. This new, second layer of Japan-origin loanwords is distinctive from that of the Sino-Vietnamese words of Japanese origin in that they were borrowed directly from Japanese and not through a third language. This vocabulary includes words representative of Japanese culture, such as *kimono*, *sumo*, *samurai*, and *bonsai*. In this paper, we refer to these loanwords as *new Japanese loanwords*, in contrast with the aforementioned Sino-Vietnamese words of Japanese origin.

The new Japanese loanwords are written very similarly to romanized Japanese words. This is because both the Hepburn romanization of Japanese and the modern Vietnamese

alphabet are based on the Latin alphabet. For example, the Japanese word 着物 is written as *kimono* in both modern Vietnamese and romanized Japanese. A significant number of new Japanese loanwords are of Chinese origin and as such can be written in Chinese characters. Sometimes, the same concept can be described using both Sino-Vietnamese words of Japanese origin and new Japanese loanwords. For example, in the Vietnamese language, *judo* can be referred to as both *judo* and *nhu đạo*, the Vietnamese version of the Chinese characters 柔道.

This paper discusses the introduction of something which can perhaps be considered a third layer of Japanese-origin loanwords in Vietnamese: loanwords that are borrowed directly from Japanese into Vietnamese by Vietnamese students and technical trainees and that are used exclusively by them. They differ from the previous two layers of loanwords in the sense that they are only actively used by a specific diaspora. We use the term *migrant loanwords* to refer to this kind of loanwords due to their limited community of users. These loanwords are defined as words with a Japanese origin that are frequently used by Vietnamese students and technical trainees in Japan as Vietnamese words.

### 3. Background of Vietnamese technical trainees and students in Japan

To understand the introduction of the Japanese migrant loanwords into Vietnamese, the community that gave birth to that vocabulary should first be considered. This section discusses the background of the newly arrived Vietnamese technical trainees and students in Japan.

The first mass immigration of Vietnamese people to Japan took place after the end of the Second Indochina War. From 1978 until the early 2000s, the Japanese government opened its door to more than 11,000 Indochinese refugees (Kawakami 2008). Although this number only accounted for a small proportion of the overall 800,000 refugees who had been displaced by the war, this effort was unprecedented in the context of a racially homogeneous Japan. Subsequent policies pursued by the government following this mass immigration greatly improved the living conditions of immigrants in Japan. This first wave of war refugees would dominate the Vietnamese diaspora in Japan until the mid-1990s when temporary visa holders started to arrive as students and workers. By 2006, these visa holders outnumbered the war refugees three to one (Kawakami 2008).

Recently, Japan's rapidly aging population has forced the Japanese government to further open the country to immigrants. According to statistics from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the number of foreigners in Japan reached an all-time high of 2.5 million in January 2018. The government also plans to further admit more than 500,000 new workers to five major designated industries by 2025 (Yoshida 2018). A significant proportion of those migrant workers will be Vietnamese nationals.

From 2010 to 2018, the number of Vietnamese residents in Japan increased by almost eight times from 41,354 to 330,835. Many Vietnamese came to Japan via the Technical Intern Trainee Program which was established in 1993 based on the 1951 Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (Japan International Training Cooperation Organization [JITCO] 2019). In 2011, the number of Vietnamese technical trainees in Japan was only 13,789 people, accounting for 19 percent of the total Vietnamese population in Japan. In 2018, those numbers were 164,499 and 49.7 percent, respectively (MOJ 2019a). In 2018, Vietnamese technical trainees accounted for a half of the number of foreign technical trainees in Japan (METI 2018). Although the number of Vietnamese people who came to Japan under student visa and working visa has also increased, technical trainees remained the biggest contributor to the increase of the Vietnamese population in Japan. To improve the Technical Intern Trainee Program, in November 2016, the Japanese government promulgated the Act on Proper Technical Intern Training and Protection of Technical Intern Trainees, which subsequently came into effect in November 2017 (JITCO 2019).

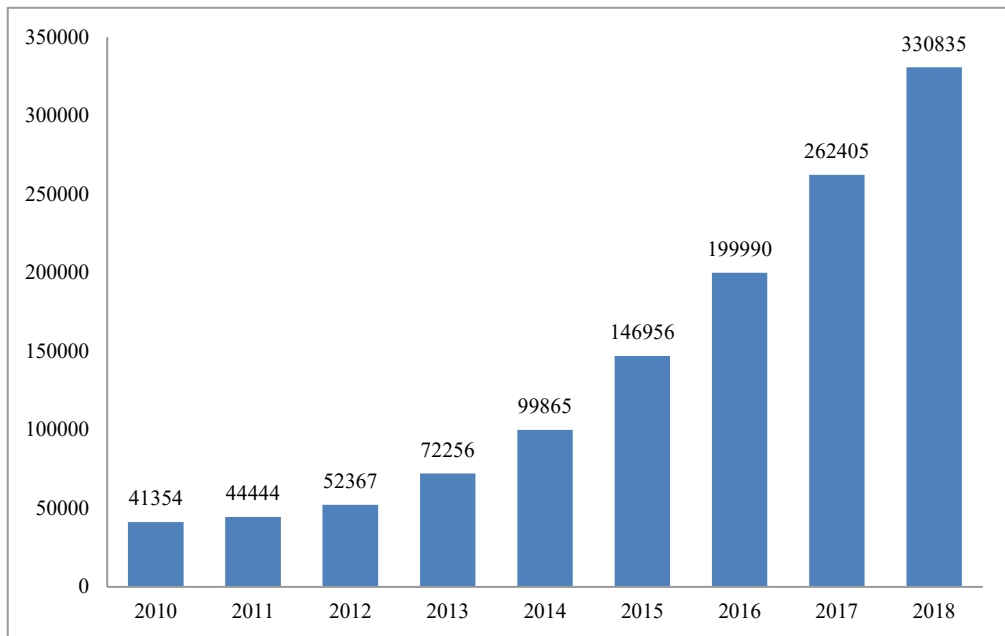


Fig. 1 Number of Vietnamese residents in Japan 2010–2018. Source: MOJ

According to JITCO (2019), the Technical Intern Trainee Program serves to:

...transfer skills, technologies, or knowledge (“Skills etc.”) accumulated in Japan to developing and other regions and to promote international cooperation by

contributing to the development of human resources who can play roles in the economic development of those developing regions.

Nevertheless, a number of journalists and activists have criticized that this program is a guest-worker program aimed at bringing in cheap laborers under the form of technical trainees (Hirayama 2018; Sawada 2018). Vietnamese technical trainees also consider themselves laborers working manual jobs, which require neither technical expertise nor language ability, to earn money overseas rather than trainees coming to Japan to acquire new skills (Sawada 2018). The vast majority of technical trainees cannot afford the education and experience to find better earning jobs in Vietnam. As a result, the vast income gap between low-skilled workers in Japan and their counterparts in Vietnam, and not the opportunity to learn new skills, is the main push factor for the current mass migration of laborers from Vietnam to Japan. Manual laborers in Japan typically earn approximately US \$1800 a month (Portal Site of Official Statistics of Japan 2019), which is around 7.5 times more than their Vietnamese counterparts (General Statistics Office of Vietnam 2019).

The pull factor is the need to replenish the aging workforce of Japan with young workers from overseas. As of April 2019, the population of Vietnam is estimated to be 96 million (Vietnam Express 2019) with a median age of 30. Importing from this abundant and youthful source of laborers could be one of Japan's solutions to mitigate the effect of its aging population on its economy. In fact, most labor exporting organizations prefer workers who are 19 to 30 years old (Japan.net 2019). The vast majority of the Vietnamese migrant workers' population in Japan consists of young people from impoverished areas as they lack the education and working experience to find better-earning jobs in Vietnam. These workers usually have to borrow a large sum of money from a bank at a high interest rate to pay brokers and a labor exporting organization to go to Japan.

The second largest contributor to the increase of Vietnamese in Japan is the student visa holders. Between 2011 and 2018, the number of Vietnamese students in Japan increased more than 2000 percent, from 4033 to 81,009 (JASSO 2012; 2018). Those numbers accounted for 9 and 24.5 percent of the total Vietnamese population in Japan in 2011 and 2018, respectively (MOJ 2019a). The Internal Cooperation Department of Vietnam estimated that 95 percent of Vietnamese students in Japan are privately-financed. The majority of Vietnamese students in Japan enroll in Japanese language institutions and vocational schools (Vietnam Television 2019). In many cases, Vietnamese nationals have used their status as students at Japanese language institutions or vocational schools to work part-time with the sole purpose of earning money (Vietnam Television 2019). Many students work over the weekly 28-hour limitation regulated by law, with extreme cases working as much as one hundred hours a week during school vacations.

In some cases, technical trainees and students have become illegal workers in order to earn back the money they borrowed, thus becoming additional members of the overstayers' community (Nikkei 2019b). As of January 2019, the Ministry of Justice estimates that there are 74,167 illegal residents in Japan, 11,131 of whom are Vietnamese, an increase of 64.7 percent in comparison with January 2018 (Osuni 2019).

This expanding Vietnamese community in Japan has, in a sense, enriched the Vietnamese language by unconsciously incorporating many Japanese words into it. In the next section, we present a list of the most frequently used loanwords with semantic analyses. We argue that in order to improve the communication between themselves, Vietnamese migrant workers and students incorporate frequently encountered Japanese words in their daily life into Vietnamese.

#### 4. Japanese words borrowed into Vietnamese by Vietnamese technical trainees and students in Japan

This section semantically examines the Japanese loanwords that have been adopted into Vietnamese by Vietnamese migrant workers in Japan. As mentioned earlier, these migrant loanwords are defined as words with Japanese origin that are frequently used by Vietnamese migrant workers as Vietnamese words. We consider Japanese phrases frequently used among Vietnamese technical trainees and students such as *arigatō* (ありがとう/thank you) or *onegaishimasu* (おねがいします/please) to be loanwords rather than code switching. Code switching is defined as “the alternate use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation” by Milroy (1995: 7). Durkin (2014: 10) argues that “most scholars consider that code switching occurs when bilingual and multilingual speakers mix elements from more than one language within a single act of communication”. On the other hand, loanwords are words adopted by the speakers of one language from another language to fill a lexical gap. The majority of subjects examined in this paper are Vietnamese technical trainees and students whose Japanese language ability is far from proficient. They use Vietnamese as the primary mean of communication and only alter vocabulary in certain contexts. As such, the Japanese words used in conversations between Vietnamese technical trainees and students should be considered loanwords and not code switching. Proper nouns such as locations and brand names, for example, Tokyo or Honda, as frequently used as they are, are not considered loanwords.

We use the modified Hepburn romanization to display Japanese words in this paper. Loanwords are displayed as they most frequently spelled by Vietnamese speakers. As in most cases, Vietnamese speakers do not distinguish between long and short vowels in Japanese when borrow them. We have decided to not indicate long and short vowels in loanwords to reflect that fact. Furthermore, many loanwords are spelled differently from

their Hepburn romanized counterparts. For example, the word *shain* (社員) which means employee in Japanese, is frequently spelled as *sain* by Vietnamese and as a loanword will be spelled as such.

From September 2018 until March 2019, based on an analysis of 2,924 social media posts including advertisements, text messages, emails, handwritten letters, conversations, and monologues created by Vietnamese technical trainees and students in Japan, we have compiled a list of 61 loanwords that are each used at least one time (see Appendix 1). Only materials with at least one loanword were analyzed. The length of the analyzed materials varies from 100-word advertisements to conversations of no more than 1000 words each. We divided more extended conversations into under-1000-word segments and analyzed them as separated materials. Each segment is considered a piece of communication in the total sum of 2,924. The distribution of the analyzed materials is as follows with oral materials presented last.

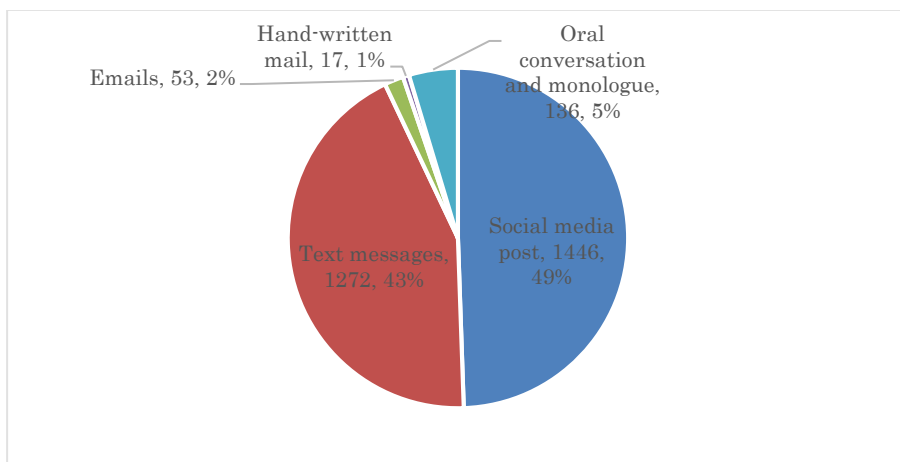


Fig. 2 Distribution of analyzed materials

While conversations are the most common medium for information exchange, the vast majority of the analyzed materials in this paper consists of text messages and social media posts, because these are easy to access, readily available, and are archived materials. Most migrant workers only use email when they need to contact their colleagues or boss regarding business-related matters. Even in such cases, however, the vast majority would rather use social media networks, most notably Facebook and LINE. Handwritten letters are the least preferred method of communication between migrant workers and are only used when there is no other method. The distribution of the analyzed materials perhaps also reflect the preferred mean of communication among younger generations as most research participants were in their 20s or early 30s.



The sources of the analyzed materials are as follows. (1) The social media posts were mostly taken from Facebook pages aiming at connecting communities of Vietnamese people living in Japan, such as *Tokyo Baito* [Part-time jobs in Tokyo], *Hội tu nghiệp sinh Nhật Bản* [Technical trainees in Japan], or *Người Việt ở Nhật Bản* [Vietnamese in Japan]. (2) The text messages were provided by research subjects, most of whom were technical trainees and students, with the knowledge that they would be used in this study. Research subjects include 15 Vietnamese students at Human Academy, a Japanese language school in Tokyo<sup>2</sup> and 22 technical trainees who are currently working in Japan. The technical trainees are recruited, trained, and managed by ICO, a labor-exporting agency with headquarter in Hanoi, Vietnam and a representative office in Japan. The representative of this agency in Japan approved our request and provided us with the contact of the technical trainees. All of the 22 researched technical trainees were working in Japan at the time they were studied. All of those 37 technical trainees and students had lived in Japan for at least six months at the point of their participation in this study. Each participant provided us with pieces of written communication through text messages between them and other Vietnamese technical trainees and students. Written conversations longer than 1000 words are divided into under-1000-word segments. (3) The emails were provided by research subjects, most of whom were undergraduate students and office workers, with the knowledge that they would be used in this study. Participants include one undergraduate students and three graduate students at Waseda University. Furthermore, we also surveyed two Vietnamese interpreters for technical trainees. Although they do not fall into the category of technical trainees or students, they frequently exchange emails and text messages with technical trainees and that was why they were chosen as research subjects. (4) The handwritten letters were also provided by the technical trainees and students in (2). We asked them to take pictures of their written letters to their family in Vietnam and send them to us. As their preferred method of communication is through the Internet, we could only collect a few letters this way. Most of those letters were attached to the goods sent home by the research subjects. In some rare cases, our students who work as interpreter would ask us to help with the translation of the letters written by people who are held in custody. (5) The conversations about topics from everyday life and work were recorded with the consent of the research subjects also from the technical trainees and students in (2). We recorded two conversations with the length between two to three minutes with the participation of four participants from group (2). Furthermore, we also analyzed monologues and conversations about topics related to Japan created by migrant workers and made public through channels such as YouTube. We used the videos

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<sup>2</sup> The research subjects are students of a two-year Japanese course at Human Academy. Ms. Trang, the co-author of this paper was also a student there.

from the following YouTube channels: *Cuộc sống Nhật* [Life in Japan], *Tôi ở Nhật Tivi* [I am living in Japan TV], *Bo Vlog*, *Vlog Japan*, and *Khanh Hồ*. We selected those channels because their owners are or were technical trainees and their content covers daily life in Japan extensively. The videos were uploaded to YouTube between June 2017 and February 2019. We selected four to five videos from each channel and analyzed from 10 to 15 minutes of content of each video. Each content usually has from 4000 to 5000 words and as such can be divided into from 4 to 5 segments. Each segment is considered an independent unit for analysis. Figures 3, 4, and 5 show three examples of analyzed materials.

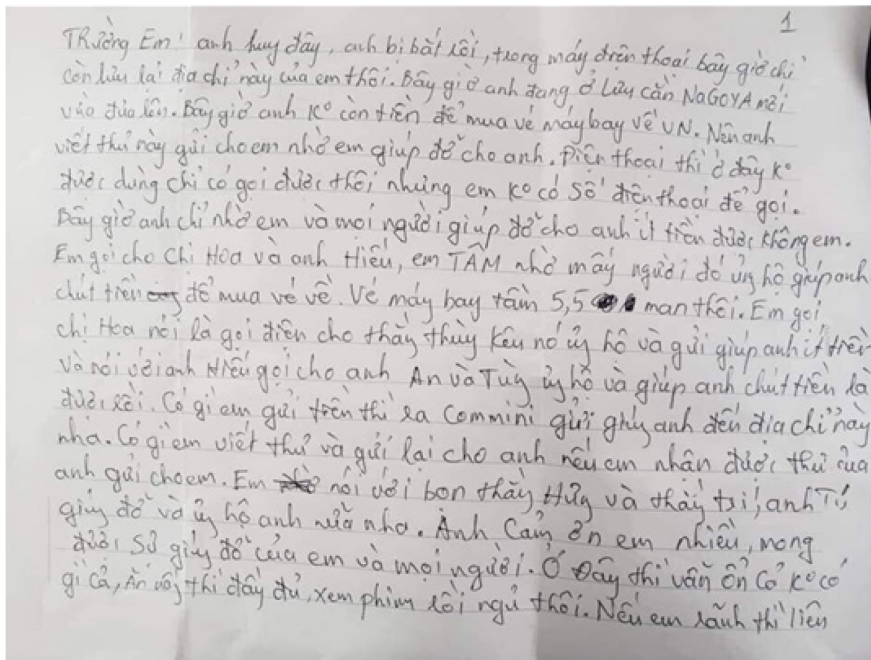


Fig. 3 Handwritten letter by an illegal worker held in custody

In Figure 3, the writer, who was arrested and held at the Nagoya Regional Immigration Bureau, asks a fellow Vietnamese worker to raise money for him so that he can buy an airplane ticket to be sent back to Vietnam. The letter reads:

Truong, I'm Huy. I was arrested. I only have your address saved in my phone. I am being detained at Nagoya Regional Immigration Bureau. I have no money to buy an airplane ticket. I am writing this letter to ask for your help. I cannot connect to the Internet here, I can call you, but I do not have your number. I only ask that you and others give me some money. Please contact Hoa, Hieu, and Tam and ask them

to contribute some money so that I can buy an airplane ticket. The ticket is only around 55,000 yen. Please call Hoa and ask her to contact Huy. Also, please ask Hieu to contact An and Tung. If you want to send me money, please use convenient store to send it to this address. If you receive this letter, please send me a letter to confirm. Also, please ask Hung, Tri, and Tu to support me. Thank you very much. Please help me. Here everything is fine. I get to watch TV all day. Please contact me.

One of the recipients of this message provided it to us with the intention of raising money. In the letter, the writer uses words with Japanese origins, such as *lưu cản* [sic] (入管/*nyūkan*: Immigration Bureau), *man* (万: 10,000), and *commini* [sic] (コンビニ/*konbini*: convenient store).



Yesterday at 1:21 AM

Góc nhờ vả

E trước từng làm về kaitai phá dỡ kinh nhiệm cũng được gần 2 năm rồi ae ai có việc hoặc cần người giới thiệu sôkai giúp e với ạ phí e xin gửi đầy đủ e xin chân thành cảm ơn



Fig. 4 A soon-to-be unemployed technical trainee posting on a social media network looking for a new job

The technical trainee in Figure 4 was looking for a job by posting a brief description of his expertise. The content of the request in English is as follows:

Please help: I had a demolition job with two years of experience. Please recommend me a job. Thank you very much. I will compensate your effort accordingly.

In his message, he uses words with Japanese origins such as *kaitai* (解体: demolition) and *sōkai* (紹介/*shōkai*: job recommendation). *Sokai/sōkai* is a borrowed word used by migrant workers to refer specifically to job recommendations and not simply the act of ‘introduction’ in general. The writer uses the Vietnamese vowel ô [IPA pronunciation: o] instead of the generic vowel o [IPA pronunciation: ɔ]. Most Vietnamese believe that the vowel o [IPA pronunciation: o] in the Japanese word *shōkai* should be pronounced in the same way as the vowel ô in Vietnamese.

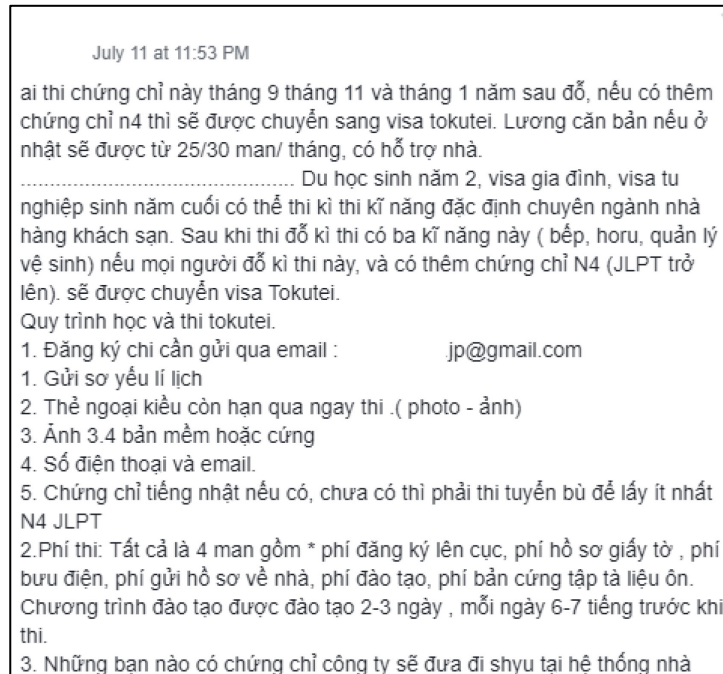


Fig. 5 Recruitment notice for the new specified skills visa

Figure 5 is an online advertisement from a human resource consultant looking for prospective workers to go to Japan under the newly promulgated specified skills visa. The content of the advertisement is as follows:

People who have passed Japanese-Language Proficiency Test level 4 and pass this test in this year’s September and November and next year’s January will be able to change visa status to Specified-Skilled Worker Visa. Basic payment in Japan is from 250,000 to 300,000 yen a month with housing support. Second-year students, dependents, last-year technical trainees can take the hotel-related jobs special skill test. If you can pass the skill tests (kitchen job, waiting-tables job, and cleaning job) and have passed Japanese-Language Proficiency Test level 4 and above, you are eligible to change to Specified-Skilled Worker VISA. The procedure to take this test:

1. Please register via this email address: .jp@gmail.com
1. Send your CV
2. Valid residence card until test date (picture)
3. Your picture, send 3 or 4 copies in case of printed pictures
4. Your phone number and email address
5. Your Japanese language certificate, in case you do not have any, you will have to pass the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test level 4 test at a later date.
2. Examination fee: 40,000 yen in total including registration fee, documentation fee, postage fee, training fee, textbook fee. You will be trained for from two to three days, six to seven hours each day before the exam.
3. We will help you to find a job after you have passed the test.

The recruiter uses loanwords such as *tokutei* (特定: specified skills visa), *horu* (ホール: waiting-tables jobs), and *shyu* (就職/*shūshoku*: finding employment).

Table 1 presents the ten most frequently used borrowed words and phrases, based on our analysis of the aforementioned materials.

Table 1 Ten most frequently used migrant loanwords

	Loanword	Original Japanese word	Meaning in Vietnamese context and in Japanese	Times mentioned
1	<i>man</i>	万/man	10,000	4,212
2	<i>sen</i>	千/sen	1,000	2,029
3	<i>conbini</i>	コンビニ/konbini	convenient store	1,327
4	<i>baito</i>	バイト/baito	part-time job	612
5	<i>kaisya</i>	会社/kaisha	company, workplace	514
6	<i>nyukan</i>	入管/nyūkan	immigration Bureau	423
7	<i>onegaishimasu</i>	お願いします/onegaishimasu	please	312
8	<i>sokai</i>	紹介する/shōkai	job recommendation	211
9	<i>yucho</i>	郵貯/yūcho	Japan Post Bank	129
10	<i>senpai</i>	先輩/sempai	one’s senior	87

The most frequent loanwords used by migrants, as one may expect, indicate concepts related to their work, daily life, and legal status. The most frequently used loanword is *man* (万), which means ten thousand. Although *man* is a generic number word in Japanese, the borrowed version is almost always used in reference to Japanese currency. A Vietnamese migrant might say “*lương tháng của tôi là hai man*” [my weekly salary is twenty thousand yen] but would say “*có hai mươi nghìn sinh viên trong trường đại học của tôi*” [there are twenty thousand students at my university]. The same principle also applies to the word *sen* (千), which means one thousand. When Vietnamese speakers refer to monetary values in Vietnam Dong (VND), they normally do not use *man* and *sen*. In written language, especially on the Internet, the words *man* and *sen* are often abbreviated to just *m* and *s*, respectively, and used in combination with Arabic numbers. For example, one message that we collected reads “*vé tàu từ nhà ra Narita mất 3s1*” [train ticket from my house to Narita costs 3100 yen].

The most frequently used loanword that is not directly related to money is *conbini*. The Japanese word *konbini* itself is both a loanword and an abbreviation of the English word *convenience store*. Convenience stores play an essential role in daily life in Japanese cities, and working at a convenience store is a popular part-time job among international students. Although the word *conbini* can be directly translated into Vietnamese as  *cửa hàng tiện lợi* (*hàng tiện lợi* can be written in Chinese characters as 行便利, we are unsure if *cửa* is a Sino-Vietnamese word or not), most Vietnamese migrants in Japan prefer to use the Japanese loanword.

The fourth word in the list is *baito*, which means part-time job. The word *baito* is a shortened version of *arubaito*, which is itself a borrowed word from Germany (*arbeit*: work, labor). The Vietnamese word *việc làm thêm* has the same meaning as *baito*; however, it seems that most Vietnamese technical trainees and students in Japan prefer to use the loanword *baito* over its Vietnamese counterpart.

The fifth word on the list is *kaisha* (会社), which means company in Japanese. While the word *kaisha* is used in Japanese to indicate companies in general, Vietnamese workers in Japan almost always use this word to refer to their own or someone else’s company or workplace. This message was sent by one of the research participants to his Vietnamese friend in Tokyo via Facebook message “*Anh đang sống ở trong ký túc xá của kai*” [I am currently living in the company’s dormitory]. When referring to generic companies, Vietnamese migrants tend to use the Vietnamese equivalent of *kaisha*, *công ty* (公司 in Chinese characters); for example, they would say “*công ty Toyota rất nổi tiếng*” [Toyota is a famous company] and not “*Kai Toyota rất nổi tiếng*”. Vietnamese speakers also often abbreviate the *kaisha* to just *kai*, an unfamiliar practice to Japanese native speakers.

The Japanese word *nyūkan* is a widely used abbreviation of the Japanese word *nyūjoku-kanrikyoku* (入国管理局: Immigration Bureau). The official name for the

Japanese Immigration Bureau in Vietnamese is *Cục Quản lý Xuất Nhập Cảnh* (局管理出入境 in Chinese characters). Since the Immigration Bureau is the governmental organization that oversees and monitors foreigners living in Japan, it is arguably the most important governmental organization to Vietnamese migrant workers. As such, it is understandable that it has become one of the most widely used loanwords among the Vietnamese community in Japan.

The seventh item on the list is not an individual word, but a phrase. In Japanese, the phrase *onegaishimasu* can be used in many contexts with various meanings, varying from “I am counting on you” to “have a good game.” Perhaps it is partly because translating the phrase into Vietnamese could be quite context-dependent that Vietnamese migrants seem to use the phrase directly in most cases. For example, it is not uncommon for Vietnamese say *onegaishimasu* after finishing his or her self-introduction to other Vietnamese. In this context, *onegaishimasu* means “please be kind to me” or “I look forward to working with you”. In many advertisements and messages, the phrase *onegaishimasu* is also frequently used after a request. For example, one request which was posted on the Facebook page Tokyo baito reads “*E cần chuyển ít đồ về VN ak, có ace nào sắp về VN thì inbox em đc không ak. Onegaishimasu*” [I need to send something back to Vietnam, if you are leaving for Vietnam shortly, please contact me via Facebook message. I am counting on your help]. Other popular Japanese phrases, such as *arigatō* (thank you) or *ohayō* (good morning), can more easily be translated directly into Vietnamese independent of context.

*Sokai* is another loanword from Japanese frequently used by Vietnamese migrants. In Japanese, this word is spelled *shōkai* (紹介: introduction) and means the act of introduction in general. There is a Sino-Vietnamese word, *giới thiệu* (紹介: introduction), which has the same origin and meaning as the Japanese word *shōkai*. However, while the word *giới thiệu* is used by all Vietnamese to refer to the act of introduction in general, the loanword *sokai* is only used by Vietnamese migrant workers to refer to job recommendations. In the data that we collected, *sokai* is almost always used in combination with *công việc* (job). Migrant workers would not use the word *sokai* to refer to self-introductions but would instead use the Sino-Vietnamese word *giới thiệu*. For example, a Vietnamese migrant would say “*Tôi xin được tự giới thiệu*” [I would like to introduce myself] and not “*Tôi xin được tự sokai*”.

The next most frequently used word is *yucho* (ゆうちょ), which refers to the Japan Post Bank. While Japanese native speakers exclusively use the word *yūcho* to refer to the bank and its savings services, Vietnamese migrants use the word *yucho* to refer to several things, including Japan Post Bank cash cards and credit cards, automatic teller machines, and post offices. For example, one participant said “*không có yucho gần đây*” [there is no

Japan Post Bank's branch/ATM nearby] while another asked his friend “*cho anh mượn thẻ yucho của em được không?*” [can I borrow your Japan Post Bank card?].

The tenth most frequently used word is *senpai*, meaning one's senior. The *senpai-kohai* (senior-junior) relationship is a concept unique to Japanese and Korean culture that refers to the interdependent bond between two people within one organization based on seniority, experience, hierarchy, or age. Usually, such relationships are established when one first enters an organization. This concept is quite unfamiliar to Vietnamese people, who emphasize interfamily relationships. Nevertheless, Vietnamese workers and students in Japan have borrowed not only the words *senpai* and *kohai* but also the relationship represented by them. For example, a first-year Vietnamese student in a Japanese university or vocational school would call a second or second-year Vietnamese student from the same institution *senpai*. This also applies to technical trainees as a technical intern training program lasts three years and during this period, *senpai-kohai* relationships are usually established between trainees arriving in Japan in different years with the *senpai* offers the *kohai* his assistance and guidance on their job and daily-life in Japan.

It should be noted that there are many ways to spell each of the aforementioned loanwords in written language. For example, there have been cases where the loan word *nyukan* is spelled as *niukan* or *newkan* [IPA pronunciation: niwkãŋ], perhaps due to the fact that all three of these ways of spelling sound the same to Vietnamese speakers. Those spellings do not exist in standard Vietnamese and perhaps were adopted into Vietnamese from English and Japanese. We have also encountered instances where *conbini* is spelled as *combini*, *kombini*, or *konbini*. Furthermore, Vietnamese speakers sometimes have the tendency to shorten the loanwords such as the case of *kaisha* and *kai*. Other examples include *hoken* and *haken*, which are sometimes shortened to *ken*, and *mensetsu* which is usually shortened to *men*. Those abbreviations do not exist in Japanese. Vietnamese speakers also tend to add tonal marks to loanwords that reflect their pronunciation in Vietnamese; for example, *baito* is frequently spelled as *bai-tộ*. By adding the tonal mark “.” to the vowel *ô* in *bai-tộ*, Vietnamese speakers express their perception that the syllable *tộ* is a mid-falling, glottalized, and short syllable. Perhaps this implies that those loanwords have originated from attempts to reproduce the pronunciation of spoken Japanese words.



## 5. Conclusion

Loanwords account for perhaps as much as 80 percent of the Vietnamese words that are currently commonly in use and their number is ever-increasing. Vietnamese has borrowed the bulk of its vocabulary from Chinese and later French, Japanese, and English. Due to cultural influence, more and more loanwords have been introduced into the Vietnamese language. Overseas Vietnamese communities have also actively adopted new words into their vocabulary.

The majority of current Vietnamese temporary visa holders in Japan are immigrant workers under the Technical Intern Trainee Program or students at vocational and Japanese language schools. Many of them came to Japan from remote and poor areas in Vietnam with the sole purpose of earning money. Our study argues that this explains why most newly adopted loanwords by these migrants revolve around their daily-life, employment, and their financial and legal status. Due to the limited contexts that Vietnamese migrants usually use loanwords in, more often than not, they may limit the meaning of some loanwords to those particular contexts. While incorporating Japanese concepts into Vietnamese, Vietnamese users have not only enriched the Vietnamese language in a manner of speaking, but have also adopted certain aspects of Japanese culture as their own. For example, Vietnamese students and trainees adopted not only the loanwords *senpai* and *kohai* but also the *senpai-kohai* hierarchy. Another example is that Vietnamese students and trainees in Japan are becoming more and more accustomed with adding the phrase *onegaishimasu* to the end of their requests. Vietnamese in general do not use such expression to mark the end of their request, in its stead they would simply say *cám ơn* (thank you).

There two main shortcomings that we did not have the resources to overcome in this paper. The first shortcoming is this paper only covers technical trainees and students and not Vietnamese immigrants in Japan as a whole. While the number of technical trainees and students accounted for almost three fourth of the total Vietnamese population in Japan as of 2018, there are other groups such as permanent residents, dependents, and spouses of Japanese nationals. Due to our limited connection to those groups, we could not include them in this paper. The second shortcoming is the distribution of analyzed materials. We collected and analyzed the materials which are most accessible to us and as such may overlook loanwords used in materials that we did not have access to. Furthermore, our convenient approach in material collection may have resulted in a disproportionate representation of the loanwords. Nevertheless, this paper presents—if not the first, then—one of the first studies about the loanwords used by the Vietnamese migrant community in Japan, one of the fastest-growing overseas Vietnamese communities.

## Appendix 1 Tentative list of Japanese loanwords adopted into Vietnamese by Vietnamese temporary visa holders<sup>3</sup>

Loanwords	Original Japanese words and their Hepburn romanization	Meaning as used by Vietnamese
1. apato	アパート/apāto	apartment
2. arigato	ありがとう/arigatō	thank you
3. ashiba	足場/ashiba	scaffolding
4. baito	バイト/baito	part-time job
5. daibiki	代引き/daibiki	cash on delivery
6. conbini	コンビニ/kombini	convenient store
7. genba	現場/gemba	(working) site
8. gokon	合コン/gōkon	matchmaking party
9. gou	号/gō	number
10. haken/ken	派遣/haken	temporary employment agency
11. hoken/ken	保険/hoken	insurance
12. horu	ホール/hōru	waiting-tables job
13. hoteru	ホテル/hoteru	hotel
14. ijime	いじめ/ijime	bully
15. jikyu	時給/jikyū	hourly wage
16. kai/kaisha	会社/kaisha	company
17. kaitai	解体/kaitai	demolition
18. kaiwa	会話/kaiwa	conversation
19. kakutei	各駅停車/kakuekitēsha	local train
20. kaze	風邪/kaze	a cold
21. ken	県/ken	prefecture
22. kensyu	研修/kenshū	trainee status
23. kitchen	キッチン/kicchin	kitchen
24. koban	交番/kōban	police box
25. kohai	後輩/kōhai	one's junior
26. konbini	コンビニ/kombini	convenient store
27. konnichiwa	こんにちは/konnichiwa	hello
28. kuyakusho	区役所/kuyakusho	ward office
29. kyu	級/kyū	level
30. mainamba	マイナンバー/mainambā	individual number
31. makanai	まかない/makanai	staff meal
32. man	万/man	10,000
33. manbiki	万引き/mambiki	shoplifting
34. manshon	マンション/manshon	apartment building
35. mensetsu/men	面接/mensetsu	interview
36. naitei	内定/naitē	job offer/job promise
37. nenkin	年金/nenkin	pension
38. nyukan	入管/nyūkan	Immigration Bureau

<sup>3</sup> As mentioned earlier, new Japanese loanwords do not have any fixed spelling. In this list, loanwords are displayed as they most frequently spelled by Vietnamese speakers. Many loanwords are spelled differently from and/or shorter than their Hepburn romanized counterparts.

39.	ohayo	おはよう/ohayō	good morning
40.	onegaishimasu	お願いします/onegaishimasu	please
41.	shain	社員/shain	employee
42.	sakai hoken	社会保険/shakaihoken	social insurance
43.	seisain	正社員/sēshain	full-time employee
44.	senpai	先輩/sempai	one's senior
45.	sen	千/sen	1,000
46.	senmon	専門（専門学校）/semmongakkō	vocational school
47.	shiyakusyo/shi	市役所/shiyakusho	city hall
48.	shiken	試験/shiken	test
49.	shikikin	敷金/shikikin	deposit
50.	sokai	紹介/shōkai	job recommendation
51.	sogei	送迎/sōgē	pick-up service
52.	soji	掃除/sōji	cleaning/cleaning job
53.	supa	スーパー/sūpā	supermarket
54.	saken	車検/shaken	automobile inspection
55.	syusoku/syu	就職/shūshoku	finding employment
56.	takyubin	宅急便/takkyūbin	express home delivery
57.	tencho	店長/tenchō	shop manager
58.	tokuteigino	特定技能/tokutēginō	specified skilled status
59.	yoroshiku	よろしく/yoroshiku	please
60.	yukyu	有給（有給休暇）/yūkyūyūka	paid leave
61.	yucho	ゆうちょ（ゆうちょ銀行） /yūchoginkō	Japan Post Bank's branches, ATM, and cards

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