

A Study of the English Vocabulary of Today's University Students

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Abstract

In recent years we often see newspaper articles reporting on the deteriorating quality of university students. This naturally leads us to think about whether there has been any change in the English abilities of students at Hitotsubashi University. A study I conducted intermittently from 1991 to 1998 provides some information about this area. Tests were given on a total of 1,240 English words. This paper shows the full results, from which we can see clearly which words they know and which they do not. Analysis shows, firstly, that their vocabulary is, indeed, poorer than is usually believed, but one out of five students can still be expected to reach approximately the 5,000 word level, and secondly, that their knowledge of English words shows an unfavorable deviation from native knowledge.