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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

This Month's Topic: Loanwords and *Wasei Eigo* Part 2

In the [April 2025 issue of CIR's Corner](#), I introduced some examples of loanwords and *wasei eigo* used in Japanese. There are many more examples, so this month I am writing part 2. These examples come from my English conversation



classes, as well as the book [An A-Z of Common English Errors for Japanese Learners](#) by David Barker.

By the way, this book doesn't just cover *wasei eigo*, but it also explains various grammar points that are difficult for Japanese learners in an easy-to-understand way. I

recommend this book to any Japanese English learner. There is a Japanese edition and an English edition.



○ ウェア (*wear*)

English: clothes

We do have the word "wear" in English, but it's more natural to use it as a verb rather than a noun. For example, "I wear a uniform to school," and "She is wearing a white shirt."

We do use "wear" as a noun sometimes, for example, formal wear, casual wear, beach wear, etc. But as you can see, there is an adjective before it to specify what type of "wear" it is. If you want to talk about regular "wear," then "clothes" is the right word. For example, "I want to buy some new clothes."

We would not use "wear" in that sentence.

I think that clothes might be a difficult word for students to pronounce. There is a "th" in the word, but native speakers only pronounce it when they are speaking very slowly and clearly, and even then it's quite subtle. When they speak at a normal speed, "clothes" sounds almost exactly like "close."

○ ゴージャス (*gorgeous*)

English: fancy

The word "gorgeous" in Japanese is used to describe something extravagant, luxurious, or flashy. You might hear Japanese people talk about a "gorgeous meal" or "gorgeous clothes."

However, in English, gorgeous means beautiful or attractive, and it can be used for people, things, and even scenery. For example, you can say, "a gorgeous woman" or "a gorgeous sunset." It simply means "extremely beautiful," and does not necessarily imply extravagance, luxury, or flashiness.



Left: The top result for "gorgeous bag" in Japanese

Right: The top result for "gorgeous bag" in English

Recently, in one of my English conversation classes, a student was talking about a "gorgeous bag." I

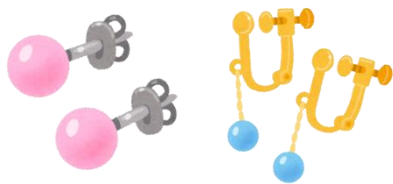
pictured a sophisticated and classy bag, but upon further questioning, I found out that the bag the student was describing was actually a colorful floral print bag. Some people might find that pattern beautiful and attractive, but generally the meaning of “extravagant and flashy” that “gorgeous” carries in Japanese does not really match “gorgeous” in English. I think “fancy” is a much better match.

We also say “drop-dead gorgeous.” It means someone is so beautiful that you could die. It’s usually used towards stunningly beautiful women (and recently men). It implies natural, effortless beauty, and is generally not used for people who look too overdone or flashy. I would say Haruka Ayase or Koyuki could be called “drop-dead gorgeous.” “Eye-catching” and “breathtaking” are similar expressions.

○ ピアス (*pierce*)

English: earring(s)

The English word “pierce” is a verb, and it means “(of a sharp pointed object) go into or through (something).” We can use it when talking about putting holes in our ears for fashion, for example, “I got my ears pierced when I was six years old.” What people actually wear on their ears are called “earrings.” The singular is “earring.”



These are both called earrings!

In Japanese, the type that you put through the hole are called “*pierce*” but the type that you clip onto your earlobes are called “*earring*.” In English, these are both called earrings, but if you want to be specific, the latter kind are called “clip-on earrings.” When I first started studying Japanese, I couldn’t understand the difference between “*pierce*” and “*earring*” at all. Even now, I sometimes slip and call my *pierce* “earrings” when speaking Japanese.

○ メンバー (*member*)

English: people

In Japanese, it’s not unnatural to say something

like, “The party’s members are William and Harry,” but it sounds very strange in English. A “member” is a person who belongs to a group or organization, and becoming a member of something usually involves some kind of registration or application process. A party is just a casual gathering, not an organization, so we do not use “member.”



Instead, we might say something like, “The people who are coming to the party are William and Harry,” but even that’s a bit wordy. I think the most natural sentence would be, “William and Harry are coming to the party.” Keep it simple.

○ ライブ (*live*)

English: concert

At the beginning of each English conversation class, I always ask students about their recent news, and “I went to a live” is one of the most common mistakes. In English, “live” is an adjective that means something is alive (ex: live crabs), or a musical performance or broadcast is not a recording (ex: live performance, live broadcast). You can’t use “live” as a noun; instead, we say “concert.” For example, “I went to an Arashi concert.”

However, “concert” can sound like a large-scale performance of a famous artist. For the kind of performers you’d see in a smaller Japanese “live house,” you can say “show” or “gig.” For example, “I went to my friend’s gig,” or “My band played a show in Otaru.”

By the way, we don’t call a music venue a “live house” either. We would just call it a “bar” or a “club.”

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