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Looking In, Looking Out

English loanword use on Japanese television

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The acceptance of foreign terminology into Japanese has become commonplace, especially when adopted words possess or suggest English origins. To examine how native Japanese use such terminology in spoken discourse, various genres of modern Japanese television programs were video recorded and analyzed. Results indicate that the loanwords used were numerous, used often, and can be placed into a greater variety of categories than originally anticipated. Additionally, it was found that direct and nearly direct English loanwords comprised a vast majority of word borrowings. The article presents several conclusions and implications about loanword usage as well as suggestions for future research.

外国語の日本語への受け入れ、特に英語の語源を持つ言葉の受け入れは、今や当然の現象となっている。日本語話者が談話の中で実際のようにこれらの言葉を使うかを検証するために、テレビ番組をジャンル別で録音し、分析した。結果として、番組内で発せられた外来語は、数多く、使用頻度も高く、予想した分類より多くの種類の分類が必要となった。加えて、「原音直接借用」と「日本語プラス原音直接借用」の分類が抽出外来語全体の大部分を占めたことが分かった。論文の最後では、結論と教育的提案を述べると共に、今後の研究の方向性を示している。



The Japanese language has long been influenced and shaped by word borrowings from other languages. Throughout the first millennium, Japan received many linguistic influences from China as the Japanese looked to the greater Asian continent for sources of trade and cultural guidance. Because the adoption of Chinese characters, known as *kanji*, became the foundation of modern-day Japanese orthography (Habein, 1984; Seeley, 1991) between the fifth and eighth centuries, Chinese vocabulary became accessible to educated Japanese (Hoffer, 1990). From the sixteenth century, limited contact with European traders exposed the Japanese to terminology of Western origin, much of it relating to medicine

and science (Kay, 1995). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, word borrowings rose sharply as the Japanese sought to catch up to the industrialized West. They began studying Western languages in earnest, which, though meant initially to allow the Japanese quick access to Western documentation on technological and military advances, exposed them to ideas and concepts so novel that, in many cases, native equivalents were either insufficient for use or simply did not exist. Borrowing foreign terminology became an expedient means of overcoming the lexical obstacles the Japanese encountered on their way to modernization.

This influx and use of foreign loanwords, though halted briefly during the war years, found renewed strength during the U.S. occupation after the war, with many loanwords not surprisingly coming from English. With Japan's strong post-war economic ties with Western nations and, more recently, with increased globalization, loanword adoption and use by the Japanese can no longer simply be characterized as being guided solely by the need for lexical supplantation and concept identification. A whole array of social and cultural factors has made English loanwords common and increasingly acceptable for use in the Japanese language.

In seeking to understand the ways in which English loanwords are adopted and used by native Japanese in modern society, it is the aim of this paper to detail research that examined English loanword usage. This examination focused on data from a sample that was abundant, easy to gather, and indicative of modern Japanese speech: Japanese television programming. Specifically, the research meant to analyze the amount, frequency, and kinds of English loanwords native Japanese speakers use in spoken discourse

in various Japanese television program genres that are produced for a largely Japanese-only viewing audience. It was hoped that this analysis would lead to an understanding of English loanwords indicative of those to which Japanese EFL (English as a foreign language) learners are exposed to and potentially use.

English loanwords used in Japanese

The English language currently enjoys the greatest popularity in terms of foreign languages studied and used in Japan. The result of this popularity can be seen in the number of Western words (called *gairaigo* in Japanese) incorporated into the Japanese language. By one account, in the early 1970s, almost 10% of the total Japanese vocabulary was comprised of Western loanwords, over 80% of which were of English origin (Higa, 1973). This latter figure has more recently been calculated to be upwards of 90% (Shinnouchi, 2000, cited in Rebeck, 2002), with loanword use in the lexicon of Japanese native speakers in daily conversation calculated a decade ago to be 13% (Honma, 1995). Continued economic expansion, coupled with the rise of the Internet, has undoubtedly led the Japanese to further regard the incorporation of English as necessary (Nakagawa, 1996).

English loanwords and the media

Contrary to expectations, few examinations of Japanese media have centered on English loanword use in spoken discourse by native Japanese speakers for a native Japanese audience. Many of the English loanword studies that have

been conducted have focused specifically on examining loanword use in printed advertising (e.g., Shintani, 1999, cited in Rebuck, 2002). Takashi's (1990) analysis of English word borrowings in advertising in Japanese media included television as one medium, but because it is clear that the goal of advertising is to sell a product or a service, the instances of English usage in such instances cannot always be taken as representations of English loanword usage employed by native Japanese speakers in natural spoken discourse.

Taura's (1996) research on English usage by radio disc jockeys in Japan comes closer to portraying English used by Japanese speakers for a Japanese audience, but because the English usage found in the study came largely from samples evincing instances of code-switching that were used to create a bilingual atmosphere for listeners, such instances also fail to represent natural spoken Japanese. Tanaka (1995) examined the medium of television in Japan, focusing specifically on describing the extent to which English programs are broadcast. The target of Tanaka's description was English as presented in bilingual programming from NHK and commercial and cable television networks. Because the programs she examined (a) were either bilingual programs (i.e., programs that can be listened to in either Japanese or English) or original programming in English and (b) had as their target audience native English speakers rather than native Japanese speakers, such programming, it was thought, would not be fully indicative of English loanword usage as found in natural Japanese spoken discourse and therefore could not be used as a data source.

Approach and methodology

Samples of spoken discourse were sought from six television programs spanning six different genres. These programs were broadcast over a three-week period in February and March 2007. The titles and genres of these programs are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The television programs

Program title (with English translation)	Genre
たけしのTVタックル (Takeshi's TV Tackle)	talk show
ハケンの品格 (The Dignity of Temporary Staff)	drama
とんねるずのみなさんのおかげでした (Thanks to Tunnels' Viewers)	variety
ニュースウォッチ9 (News Watch 9)	news
どうぶつ奇想天外 (Amazing Animals)	quiz show
さんま御殿 (Sanma's Mansion)	variety talk show

These six genres were selected because it was thought that viewers would primarily be native Japanese speakers, that viewers would span a relatively large demographic, and because it was believed that these programs would use natural or semi-natural spoken discourse¹. Because it was doubted that genres like animation and music programs would, on the whole, present authentic Japanese discourse

¹ It was understood that the news and drama genres, and possibly portions of the other genres selected, were scripted. It is our position that these genres were acceptable for analysis, as the scripts are meant to either represent natural discourse or present information to viewers in a way decidedly dissimilar from advertisements.

situations, they were not selected for examination in the study.

As far as the selected genres are concerned, it should be pointed out that distinct differences were noted in the talk show, variety, and variety talk show genres, which made them attractive for inclusion. The talk show genre presented programming in a discussion-type format. These discussions tended to focus on social topics and recent events, such as political themes and educational issues. The variety genre presented viewers with something different each week, for instance, games involving the program's hosts and guests or quizzes. The variety talk show genre, though similar to the talk show genre in that discussions were held between the host and guests, differed from the other genres because each show centered on particular discussion themes decided upon beforehand.

Some researchers make the distinction between full loanwords and words borrowed temporarily or used only once (see Takashi, 1990). The present study meant to look at English utterances within longer strings of Japanese utterances or in larger contexts in spoken discourse by native Japanese speakers. Therefore, it was not considered necessary to determine so-called "authentic" loanwords (e.g., words listed in recent dictionaries) and discriminate them from temporary word borrowings or new coinages.

For the purpose of data collection, the identification of instances of loanword use in the television programs went as follows. First, all the television programs were video recorded so that they could be archived and analyzed repeatedly. During program analysis, initially, any utterances that would normally be transcribed by using *katakana* (as

katakana is the Japanese script used mainly to transcribe foreign language words) were noted. Utterances that could potentially be written in *katakana* but were of clear Japanese origin (e.g., *giseigo*, or onomatopoeia) were not considered. The acceptable utterances were entered into a spreadsheet program, as were words or terms that used, in part or in full, Roman letters. This broad notation process was used to make sure that no terminology of foreign origin would be missed.

Once the process of noting the foreign utterances had been completed, utterances were discarded if they represented proper nouns (i.e., people, place, event, organization, company, or product names) or if they had a language of origin other than English². Exceptions to the aforementioned criteria include the adjective forms of place names used as modifiers for descriptive purposes (e.g., *Italian* restaurant), utterances that used only Roman letters (e.g., OK), regular acronyms (e.g., OL, or "office lady"), and acronyms in English that may be written in *katakana* (e.g., ニー卜, or "NEET").

Results

Table 2 shows the totals of the *katakana*/Roman letter utterances for each program that were initially recorded, utterances that were suitable for analysis purposes (i.e., the loan tokens for this sample), and the number of individual loanword utterances (i.e., the loan types) after repetitions had been excluded in each genre but not across genres.

² Words with likely non-English origins that are in common use in English (e.g., energy) were not discarded, as word etymologies (i.e., the route the words took to arrive in the Japanese language and/or the Japanese speech samples) were not analyzed.

Table 2. Totals from the sample

Genre	Total number of utterances	Total number of loan tokens	Total number of loan types (within genres)
Talk show	357	260	142
Drama	259	219	113
Variety	713	549	262
News	737	500	289
Quiz show	689	487	177
Variety talk show	522	431	220
TOTAL	3277	2446	1202

As can be seen from the table, comparisons between the first and second columns' final totals reveal that after discarding proper nouns and non-English foreign utterances, the sample total was reduced by exactly one-fourth. Deleting repetitions of loanword tokens within each genre further reduced the total by nearly half. Of additional interest, though not listed in the table, is that when repetitions across genres were removed, the total number of distinct loanword types found in this sample numbered 949.

As per the aim of the research, calculations were performed to reveal the average amount of loanwords used throughout the sample. With regard to the number of loan tokens, it was found that 408 loanwords per genre were used on average across the three weeks of sampling and that 136 loanwords were used in each program. These averages were higher than expected. When calculating similar averages for the loan types, an average of 200 loanwords were found to be used per genre with 67 loanwords used on average per program.

In order to discern loanword use frequency, averages were calculated by dividing the totals of loan tokens and types for each genre from the two right-hand columns in Table 2 by genre broadcast time. The results of these calculations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Average loan token and type frequency per genre

Genre	Total genre broadcast time (in hours)	Average number of loan tokens per minute	Average number of loan types per minute
Talk show	2.30	1.88	1.03
Drama	2.37	1.54	0.79
Variety	2.30	3.98	1.90
News	3.00	2.78	1.61
Quiz show	2.14	3.36	1.38
Variety talk show	2.30	3.12	1.59
AVERAGE	2.40	2.78	1.38

As the results indicate, the genres presented on average programming 2.40 hours in duration across the three weeks of data collection (an average of 48 minutes of programming per genre per week). When averages per minute of the loan tokens and types were calculated, it was found that the variety genre evinced the highest average number of loan tokens per minute at 3.98, as well as the highest average number of loan types per minute at 1.90. The drama genre evinced the lowest averages for both calculations (1.54 and 0.79, respectively). Even considering the latter genre's

comparatively low averages, what these figures indicate is that English loanword usage appears to be a fairly common occurrence on Japanese television, with such loanwords being uttered on average at least 1.5 times per minute.

Upon consideration of the results in Table 3, it may be speculated that frequency of loanword usage is more or less governed by genre characteristics. For example, the drama genre presented far fewer loan tokens or types than the other genres. The most likely reason for this is because the scripts are highly controlled in terms of spoken dialogue and theme. Script writers' beliefs about what characters in the drama would or would not say ultimately influence loanword use frequency by those characters. The variety genre, on the other hand, being unscripted with many on-screen participants who can talk over one another about diverse topics, can not only present more spoken discourse in general per minute (even with overall less broadcast time) but is also far less restricted in terms of the content of the spoken discourse used.

In order to examine the kinds of loanwords used in the data, it was necessary to categorize the loan types extracted from the sample. Initially, we sought to use loanword classifications already established in the literature. However, it was discovered that different researchers presented different categories. For example, Hoffer (1990) had classified English loanwords into eight different categories while Honna (1995) later classified only seven. Only five of these classifications overlap, meaning that combined, these authors present 10 classifications. These classifications, which we used to begin our analyses, are listed below, followed by examples and meanings in parentheses³.

³ Numbers 1 through 5 represent the Hoffer and Honna overlapping categories. Numbers 6 and 7 are Honna's categories, and numbers 8 through 10 are from Hoffer.

1. (tail) abbreviations (リストラ = risutora = restructuring)
2. abbreviations of compounds (セクハラ = sekuhara = sexual harassment)
3. compounds with English and Japanese (歯ブラシ = haburashi = toothbrush)
4. word play (“This 伊豆 a map.” = “This is a map.”)
5. Japanese phrasings in English (morning service = cheaper than usual breakfast combination)
6. semantic narrowing or shift (“human” in human computer = a user-friendly computer)
7. acronyms (OL = office lady = woman who works in an office)
8. direct borrowings (ビジネス = bijinesu = business)
9. English loanwords with Japanese morphology (メモる = memoru = take a memo)
10. Japanese with English morphology (unshinjirable = unbelievable)

These 10 categories, while quite comprehensive, were found to be insufficient for our purposes of examining the loan types as they were manifest in the contexts of spoken discourse in our sample. For instance, although *bijinesu* could be considered a direct borrowing of the English term “business,” terms like *gyara* (“performance fee”) were not as easily categorized. Even though *gyara* is an abbreviation of the word “guarantee,” it is highly unlikely that a native English speaker would comprehend as much, not to mention

comprehend the actual meaning of the term as it is used in Japanese. As such, we believed that *gyara* and other terms deserved to be placed in categories that more accurately described them.

As the data analysis process progressed, multiple new classification categories were created. In all, eight new categories were added to the previous 10 categories. The list of these new categories, with examples and explanations, is as follows:

11. Abbreviated compounds with English and Japanese (ウラン型 = urangata = uranium-based weapon)
12. Abbreviated understood references (イエロー = ierō = yellow, an abbreviation of イエローカード = ierō kārdo = yellow card)
13. Abbreviated direct borrowings (ネック = “neck” from “bottleneck”)
14. Irregular direct borrowings (右ハンドル = migi handoru = steering wheel on the right-hand side of a car)
15. Compound semantic narrowing or shift with English and Japanese (ギャラ = gyara = guarantee, or “performance fee”)
16. Coinages (スパイズム = supaiizumu = spyism, or “spy system”)
17. Abbreviated word pairings (カンカンダンス = can can dance = the can can + dance)
18. Compound semantic narrowing or shift in word pairings (レアチーズケーキ = rea chīzūkēki = rare cheesecake = gelatin cheesecake)

The kinds of loan types used in the sample were categorized and tallied. Table 4 presents the total number of these categorized loan types per category per genre.

Table 4. Number of loan types within genres

Category	T.S.	Drama	Variety	News	Quiz	V.T.S.	TOTAL
1.	9	7	10	16	8	14	64
2.	1	2	1	1	1	1	7
3.	25	13	30	71	29	34	202
4.	0	3	3	0	1	1	8
5.	0	0	2	0	1	8	11
6.	6	6	12	6	7	8	45
7.	1	0	3	2	1	3	10
8.	92	73	183	163	118	132	761
9.	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
10.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
11.	1	4	7	22	5	5	44
12.	0	3	3	0	0	1	7
13.	2	1	0	1	0	2	6
14.	3	0	3	5	1	2	14
15.	1	1	2	1	2	1	8
16.	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
17.	0	0	2	1	2	6	11
18.	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	142	113	262	289	176	220	1202

The loan type totals are very telling in that the most common type of loanword found in the sample as a whole, and indeed, within each genre, was that of Category 8, or of direct borrowings. These loan types accounted for 63% of the total number of loan types. The second most common loan type for the entire sample as well as within each genre was that of Category 3, or compounds with English and Japanese. Though not quite as pervasive as direct borrowings at only 17% of the total number of loan types, loanwords from this category accounted for more than three times the number of the third most common loanword type (i.e., Category 1, or abbreviations). When combined, the loanwords found in Categories 8 and 3 accounted for 80% of all the loanwords from the study.

When looking at the other 16 categories, which accounted for only 20% of the total data set, it was noticed that loanwords from some categories were used only moderately (e.g., Categories 1, 6, and 11), others rather infrequently (e.g., Categories 9, 16, and 18), and others not at all (e.g., Category 10). Further examination of these less common categories revealed that their usage was not simply about the category to which they belonged. Genre appeared to play a role in how often the loanwords in these categories were to be used. As an example, Category 11 loanwords (i.e., abbreviated compounds with English and Japanese) were used most in the news genre with 22 instances. This is the same amount of such category loanword usage for the other five genres combined.

Conclusions, implications, and future directions

Although the results of this small scale preliminary study that meant to examine only amount, frequency, and kind of English loanwords used in various genres on Japanese television cannot be considered fully representative of Japanese television programming as a whole, what was nevertheless revealed by the data analysis was that English loanwords in our sample (a) were found in every genre and every program analyzed, (b) occurred with relatively high frequency throughout the sample, and (c) spanned a number of different descriptive categories, some of which were never before discussed in the literature. The general conclusions that can be drawn from this study are that English loanwords are quite pervasive in spoken discourse (at least in spoken discourse as found in our sample of the television medium), possibly more so than may be generally suspected, and that the most common kind (i.e., category) of loanword being employed by speakers in this medium (that of direct borrowings) would, in fact, likely be more or less comprehensible to native English speakers.

Tanaka and Tanaka (1995) discuss *wasei-eigo* (literally, “English made in Japan”) and conclude that although these Japanese words are cobbled together from English words, we as educators “have to keep reminding our students of these *wasei-eigo* that they are not to be used in speaking and writing English” (p. 129). Certainly, some loanwords used in Japanese that are very English sounding are, in fact, incomprehensible to the average native English speaker (being Category 6 terms) and would thus cause confusion and a breakdown in spoken communication situations. However, 63%, or nearly two-thirds, of the loan types

uncovered in this study were from Category 8, which was the direct borrowings category, while only 4% can be considered Category 6 terms, or the semantic narrowing or shift terms. Because the study's data had been retrieved from television genres meant to convey information via spoken discourse, and because in every genre examined, direct borrowings were by far the most common loanword type, it seems drastic to make a call for a ban on EFL students' attempts at using *wasei-eigo* when speaking English when it may not even be clear to such students which words are *wasei-eigo* and which are direct borrowings, especially when the latter may comprise a distinct majority of the loanwords being used in varied communicative contexts.

Instead of outlawing and avoiding loanwords outright, it is our suggestion that because nearly two-thirds represents reasonably decent odds, students should not necessarily be discouraged from using English loanwords in speech, as the chances are relatively good that the loanword to be used is a direct borrowing. The caveats to this suggestion are that the words to be used must (correctly) be deemed to be direct borrowings (like *bijinesu*), that they are of English origin, and that the students have either been taught or otherwise grasp the concept of syllables in English word pronunciation. As can be seen, when said in Japanese, *bijinesu* has four syllables compared to the English original's two. This adding of syllables to English terms by Japanese speakers is common in speech and can render even the most simple and straightforward directly borrowed term incomprehensible to native speakers of English.

The research discussed here is, to our knowledge, the first to examine the amount, frequency, and kinds of English loanwords used on Japanese television in broadcast programming meant primarily for a native Japanese speaking television viewing audience. Obviously, the examination of these aspects, though important and necessary, provides only a limited glimpse of English loanword usage by Japanese speakers. Deeper analyses of the loanwords found in this medium are needed and, in our opinion, would go even farther in providing depictions of how English loanwords are used. Such analyses could, for example, focus on part-of-speech shifts (e.g., words being used as nouns in English but as adjectives in Japanese), loanword pronunciation by Japanese speakers, and the level of comprehensibility of these loanwords by the Japanese television viewing audience.

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