

## Part-of-speech shift in English loanword adoption

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One kind of metamorphosis in foreign loanword adoption is part-of-speech shift (POSS). To examine POSS, the authors undertook more detailed data analyses involving past research with English loanwords found in spoken discourse in various genres of Japanese television programming. Instances of POSS were sought by examining loanword tokens of terms categorized as direct borrowings in the context of the loanword utterances in the data set. Research results evinced a high degree of consistency, as a majority of direct borrowings and POSS involved resultant nouns and a +*suru* construction for the creation of verbs in Japanese was found throughout.

本論文では、様々なジャンルのテレビ番組に於ける談話データ内の借用語を詳しく分析し、品詞転用を考察している。直接借用語と品詞転用語の大部分を名詞が占める点、そして、動詞作成時には「名詞+する」の形をとる点に於いて、一貫性があるという結果となった。

Increasingly, researchers have begun to examine the ways in which languages influence each other. In previous research, we examined English loanword use on Japanese television in broadcast programming meant primarily for a native Japanese speaking television viewing audience (Ishikawa & Rubrecht, 2008). In that research we examined the amount, frequency, and kinds of English loanwords used and discovered that not only do English loanwords occur with relatively high frequency in every program of every genre we analyzed, but we also found that many of the loanwords from our data could be classified into categories never before discussed in the literature. Additionally, we found the expanse of categories to be of less importance, relatively speaking, than the actual context of loanword usage, which at the time went unanalyzed. In other words, although valuable, loanword classification provides only limited information



about the loanwords themselves, as classifications do not indicate how the English loanwords are used in the Japanese language and what transformations, if any, they underwent when adopted into Japanese from English.

The current article details further analyses of the above-mentioned research's data set. While much of this article presents information (e.g., background literature, television genre selection rationale) that was detailed in the article discussing that previous research, it was the aim of this second research phase to delve deeper into the data and analyze part-of-speech shift (POSS) in loanwords that were categorized as direct borrowings in order to make clearer how English loanwords were grammatically being put to use in the Japanese language.

### English loanwords in Japanese

As is commonly known, English is the foreign language that is most widely studied and used in Japan. As a result, many English words have found their way into the Japanese language. Although figures vary, Higa (1973) estimated that nearly 10% of the total Japanese vocabulary in the early 1970s was composed of *gairaigo* (外来語; lit. words that have come from outside), with over 80% of these words originating from English. In the mid 1990s, it was calculated that of all the foreign borrowings found in dictionaries, English loanwords alone constituted 10% of the Japanese vocabulary (Honna, 1995). At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Shinnouchi (2000, cited in Rebuck, 2002) found that English loanwords alone account for around 90% of all loanwords found in modern Japanese. Because the number of English loanwords extant in the Japanese language was

zero at the beginning of the Meiji Era, continued scrutiny of the English language's transplantation into Japanese is deemed warranted.

### English loanwords and the media

As we have noted in our previous article, few researchers have examined spoken Japanese media (i.e., television, radio) that have native Japanese speakers as their intended target audience for their inclusion or usage of English loanwords. Those that included television as a medium (e.g., Takashi, 1990; Tanaka, 1995) examined specific kinds of English, that is, English in advertising or English programming on Japanese television (mainly bilingual foreign programming and commercial and cable television). Such research, while beneficial in furthering our understanding of the extent to which English language broadcasts have permeated daily Japanese life, provided few points of reference for our particular research. Jinnouchi (2007) cites a 2006 study by the *Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyujyo* (National Japanese Research Laboratory) stating that loanwords in Japanese media (including magazines, books, newspapers, and broadcasts) were used 3.5 times more in 1994 than they were in 1956. Such a figure, though indicative of the increased trend in loanword usage, does little to provide perspective regarding how those loanwords are used, that is, the process by which adopted loanwords are integrated into Japanese discourse. We believe that this general dearth of research into the patterns of loanword utilization reflects the fact that loanwords, though widely acknowledged as proliferating in Japanese, are not yet fully understood.

## POSS

Iwabuchi (1993) makes note of the fact that when words from other languages are adopted into Japanese, shifts in the part of speech can occur. This adoption often simultaneously introduces changes in meaning. For instance, the French preposition *avec* (meaning *with*) becomes a noun (*abekku*) with a meaning similar to that of *dōhan* (*accompaniment*) in Japanese. Cannon (1994) discusses POSS from Japanese to English, such as the borrowing of the noun *kamikaze* and using it as a verb and the taking of the noun *karate* and using it as both a verb and an adjective, depending on the situation. While POSS is thus mentioned in the literature, to our knowledge, detailed examinations of POSS from English to Japanese have yet to be conducted.

## The research

Samples of Japanese spoken discourse were sought from six television programs from six different genres. These samples spanned three consecutive weeks in February and March 2007. Table 1 presents the titles and genres of these programs<sup>1</sup>.

We chose these genres because it was thought that the intended viewing audience would be native Japanese speakers, viewers would span a large demographic, and because we believed that the programs in these genres would use natural or semi-natural spoken discourse<sup>2</sup>. The genres chosen were distinctly different. For instance, the talk show

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

genre presented discussions that focused largely on social topics and recent events. The variety genre differed from week to week (e.g., each program involved varying games and quizzes to engage the hosts and guests). The variety talk show genre employed discussions between the host and guests that centered on pre-decided discussion themes.

For this research, we did not make a distinction between full loanwords and words temporarily borrowed or used only once (cf. Takashi, 1990). We meant only to look at English utterances within longer strings of Japanese utterances or in larger contexts in spoken discourse made by native Japanese speakers in the programs analyzed. Nevertheless, the data set was still constricted. All utterances that would normally be written in *katakana* (with the exception of *giseigo*, or onomatopoeia) were first noted, as were words or terms that used Roman letters. Discarded utterances included

<sup>1</sup> For brevity's sake, the television programs sampled are referred to by genre rather than title

<sup>2</sup> It was understood that the news and drama genres, and possibly portions of the other genres selected, were scripted. It continues to be our position that these genres are acceptable for analysis, as the scripts are meant to either represent natural discourse or present information to viewers in a way wholly dissimilar from advertisements.

proper nouns and words with a language of origin other than English<sup>3</sup>. Exceptions were made for adjective forms of place names used as descriptive modifiers for descriptive purposes (e.g., *Italian* restaurant), utterances that used Roman letters only (e.g., OK), regular acronyms (e.g., OL, meaning “office lady”), and English acronyms that may be written in *katakana* (e.g., ニート for “NEET”).

## Results and analyses

Table 2 outlines the total number of *katakana*/Roman letter (*romaji*) utterances that were recorded, the number of utterances that were suitable for analysis (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.

**Table 2. Totals of *katakana*/romaji utterances 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
V.T.S.	522	431	220
TOTAL	3277	2446	1202

<sup>3</sup> 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.

Whereas our previous research (Ishikawa & Rubrecht, 2008) was concerned mainly with the totals in the final column in order to determine loanword kind (i.e., category), the present research focused on the totals in the middle column. Although loanwords from our sample were ultimately placed in 18 categories, in order to most efficiently examine POSS, it was determined that only direct borrowings (e.g., ビジネス for “business”) should be scrutinized. The rationale behind this decision was twofold.

First, direct borrowings were the most common loanword type found in the data. Table 3 shows the number of data set tokens, with numbers in parentheses indicating how many of these were direct borrowings. Calculations of the percentages of direct borrowings to the total number of tokens for each program revealed a span from 51.4% to 79.5% with an overall average of 67.7%, meaning that direct borrowings accounted for over half of the loanword tokens in each individual program and that two-thirds of the tokens from the entire data set were direct borrowings.

**Table 3. Number of tokens from the data set**

Genre	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	TOTAL
Talk show	85 (60)	62 (41)	113 (72)	260 (173)
Drama	74 (46)	70 (36)	75 (52)	219 (134)
Variety	166 (116)	224 (171)	159 (113)	549 (400)
News	168 (103)	187 (111)	145 (91)	500 (305)
Quiz show	112 (89)	105 (83)	270 (211)	487 (383)
V.T.S.	116 (69)	154 (96)	161 (97)	431 (262)
TOTAL	721 (483)	802 (538)	923 (635)	2446 (1657)

Second, in order to examine POSS, there must be terms available in English to compare against that which was used in Japanese. For instance, note the 18 categories and examples of each detailed in our previous research:

1. (tail) abbreviations (リストラ = *risutora* = restructuring)
2. abbreviations of compounds (セクハラ = *sekhara* = 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)
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 kado* = 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 chizukeki* = rare cheesecake = gelatin cheesecake)

Words and terms like *risutora* from Category 1, *haburashi* from Category 3, and *morning service* from Category 5 simply do not exist in English. They are abbreviations, compounds, and Japanese phrasings in English, respectively. If they are not present in English, then there is nothing for them to potentially “shift into” when they are used in Japanese. By the same reasoning, the various abbreviations, compounds, and coinages we found would not lend themselves to POSS analyses. Direct borrowings, however, have an original English counterpart and, possible POSS aside, only go through minimal change (e.g., spelling and pronunciation when written in *katakana*) when transported to Japanese.

**Table 4. Number and kind of direct borrowing parts of speech**

Genre	N	V	Adj	Adv	Prep	Exc	POSS	TOTAL
Talk show	156	5	9	1	0	0	2	173
Drama	119	4	5	0	0	2	4	134
Variety	324	35	25	0	2	2	12	400
News	280	13	3	0	0	2	7	305
Quiz show	321	48	2	0	0	10	2	383
V.T.S.	237	5	18	1	0	1	0	262
TOTAL	1437	110	62	2	2	17	27	1657

From the total number of acceptable loan tokens, terms categorized as direct borrowings were analyzed in their respective contexts of utterance in order to determine POSS. Table 4 shows the parts of speech of the direct borrowings in each genre. Columns two through seven indicate no shift from English and Japanese in terms of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and exclamations. The POSS column indicates how many part-of-speech shifts occurred (e.g., from a noun in English to a verb in Japanese).

As can be seen from the table, direct borrowings that came from English nouns and that were used as nouns in Japanese were by far the most common, for they occurred 86.7% of the time. In descending order, the next most frequent borrowings were verbs (6.6%), adjectives (3.7%), exclamations (1%), adverbs (<1%), and prepositions (<1%). The 27 instances of POSS accounted for 1.6% of all direct borrowings in the data.

**Table 5. Number and types of POSS**

Genre	N to Adj	Adj to N	Adv to N	V to N	N to V	P to N	TOTAL
Talk show	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Drama	0	0	0	3	1	0	4
Variety	0	3	0	3	1	1	8
News	0	2	0	0	1	0	3
Quiz show	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
V.T.S.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1	5	1	7	4	1	19

Of the 27 POSS tokens, eight were within-program repetitions. When these repetitions were excluded, 19 tokens remained. Table 5 lists the shifts these tokens underwent (e.g., noun in English to adjective in Japanese).

Because the number of POSS instances was much smaller than expected, especially when compared against the overall number of direct borrowings found in the data, it was difficult to discern any patterns in these shifts. Regardless, it could still be seen that the POSS instances overall matched descriptions of loanword characteristics found in the literature. For example, the largest number of POSS instances involved shifts into nouns in Japanese. Iwabuchi (1993) notes such a shift as being one of the most common kinds of part-of-speech shift. Looking at the data, 73.7% of the shifts involved POSS noun shifts. More specifically, English adjectives became nouns five times, adverbs became nouns one time, verbs became nouns seven times, and prepositions became nouns one time.

Second, POSS verb construction appeared indicative of typical loanword verb constructions. Of the 19 POSS instances, four involved verb shifts. In each case, speakers added “*suru*” to a loanword. This +*suru* construction is common when making Japanese verbs from foreign loanwords (Honna, 1995; Iwabuchi, 1993) and is especially frequent in general when terms have a foreign rather than domestic origin. For example, the domestic form of the word “to study” or “to learn” in Japanese is *manabu* (学ぶ), which does not require the +*suru* construction. Combining characters and using their Chinese readings produces *benkyō suru* (勉強する), which has essentially the same meaning as *manabu*. The four POSS +*suru* constructions involved the English nouns “break,” “advice,” “reaction,” and “house.”

### Implications

Although the data discussed in the present paper yielded only 19 POSS tokens, these results nevertheless indicate that the POSS instances from this study fit descriptions of typical loanword transplantation detailed in the literature. In other words, as related by other researchers, (a) nouns are the most common part of speech for loanwords and (b) loanwords employ a +*suru* construction when shifted into verbs.

The fact that most direct borrowings from the sample as well as most resultant POSS instances were nouns matches what the literature has to say about loanwords and their parts of speech. Oshima (2002) compared loanwords listed in the 1955 and 1991 editions of the *Kojien* Japanese language dictionary and found nouns to far outnumber other parts of speech in both editions. Nakagawa’s (1996) research revealed that, taken together, nouns in everyday speech

account for the most common loanword part of speech used and heard in the daily lives of the Japanese university undergraduates under study. Percentage-wise, Higa (1973) had found that nouns account for more than 90% of English loanwords in Japanese. This figure nearly corresponds with the percentage of nouns found in our data for direct borrowings (86.7%) and is approached by the percentage of the few POSS instances we discovered (73.7%).

Concerning verbs, it was mentioned previously that the most common way of constructing Japanese verbs from loanwords is with a +*suru* construction. Other constructions are possible but not without changing the category to which the loanword belongs. For instance, *memoru* (“to take a memo”), being a Category 9 borrowing (i.e., an English loanword that employs Japanese morphology), differs significantly from Category 8’s classification of direct borrowings. Considering the ease by which +*suru* can be added to nearly any loanword, it came as no surprise that all POSS verbs in the data set, not to mention all direct borrowing verbs, employed this construction. As such, seemingly impossible constructions of *reaction +suru* and *house +suru* emerged from the data and were utilized as verbs in Japanese.

The picture that these results paint is essentially one of consistency. With the figures from the literature in mind, it can therefore be concluded that our sample, though relatively small, shows two things. First, because of the commonality of nouns and the verb transformation process discussed above, our data can be said to be indicative of how Japanese use English loanwords in speech. Had our data set, for instance, contained a majority of verbs or had a majority of noun-to-

adjective POSS instances it would have been cause for some alarm, as there would have been either something unique about the data set or it would have indicated that there were widespread changes occurring in Japanese speech with regard to English loanword usage. Either case would have been call for extended analyses of the data set coupled with an examination of external examples of loanword usage.

Second, and more importantly, the results indicate that although the English loanwords in use in Japanese may change over the years, the proportions of their usage as well as the ways in which they are constructed do not. This means that when looking back from the present over the course of several decades, one can see that (a) nouns were once and still are the most common part of speech in resultant loanwords, both in terms of direct borrowings and as shifts, and (b) when verbs are created they tend to be constructed in the *+suru* format. The implications of these results for nouns are that they are the most useful part of speech, just as they were during the Meiji Restoration. For verbs, it means that when the need to create and utilize verbs from terms originating in English presents itself, the Japanese have a way to do so that is simultaneously simple, easy to understand, and effective.

## Conclusion

Cannon (1994) states that when two languages differ significantly in terms of culture and typology, extensive linguistic interference can result should the borrowing of terminology occur. Considering the many differences between the English and Japanese languages, we had expected a greater number of POSS instances than were

found. While we discovered only very few instances of POSS, we found English loanwords to be largely adopted and used in a generally consistent manner (i.e., both proportionally and historically), at least for the loanwords found in our data.

The insights gained from this research can be used as a basis for future loanword studies. Research could be conducted that gauges the comprehensibility of the loanwords used in the medium of television, such as by examining the loanwords in our data set and the contexts in which those loanwords were used. As there do not appear to be any strict rules for loanword adoption and the parts of speech those loanwords take (e.g., the loanword “house” can apparently be used as either a noun or verb in Japanese), the question remains as to how comprehensible the loanwords actually are to listeners.

Relatedly, another research direction would be to examine how English loanword users select the loanwords they use, that is, if Japanese speakers are fully cognizant of the meanings (and the parts of speech of those words) of the words selected or if there are underlying cognitive rules loanword users unconsciously follow. As mentioned above, looking at both the POSS instances from the data and their utterance contexts gave no clues as to why those words and not others were uttered as English loanwords or why they underwent POSS. Yet another avenue of research could aim to determine if the consistency found in this study is evident in other media (e.g., newspapers, magazines, radio). Deviations from the trend of consistency we found could indicate larger forces impacting the structure and direction of Japanese society as a whole.

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### Appendix

#### *Loanwords involved in POSS instances*

Talk show: reality, please

Drama: follow, check, reaction, clear

Variety: no challenge, versus, break, follow, on air, natural, switch on, original

News: advice, straight, stainless

Quiz show: clear, house

V.T.S.: —