A study of English Loanwords in Japanese

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1. Introduction

"A loanword," according to The America Heritage Dictionary of The English Language (1969), "is a word adopted from another language that has become, at least partly, naturalized; for example, encore, kindergarten." Nihongo Daijiten (1989) defines gairaigo or loanwords as "the words, borrowed from other languages, that have come to be used as part of a language. As far as Japanese is concerned, we mostly call comparatively newly adopted foreign words loanwords, while the ones adopted from Chinese or other foreign languages long time ago are usually excluded from this category." We can also safely say that a conspicuous characteristic of loanwords in our language is that they are described in katakana, though all katakana words can not be called loanwords.

The Japanese loanwords from English can be divided into two main categories: Katakana eigo (Japanese transcription from English) and Japanese English. Katakana eigo also consists of two categories: one includes the words borrowed from English such as 'typewriter' or 'hamburger'. They are transcribed into Japanese as closely to the English pronunciation as possible. The other type of katakana eigo includes the loanwords partly deleted or transformed from the original English in a Japanese way. They are, for example, sangurasu for 'sun glasses' or hamu eggu for 'ham and eggs'. The Japanese English words, on the other hand, are the words coined by Japanese in Japan and, to most of the Japanese people, they look like English words. But generally they are not understood by native speakers of English.
Katakana eigo and Japanese English are both far from English. This is because once an English word gets incorporated into the Japanese language, its pronunciation changes drastically. Moreover, its meaning does not necessarily fit with that of English nor does its grammar. So, from the viewpoint of the English language, both these categories are Japanized English. However, if we look at katakana eigo and Japanese English from the Japanese viewpoint, they are quite different in their characteristics.

It is remarkable that the Japanese are so eager to borrow and use foreign English words even to the extent that it has been said that "...in principle, the entire corpus of English vocabulary would become as available to Japanese as was the corpus of Chinese in the past."

It may be no exaggeration to say we are immersed in loanwords. We come across, or are forced to read, them in the newspapers, books, signboards in the street, advertisements in the train or even in brochures at theaters or playgrounds. What is more, English words, phrases, or sentences easy for Japanese to understand, not in katakana words, recently can be found in newspapers, leaflets or posters, such as ‘It’s a Sony’, ‘The 1st International Motorsports Show In Tokyo’, ‘for the next stage’ etc....

The proliferation of these English loanwords may be due to the increase in the number of people with a good command of English, including those returning to Japan after living abroad. Also, travelling abroad has increased over the years. According to The Japan Times, in 1990 more than 10 million Japanese tourists traveled overseas for the first time ever. In addition, many junior and senior high schools in Japan employ native speakers of English to work in the classrooms. Due to this increase in contact with “proper and natural” English, it is the writer’s supposition that some changes in the field of loanwords may be appearing, and that Japanese English words such as ‘goal in’ might be decreasing in number. A better understanding of English may be providing a positive influence on loanwords.
2. Method and Findings

2.1. Materials

Three weekly magazines, the Sep.28 *FOCUS*, the Sep.25 *AERA*, and the Sep.27 *Hanako*, each with many photos accompanying their news articles, were selected and studied. These specific magazines were chosen because each has a wide circulation and attracts different types of readers. The sales volume of *FOCUS* is listed as 800,000. This is the top seller among the weekly magazines of this kind. *Hanako*’s sales volume is listed as 350,000. This magazine chiefly gives information about what is happening in the Tokyo metropolitan area each week. It is geared to a certain type of young business woman and female college student to the extent that it has even attracted the attention of the general public and has helped to coin words or phenomena known as oyaji gal, hanako-phenomena, etc. *AERA*, with the listed volume of 450,000, is well read by professionals who want to keep up with the week’s important political news and events.

2.2. Method

The writer picked up all katakana words from these three weekly magazines except for those words in advertisements, the names of companies, trademarks and proper nouns.

The words picked up were divided into five groups as follows:

Group I …… the loanwords which are found mainly in *Konsaisu Gairago* and/or *Kadokawa Gairaigo Jiten*, *Gairaigo no Gogen* and *Katakana Eigo Jiten*.

Group II …… the katakana words which are not found in the dictionaries mentioned above.

Group III …… the loanwords which are found in one of the dictionaries mentioned above, having certain meanings, but now have acquired expanded definitions.
Group IV⋯⋯the loanwords which originated from languages other than English.

Group V⋯⋯abbreviated words.

The katakana words in Group II and III are the main targets of the writer's research. Group II is further divided into the following groups, according to their characteristics.

- **Group II A**
- **Group II A – 1**
- **Group II A – 2**
- **Group II A – 3**
- **Japanese English**

**Group II A – 1**⋯⋯the katakana words which are not in CGJ and other dictionaries mentioned before. Native speakers of English can use their original English, because they are the Japanese transcription of the English words. For example, 'auctioner', 'cleaning service', etc. There were a total of 356 of these words.

**Group II A – 2**⋯⋯the katakana words whose original English may be used in a sentence or as a sign on a door, but they are not colloquial expressions. There were 67 of these found.

**Group II A – 3**⋯⋯the katakana words whose literal translation into English is understood by native speakers. However, these words are not proper English and are therefore not used by those speakers; such words have either had their order changed and/or one or more words had been omitted.

**Group II B**⋯⋯the Japanese English which native speakers can not understand whatsoever, though they are made up using English words. These are English words with no equivalent meaning in the English language but are words coined by Japanese and used solely by them, for example, 'skill up' for 'improve one's skill', 'velour touch' for 'to feel some thing as soft and slightly furry as velour'.

2.3. Findings

2.3.1. Characteristics of the Words Found in Group II A – 3

2.3.1 – 1 Abbreviation/omission of Words

The examples of abbreviation or omission of the first word or part of
the first word of a compound word:
1. daia ringu (daiaMONDO ringu) diamond ring
2. ohdah shatsu (SUPESHARU ohdah shatsu) special order shirt
3. puro supohtsu (puroFESSHONARU supohtsu) professional sport
4. rappingu sahbisu (GIFUTO rappingu sahbisu) gift wrapping service
5. appu (KUROHZU appu) close up

2.3.1 – 2 The examples of abbreviation or omission of the middle
word or part of the middle word of a compound word
1. interia sukuhru (interia DEZAIN sukuhru) interior design school
2. tappu shoh (tappu DANSHINGU shoh) tap dancing show
3. chekku kauntah (chekku IN/AUTO kauntah) check in/out counter
4. bakku bando (bakku – APPU bando) back-up band
5. furih raitah (furih RANSU raitah) free lance writer
6. goshikkru hohru (goshikkru SUTAIRU hohru) Gothic style hall
7. bei hoteru (bei SAIDO hoteru) bay side hotel

2.3.1 – 3 The examples of abbreviation or omission of the last word
or part of the last word of a compound word:
1. puresu (puresu EIJENTO) press agent
2. torakutah demo (torakutah demoNSUTOREISHON) tractor demon-
stration
3. konpyutah sofuto (konpyutah sofutoUEAH) computer software.
4. medikaru chekku (medikaru chekkuAPPU) medical checkup

Puresu eijento, not puresu is also used in Hanako in the field of
fashion, though puresu is more frequently used.
2.3.2. The abbreviation discussed from the grammatical point of view:

2.3.2 - 1 When the past participle modifies a noun, ‘-ed’ is deleted.
1. inpohto guzzu (inpohtEDo guzzu) imported goods
2. burendo kohhih (burendEDo kohhi) blended coffee
3. mikkusu bahjon (mikkusuTO bahjon) mixed version
4. mikkusu guriru (mikkusuTO guriru) mixed grill
5. shirikon piasu (shirikon piasuTO IARINGU) silicon pierced earings

2.3.2 - 2 The examples of the deletion of plural ‘s’:
1. sutando bai hohsu (sutando bai hohsIZU) stand by forces
2. hando beru (hando beruZU) hand bells

2.3.2 - 3 The examples of the deletion of suffixes to make adjective such as ‘-al’, ‘-an’, or ‘-able’:
1. kurashikku konsahto (kurashiKARU konsahto) classical concert
2. yohroppa sutairu (yohroPIAN sutairu) European style
3. fasshon burando (fasshoNABURU burando) fashionable brand

2.3.2 - 4 The examples of the deletion of ‘and’ of a conjunction:
1. bahbon sohda (bahbon ANDO sohda) bourbon and soda
2. ramu kohku (ramu ANDO kohku) rum and Coke
   The other examples included in this category:
3. kurohzu taimu (kurohZINGU taimu) closing time
4. nyu iyah konsahto (nyu iyahZU konsahto) New Year’s concert
5. rohru burashi (rohRAH burashi) roller brush

2.4. Findings in Group II B······Characteristics of the words in Group II B.

All the words in Group II B are coined in Japan, that is, they are Japanese English. They are categorized by their characteristics as follows.
2.4 - 1 Japanese people add an unnecessary word to the correct one, such as furawah behsu (flower vase) vase
2. nashonaru hohmu rando (national homeland) homeland
3. fuhdo menyu (food menu) menu
4. pateo supehsu (patio space) patio
5. suihto ruhmu (suite room) suite
6. heddo tchihfu (head chief) chief
7. aideru stah (idol star) idol or star

'Vase' means "a tall open vessel used chiefly for holding and displaying flowers" (AHD), so there is no need to add 'flower' before 'vase'. The Japanese word for 'vase' is kabin. Ka means 'flower' and bin means 'bottle' when they are literally translated into English. Japanese people coined furawah beisu in the same word order as Japanese word. They must have known the words of flower and vase without knowing the correct meaning of vase. 'Patio' is "an inner, roofless courtyard or a space for dinning or recreation, adjacent to a house" (AHD). Probably, Japanese people, who did not know what patio really means, looked at a patio in a picture or somewhere else and a special space caught their attention. Knowing the space was called patio, they combined patio with space, following the way the Japanese people usually coin compound words. 'Idol' is "someone admired too much" (LDCE) while 'star' means "a famous or very skillful performer or the main performer in a film, play, etc." (LDCE). So, they can not be used together. Japanese people, however, want to express the idea of the most popular idol in aideru stah. In Japanese English heddo tchihfu indicates the chief who is most responsible.

2.4 - 2 The examples of compound words, one component of which includes incorrect English:
1. mainasu imeiji (minus image) negative image
2. marihn guzzu (marine goods) marine supply
3. katto raron (cut salon)
4. heah shoppu (hair shop) beauty/hair salon or
5. katto shoppu (cut shop) beauty parlor
6. shuhzu butikkku (shoes boutique) shoe store
7. jihnzu butikkku (jeans boutique) jeans shop
8. zuhmu appu (zoom up) zoom in or close up
9. kurisutaru raito (crystal light) crystal lamp
10. chihpu gurume (cheap gourmet) budget/frugal gourmet
11. bosuton taipu (Boston type) Boston bag
12. poppusu guruhpu (pops group) rock group
13. misu kontesuto (Miss contest) beauty contest or beauty pageant
14. mahmareido jagu (marmalade jug) marmalade jar
15. taoru hangah (towel hanger) towel rack or towel rod
16. puraibehto fotu (private photo) personal photo
17. kozumetikkuk meikah (cosmetic maker) cosmetic manufacturer
18. shuhzu keisu (shoes case) shoe box
19. kafeinresu kohhih (caffeineless coffee) decaffeinated coffee
20. fihringu disuko pahtei (feeling disco party) singles' disco party

2.4-3 The examples of Japanese English consisting of more than one word which native English speakers would never use to express the same content:

(Native speakers have their own expressions.)
1. setto menyu (set menu) daily special or tabled'hote
2. basu guzzu (bath goods) toiletries
3. uesuto pohchi (waist pouch) waist bag or fanny pack
4. furih daiauru (free dial) toll free It begins with 1-800—～.
5. innah ueah (inner wear) underwear or clothes worn under a jacket, blazer, sweater, etc
6. innah (inner)
7. ohto rokku (auto lock) self locking or automatic lock
8. konsome zerih (consomme jelly) aspic
9. konto guruhpu (conte group) comedy team/troup
10. surih saizu (three sizes) proportion The ideal one is 36–24–36.
11. sukin sukohpu (skin scope) complexion oil meter
12. nyuh ohpun (new open) grand opening
13. baio essensu (bio essence) herbal extract
14. firumu pakku (film pack) mask or mud pack
15. ranku appu (rank up) promotion, to promote one step up
16. terebi anime (televiSIOAN animaTION) cartoon
17. kappuringu pahtei (coupling party) singles' party
18. rhuumu shuzu (room shoes) slippers
19. fasshon biru (fashion building) department store or mall

2.4–4 The examples in which the word order of a compound word is completely opposite from English equivalents:

1. bah raunji (bar lounge) lounge bar or cocktail lounge
2. monitah terebi (monitor televiSIOAN) television monitor/ TV monitor
3. kurahku wah puro (clerk word proCESSING) word processing clerk
4. kashimia rongu kohto (Cashmere long coat) long Cashmere coat
5. sawah suihto sohsu (sour sweet sauce) sweet sour sauce
6. kurieitah orijinaru (creator original) original creator

2.4–5 The examples of those compound words of Japanese English, which consist of two English words but which are lacking the preposition or prepositional type phrase which helps one noun modify the other.

1. apurikeishon retah (application letter) a letter of application
2. gorufu membah (golf member) a member of the golf course
3. fasshon sensu (fashion sense) a sense of fashion
4. shinema essei (cinema essay) an essay on cinema
5. botan daun shatsu (button down shirt) a shirt with button-down collars
6. ahto bijinesu (art business) a business dealing with fine art
7. wahpuro sekuretarih (word proCESSING secretary) a secretary who does word processing
8. shisutemu enjinia sukuhru (system enjineering school) a school of system engineering
9. NHK entahpuaiizu pafrurett (NHK Enterprise pamphlet) a pamphlet (published) by NHK Enterprise
10. saido sukuhru (side school) a school attended on the side

2.4 – 6 The compound words which do not seem to belong to the categories mentioned above:
1. akurobatto adahjio (acrobat adagio)
2. imehji karah (image color)
3. kyaria shih (career scene)
4. karah ueddingu (color wedding)
5. kyaria appu (career up)
6. jyuerih taun (jewery town)
7. sukih puran (ski plan)
8. tsuhuei baggu (two way bag)
9. dezainahzu hoteru (designer’s hotel)
i0. tohtaru rezah guzzu (total leather goods)
i1. dorihmu cohru (dream call)
i2. pahrimento sentah (parliament center)
i3. hihroh shohu (hero show)
i4. fasshon sutairu (fashion style)
i5. fasshon puran (fashion plan)
i6. fasshonaburu rabu komedi (fashionable love comedy)
i7. peipah shoppu (paper shop)
i8. poppu teisuto (pop taste)
19. **bondeggi ahto shou** (bondage art show)
20. **maruchi bidio sukurihn** (multi vidio screen)
21. **meiku karah** (make color)
22. **wain peizurih** (wine paiselly)
23. **wan shihn** (one scene)
24. **raisu shawah** (rice shower)
25. **reggu surimingu** (leg sliming)
26. **reisu kuihn** (race queen)
27. **raibu resutoran** (live restaurant)
28. **kajuaru weah burando** (casual wear brand)
29. **hai-bijyon saron/ sutajio/ gyararih/ sofuto** (High-Vision salon/ studio/ gallery/ soft)
30. **purezento kuizu** (present quiz)
31. **heddohohn sutere0** (headphone stereo) stereo headphone

The following words express drastically different meaning from what the original English does, though they are proper English words or phrases.

1. **doraibingu pointo** (driving point) ...... In Japanese English it indicates the driving course of a car. In English it means the main point of a story or whatever a person is trying to say.
2. **pihchi sukin** (peach skin) ...... In Japanese English it refers to a kind of texture which feels like peach skin. In English it is the skin of a peach.
3. **ai hohru** (eye hole) ...... In Japanese English it simply means 'eye(s)'. In English it is the eye socket or area around an eye.
4. **ofisu baggu office bag** ...... In Japanese English it indicates a bag designed specially for office workers. In English, on the other hand, it is derogatory slang for a woman who probably is not stylish, and who gossips about other persons in the office.
2.5 Findings in Group III

The following loanwords are listed in CGJ, but now possess additional meanings from those already defined. These additional meanings are all found in the original English usage of these words. The number of these words is small but this fact confirms that we Japanese are using loanwords more and more.

1. ririhsu (release)

This has been used in regards to the letting go of machinery, camera shutters, bowling balls, and fish. This time the word is used meaning “to allow a new record to be sold publicly”. (LDCE)

2. sukeueah (square)

This has referred solely to the geometrical figure. This is now used as an adjective meaning “rigidly conventional, unsophisticated.” (AHD)

3. uddo (wood)

This has referred only to certain types of golf clubs and musical instruments. This now also means “the substance of which the trunks and branches of trees are made”. (LDCE)

4. shifuto (shift)

This has been used as a technical word in sports or in referring to a part of a car or it has indicated a shift dress. This time it is used with the meaning of moving something from one place to another.

5. burasshu appu (brush up)

‘Brush up’ has meant cleaning up or smoothing with a brush or it has referred to a woman’s hairdo. This time they use this word meaning to improve one’s knowledge of something, for example, I studied at a night school to brush up my English.

6. kurihnappu (clean up)

Kurihn apuu torio (clean up trio), or kurihn appu was coined and has been used as one of the technical words/terms of baseball.
This time kurihn appu is used as a word meaning the act of cleaning. For example, they carried on a campaign to clean up the river.

7. padoru (paddle)

Padoru has been used as a word meaning ‘a tool with a wide blade at one end, used for moving a canoe.’ A number plate shaped like a paddle, which is used by the bidder, is now called a padoru.

8. marihn (marine)

This has only referred to a branch of the militaries. This is now used as an adjective meaning ‘of the sea.’

9. figyah (figure)

This meant a human shape considered from the point of view of being attractive in the magazine. This now can also refer to the number sign or to figure sign or to figure skating or to a pattern performed in figure skating.

10. mehn ibento (main event)

It has meant the chief boxing match in a series of boxing matches. Now it means simply an important or major event, not necessarily that of a boxing match.

11. gurafikku (graphic)

This has referred to magazine pictures that illustrated the points of a story. This word is used in place of counter graphics.

3. Discussion

The writer’s supposition was that some changes in the field of loanwords may be appearing and that, because of the increased contact with native English, the number and/or use of Japanese English words, such as ‘goal in’ might actually be decreasing. While this research shows it is true that changes are appearing, unfortunately, based on the data collected, it is unable to show whether or not Japanese English words
are actually decreasing. It is obvious that there are still lots of Japanese English words and expressions. There are lots of katakana English in use and it seems that the Japanese people continue in their desire to use loanwords. Why is this?

One of the reasons is that many Japanese are still admirers of the Western world, especially of America. There is a tendency for loanwords, especially from English, to be looked upon as something prestigious. Consequently if a few loanwords are put into a speech here and there, or into papers in place of native terms, it tends to not only give the audience a favorable impression, but it may also give the speaker or the writer a feeling of superiority over others.

There is an anecdote that shows how ardent admirers of America the Japanese are. This was featured in the evening paper of the *Asahi Shim bun* on December 3rd of 1985.

It seems that a Japanese-American in America opened a sushi bar that had a computer where people can order sushi without speaking. They just look at pictures and they can learn the price at the same time. This sushi bar caught the attention of the mass media in America and was introduced to Japan. This Japanese-American's intention was that if his idea was accepted and his way become popular in California, it would be sure to become a boom in Japan too.

Another newspaper article, this time from the morning *Asahi Shim bun* of September 12, 1990, shows how much the Japanese people like katakana English. According to research held by the Chiba Branch of Tokyo Commerce and Industry Research, 68 companies have changed their company names since last March. Out of these 68 companies 49 used katakana for their company names! For example, a company that deals with steel powder changed its name to PAUDAH TEKKU (POWDER TECH) and a construction company changed its name to EMU WAN (M ONE). They concluded that companies which have been suffering from labor shortages are trying to attract the youth who are now gradu-
ating from universities or senior high schools by changing their company names. These companies thought that if they kept on using Chinese characters for their names then prospective employees would not pay attention to their companies.

The 'Stop the Sato' campaign in 1967, instead of 'Sato naikaku dato' caught the hearts of Tokyotai and Mr. Minobe won the gubernatorial position of Tokyo. His slogan was very popular and, as a result, everybody wanted to use 'the' everywhere. We can still find 'the bargain' in the city even now. This 'the' helped Japanese people coin Japanese English.

With the exception of a very small number of people who have chances to interact with native speakers of English, it is difficult for even highly educated people to express their own ideas in English. It is often said that the English printed on T-shirts is full of mistakes. The reason is that both the people who make the T-shirts and the people who wear them are weak in English.

Japanese people like loanworks very much, but it is difficult to use them correctly. As a natural result Japanese English will continue being coined.

However, in spite of continued incorrect usage of English words, very positive signs are appearing. The following are some current examples.

1. Ofu shihzun in katakana transcription of 'off-season' is used in Hanako instead of the Japanese English shihzun ofu (season-off), which has been in popular usage by every walk of life. This one example is encouraging.

2. There were also quite a number of rather difficult words used such as metabolaiyaz (metabolizer), karisumatiiku (charismatic), poguromu (pogrom), neokurashikku (neoclassic), and sahabban (suburban), etc. Except for 'pogrom', the other words were naturally interwoven in Japanese sentences. They used gorufa'horikku (golf-a holic) too.
3. The following examples are written in katakana. In this case they looked natural enough for the Japanese readers to understand.
   a. cash before delivery
   b. Animal Health Technician
   c. spot advertisement
   d. delivery service
   e. musical love comedy
   f. mail order bride.
   g. Miss flower queen pageant
   h. time warp
   i. stand by force(s)
   j. “Save the children” Charity
   k. no thank you
   l. hand bell ringer

4. The golf terms found in the three magazines are all proper English. This is a conspicuous difference when we compare these words with the baseball terms, which are full of Japanese English. What accounts for the difference? One of the reasons must be the difference of the time when they were introduced to and became popular in Japan. Baseball was introduced in 1873 and golf, in 1895. Moreover, while baseball became popular quite rapidly, the golf boom only began about ten years ago. The society has changed a lot in this interval and so has the use of language. This can be seen in the fact that Japanese baseball terms are familiar to most people while Japanese golf terms are virtually unknown. Another big difference between baseball and golf is that golf players participate in big tournaments which are held abroad. These golfers help introduce proper English to Japan.

The internationalizing of Japan and increased contacts of its people with native English speakers cannot necessarily account for an increase
in the amount and usage of katakana English. However, whatever the actual cause and influence, it is certain from the signs around us that an increase in katakana English is actually taking place.

4. Conclusion

It is true that changes in the field of English loanwords are continuing and that these loanwords show signs of positive influence, in that they are becoming more like the English words from which they were borrowed. However, it can not be said that Japanese English is decreasing or that a better understanding of English is the cause of this positive influence.
NOTES


5) The loanwords found in the three magazines.

Group I ...... 1158 (20 in the Edo Period, 325 in Meiji, 129 in Taisho, 302 by the 20th year of Showa, 382 after the 21st year of Showa)

Group II ...... 486

Group III ...... 12

Group IV ...... 133 (91-French, 12-German, 11-Italian 7-Dutch, 3-Spanish, 3-Portuguese, 1-Finish, Chinese, Greek, Russian, Hindi, Latin respectively.)

Group V ...... 24

The situation surrounding the time when the Japanese borrowed large amounts of Chinese words and the present situation seem to be basically quite different in that we didn’t have a writing system at that time and now we do. So, we don’t seem to have the need for loanwords as we did for the Chinese letters. However, the writer thinks the English loanword boom will still continue.


11) Ishiwata, op.cit., p.50 Ishino, op.cit., p.126.
16) 1. toppu puro           top pro
    2. gurihin rifutah       green lifter
    3. puro gorufah          pro golfer
    4. puro tsuah            pro golf tour
    5. puro tesuto           pro test
    6. adobaizari puro       advisory pro
    7. afutah gorufu         after golf
    8. gorufu kyariah         golf career
    9. fukku gurippu         hook grip
   10. mini tsuah            mini tour
   11. gorufu buhmu          golf boom
   12. gorufu kurinikku      golf clinic
   13. gorufa horikku        golf-a-holic
   14. kurabu keisu         club case