Japanese-English Language and Culture Contact:
How Much English Is Found in Japanese, How Is It Used, and Why Should Students and Teachers Care?

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Abstract

In this paper I study the ubiquity of English in Japan, and show that this unique language and culture contact situation has important implications for language study and language teaching, as well as the study of human cognitive universals. I explore three topics that I think are of special pedagogical importance. First, I examine the extent of the presence of English in Japanese, and its intelligibility. Many claim that little of it is actually understood by the average person, but I show that these arguments are fraught with flawed theories and assumptions. Second—in response to this—I examine what actually constitutes an English loanword in Japanese and look at what is means to "know" it. In so doing I explore the nature of meaning construction in this particular Japanese context. Third, I will examine four specific problems facing Japanese language teachers as they tackle the complexities caused by the way Japanese has assimilated English words and culture contact situation with their students. Though the focus of this paper is one special case, I hope some of the broader theoretical implications for fields such as anthropology, linguistics, psychology, and philosophy are also apparent.

1. Introduction

As is well known by now, English words and phrases are ubiquitous in Japan. To the uninitiated observer, or even to anyone with just a casual interest in the country, this may appear as simply a quaint and colorful characteristic of the Japanese language, reflecting the Japanese cultural penchant for borrowing foreign things. Some lament its presence. Others find in it a synergy, reflecting a coming pan-global internationalized world. This hybridization of American and

Japanese popular culture, for example, could represent the future of how transnational cross-cultural flows will take place in the future.[1] Regardless, the notable presence of English in Japanese is often a source of frustration for both English and Japanese language teachers alike, reflecting unique technical and philosophical problems.

In this paper I hope to show that the "English loanword phenomenon"[2] is more than a tourist curiosity, pop culture fad, or educators' lament. Instead, I will argue throughout that this language and culture contact situation has important implications for not only language study and language teaching, but also for the study of human cognitive universals. However, I will focus mostly on those aspects of the phenomenon that I think are of particular concern for pedagogy. I will explore three topics that I think are of special importance. First, I will examine the extent of the presence of "English" in Japanese, and its intelligibility. There have been many claims as to *how much* English exists in Japanese, and *how little* of it is actually understood by the average Japanese person. I will show that such arguments are fraught with difficulties and flawed assumptions. Second—in response to the claims just mentioned—I explore what actually constitutes an English loanword in Japanese (or an English made-in-Japan) and look at what it means to "know" it. In this analysis, I will tackle the issue of how meaning is constructed in the Japanese context. Third, I will examine four special problems facing Japanese language teachers as they tackle complexities caused by the way Japanese has assimilated English words and culture with their students. Though this paper focuses on one special case, I hope some of the broader theoretical issues from fields such as anthropology, linguistics, psychology, and philosophy—and their implications—will also become clear.

2. The Extent of English borrowing in Japanese, and its intelligibility

It is hard to say precisely exactly how many English loanwords are "in" modern Japanese. I will argue shortly that these borrowings are actually something that resides in the eye—or ear—of the beholder (to use a trite phrase). That is, English

loanwords are not something "in" the Japanese language so much as something in the minds of individuals using them. I hope to show that this is not just arguing semantics. Before tackling this issue, however, I will discuss three reasons why I believe it is close to impossible to give an exact figure on the amount of English used in Japanese: problems with the methodology of counting, problems of various sociolinguistic variables, and problems with defining the terms: "loanword," "borrowing," and "English" itself.

2.1. Difficulties in determining the number of English loanwords
2.1.1 Problems with the methodology of counting

First, there are many methodological problems in the data gathering. These, of course, include the usual types vs. tokens distinction that comes up in any discussion of making tallies. For example, words like *kiro* キロ ("kilogram"), *doru* ドル ("dollar"), and *eizu* エイズ ("AIDS," or HIV) are among the most frequent terms found in Japanese newspapers and magazines. While technically English, I do not think anyone would ever seriously complain about foreign linguistic pollution in a newspaper if only these three terms appeared, even if together they constituted a sizable percentage of the total text. On the other hand, if the total text under consideration displayed several hundred different loanwords—i.e., many different types—we probably would think that there was a lot of English being used here, even if, percentage-wise, they made up a smaller proportion of the total than did *kiro*, *doru*, or *eizu* together. So, when doing a word-count analysis, we need to decide to count either the number of different loanword type-occurrences or the total number of loanword appearances (tokens) regardless of repetitions. Arguments for both ways can be persuasive.

Another methodological problem is not *what* to count, but *how* to count. Do we look at written texts, and, if so, which ones? Must we only look at "good" writing and sources (such as the mainstream newspapers and magazines), and exclude "less sophisticated" venues (such as *manga* comics or children's books)? Do we look at spoken language, and if so, do we use "normal" conversations or a

corpus gathered from the media? If we gather data from daily conversation, we run the risk that the researcher's presence will affect what is heard and recorded. If we look at the language found in, say, television or movies, we cannot be sure if it reflects real speech rather than some creator's imagined linguistic world. In all cases, I would argue, the number of loanwords could be drastically affected.

And then there is the problem of *when* to count. Do we examine things when people are speaking using the standard language (国語 *Kokugo*), in a public presentation, say, as opposed to people drinking together in a bar and conversing in a regional dialect? Should we look at speech used in school or at work, or focus only on speech used in the home or neighborhood? Or are daily informal conversations somehow more revealing than formal speech? Once more, I would venture to say that context and environment will show disparate numbers and ways that English and English-like words are used in Japanese.

2.1.2 Problems of sociolinguistic variables and registers

The second major problem concerns important characteristics of the speakers in a social setting (sociolinguistic variables) and the variety of language used for a particular purpose in a particular context (register). These are not mutually exclusive.

I, and others, have argued that the number of English loanwords in any speech event varies greatly by the age, gender, status, and education of the speakers and the topic being discussed (Stanlaw 2004). Some cases are stereotypically self-evident, as with men using more English baseball terms, and women possessing a more robust English loanword vocabulary for fashion and cosmetics.[3] It has been claimed that women often use more English loanwords than men, younger people use them more often than older people, and that loanword usage can vary by education, with those with the highest education using the most loanwords. The subject being considered also affects the number of loanwords found. It would hardly be surprising that a discussion about

computers or popular music (Moody 2006) would have many more English loanwords than, say, a discussion of Buddhism or Heian art.

A related problem, too, is the speech act involved. That is, the illocutionary force of an English term can often be quite different from that of a comparable Japanese term. This may be used for any number of purposes, for example, creating a euphemism for a sexually-charged term (e.g., *reipu* レイプ for *gōkan* 強姦) (Hogan 2003), or as a means to circumvent certain gender-constraints in the Japanese language.

The point is, all of these things—combined with variables including levels of politeness and style of discourse—make determining the number of loanwords used in Japanese very hard. Sometimes, under some conditions, for certain purposes, some people might use a lot of English loanwords; others, at other times, for other reasons might not use them quite so much at all. While it might be ideal to be able to discover a set of common core English loanwords that, say, 90% of Japanese know and use 90% of the time, such a task is probably quixotic and ephemeral. If nothing else, language changes before our very eyes, as does loanword usage. Furthermore, comparing different sociolinguistic conditions is a little like comparing apples and oranges. But the biggest challenge is philosophical: a loanword is what someone says a loanword is. I will discuss this next.

2.1.3 Problems of determining what constitutes a loanword

The third and last issue I wish to discuss concerning the problem of determining the extent of English borrowing in Japanese is the most profound: it is actually very hard to define exactly what a loanword is. In many discussions of English loanwords in Japanese, the definitions of "English" and "loanword" are almost taken for granted. I would suggest that both these notions are more contested than often assumed.

First, the idea of "English" as ontologically real has been challenged on a number of fronts (e.g., Kachru 2006). While the native English speaker may not

be dead—as implied by some critics (Paikeday 2003)—the traditional hegemony that people from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Commonwealth countries have had is no longer quite so strong. For example, the number of English speakers in China alone surpasses that of the USA and UK combined, albeit that not all learn English as a first language. With the plethora of many regional "Englishes" now commonplace, it is harder to give primacy to any one variety. Likewise, the distinction between "real" English and "Japanese" English becomes increasingly problematic. Are *gairaigo* (外来語 "loanwords") and *Wasei-Eigo* (和製英語 "made-in-Japan English") synonyms, or is one a subset of the other? As we will see later in this paper, this is not just a matter of nomenclature.

Second, just how might we operationally define a loanword? Do we go by the spoken language or the written language? Often—probably because it is thought to be easier—orthography is the first line of attack. In other words, most lexemes in *katakana* constitute a loanword.[4] But in spite of the perceived advantages the Japanese script seems to provide, things are not so clear. Many words of obvious foreign origin in Japanese (at least to native English speakers) would be excluded while other terms of obvious native origin in Japanese (at least to native Japanese speakers) would be included. An example of the former would be *tabako* ("cigarette" or "tobacco") as this is generally written as たばこ in *hiragana*. An example of the latter might be *gomi* (as in **gomi** *no hi* ゴミの日 "garbage day") as it here is written in *katakana*. And what if a term is written in roman letters? Unfortunately, we cannot just simply conclude that anything in *rōma-ji* is automatically foreign (as, say, for example, the name "**Nihon University**"[5]). So orthography itself cannot be trusted as the definitive arbiter of loanword-ness.

Spoken language, of course, is what comes first in the linguistic "chicken or egg" controversy. Any writing system will always be secondary and derivative, in spite of what literature teachers may tell us. Much has been written on the processes of phonetic and grammatical nativization of English as it gets borrowed

into Japanese. Many common features by now are well known and documented: e.g., lexeme truncation (ワープロ *wā puro* for "word processor"), or the various ways the Japanese phonological system modifies borrowed terms (レッド *reddo* from "red").

But even setting the orthographic problems aside, and considering only spoken language, this still does not give us a way to define what a loanword might be. This is because ultimately what we are dealing with is a subjective judgment. That is, something is a loanword if someone feels or notices it as such. For example, it is said that—at least in terms of vocabulary—English is 30 to 40 percent French due to the Norman conquests starting in 1066 CE, but I doubt most native English speakers would say it *feels* 30 to 40 percent French. Some might believe later importations like "lingerie" or "rendezvous" to be French borrowings, while others might consider them native English terms, giving their French origins no second thought.

It is similar in Japanese. Some English borrowings are probably noticeable by all; others might be missed by most. As many terms come and go, it is hard to catch up, much less count. Everything is fraught with ambiguity. For example, some of the latest word play from J-Pop recording artists like the long-lived rock group Southern All Stars—such as the phrase "*I, I, I, I Tender*" (Moody 2006: 219)—may be obviously English because it appears in roman letters and looks like "real" English. But to some who only hear it, it may sound like *ai shiten-da* (a slang way of saying "I love you" in Japanese). This might be ironic for lead singer and songwriter Kuwata Keisuke as the whole point of using English was probably to make the song feel foreign.

So in a sense then, what constitutes an English loanword is an individual judgment call made by each Japanese native speaker. This depends on whether the person personally knows the word to be English or not, or has experience with its connotations. This, when combined with all the semantic modifications English words go through when taken in, makes counting them very difficult. And while some terms are direct borrowings, many are loan blends of some kind,

interacting with Japanese terms, as in the case of *LOANWORD NOUN + suru* (e.g., スキーをする *sukī o suru,* "to ski"). Again, trying to tell what is English and what is Japanese is difficult.

2.2 An estimation of the amount of English used in Japan, with caveats

Keeping all the above cautions in mind, we might attempt to make a rough guess of the amount of English found in daily modern Japanese. Previously, I suggested that saying between five and ten percent of vocabulary items in Japanese are of English origin (Stanlaw 2004: 12) was a reasonable number. Many later studies generally support this estimate. Of course, if the amount of items in roman letters, and "real" (i.e., not intentionally borrowed) English is included, the figure increases substantially.

Oshima (2003: 93-94) made an interesting longitudinal study of the number of loanwords found in the editorials of the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, which has the second largest circulation in Japan.[6] She found that the number of loanwords increased from 2.5% in 1952 to 10.1% in 1997, a substantial rate of growth (2003, p. 93–94). She argues, however, that this ten percent figure is probably less than the actual number of loanwords in use as she found in her ethnographic interviews that newspapers tend to be conservative regarding loanword usage to avoid confusing the public. According to *Asahi Shimbun*'s style book, writers should, "…be aware of the abuse of *gairaigo* and foreign words" (Oshima 2003: 98).

2.3 Japanese-English intelligibility

While the Japanese language may in some sense be up to ten percent English, it is even harder to determine how much of this is intelligible to most people. Common sense suggests that most of this should be comprehensible. Otherwise, why would it be introduced and why would it continue to be used? I have found through talking with people in media and advertising, that there are controls in place to keep the number of loanwords from exploding and the number of nonce

symbols to a minimum. As one of Oshima's informants said, "The appropriate amount of *gairaigo* in newspaper articles is 10 to 20%, but it is probably about 10% right now. The number has been increasing and it will increase more. There is no point in criticizing *gairaigo*, but whenever a writer uses *gairaigo*, the writer should keep the right attitude—that is to provide understandable information" (2003: 100).

There are some, however, who argue that many Japanese do not understand much of the English now present in the Japanese language. For example, Daulton (2004) claims that nearly a quarter of the loanwords found in his survey of 1,231 *katakana* terms (of the 15,000 different types) taken from the year-2001 run of the *Mainichi Shimbun* newspaper were not understood by his sample of 140 college students in Kyoto. Tomoda (1999) reports that in a survey conducted by NHK public television in Japan, 77% of the 1,329 subjects believed they understood what the tested loanwords meant, though they actually understood only 50%. (NHK believed the comprehension rate would be 100%).

The reason for this intelligibility gap is usually attributed to prestige (e.g., Haarman 1989, Loveday 1996). Daulton (2004: 285), for example, claims that "[n]early all Western loanwords in Japanese are first introduced to the public by a small number of individuals with most Japanese people having never heard or read the word before, and having no play in their borrowing. Because of this presumptuous use of foreign words by, for example, academics, government bodies, and the media, the meanings of many of the words used are little understood."

However, this must be recognized as simply an exaggerated article of faith. There is, of course, no way to ever definitively trace back the origins of most neologisms to a single individual in a language. It is true that certain incidents may spark lexical innovation. For example, the 1972 break-in at the Watergate building in Washington, DC, has spawned dozens of other -GATE scandals in American English (e.g., MONICA-GATE, CONRA-GATE, ENRON-GATE, and DIANA-GATE to name just a few). But we can hardly attribute such changes in

the language to Richard Nixon, Monica Lewinsky, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, or Princess Diana. While there is no doubt that key public figures, the mass media, and advertising will introduce buzz words and catch phrases into everyday speech by the pound, these will not stick around long if they are only "little understood" or "presumptuous." To claim, as Daulton does, that the "… Japanese people [are] … having no play in their borrowing"—that is, denying the violation and agency of the individual of a whole speech community—seems sociolinguistically unsupportable.

But does this mean that every English borrowed form is transparent to everyone all the time? Hardly, as this goes against the personal experience of anyone who has ever been to Japan. And some research has indeed shown that there are undeniable comprehension problems at times with loanwords. But I think there are two things that must be considered.

First, part of the problem is not with the loanword so much as the referent. As another of Oshima's journalist informants explained, "The writer can create a translation for professional *gairaigo*, but the readers would not understand such translations anyway. Readers who would understand such translations would understand the *gairaigo*. So there is no point translating *gairaigo* into Japanese. It is not the issue of *gairaigo*, it is the issue of the reader's interest and profession" (Oshima 2003: 100). In other words, the problem is not really a matter of the intelligibility of the English loanwords *per se*.

Secondly, I think the real underlying issue isn't whether or not the English in Japanese is intelligible or comprehensible. The issue is that we must realize that English in Japanese might not be intended to be comprehensible in the usual sense language teachers, or even many autonomous or applied linguists, understand it. This is not an oxymoron. What I am getting at is, what a loanword "means" is not necessarily always clear, always agreed upon, or always static. Instead, their meanings—however they might be defined—are often multiple, fuzzy, in a state of flux, and emerge in use and situation. They might not mean only one thing. Just

as most native terms in a language are polysemous, and carry a multitude of connotations, so too do loanwords.

I have argued several times that the Japanese do not necessarily aspire to approximate the native-English norm, and that Japanese-English has become real Japanese, whatever its historical antecedents may have been and regardless of how it started out. So the claim made by the NHK researchers that English loanwords were only understood by half the audience is rather misleading. It assumes that there was some *a priori* absolute meaning already present in the air, and that somehow half the people didn't catch it. This ignores the way meaning gets constructed while negotiated in a social context, when categories emerge out of speech interactions. In other words, when informants are given tasks like Daulton's—where they must make judgments about individual isolated terms—it is not surprising to me that they are likely to do poorly. But I do not think this implies that they do not "know" the word. I think this kind of approach is best seen in some examples, as shown in the next section.

3. Polysemous loanwords as a tool for linguistic creativity

Most words in a language express several thoughts, feelings, and impressions at once; English loanwords in Japanese are certainly no exception. Thus, as I mentioned above, it does not make much sense to ask "What does X mean?" unless X is connected somehow to other words. But it is likely that English loanwords are even more inherently polysemous or ambiguous than native terms for two reasons: First, being neologisms, most have not yet established themselves permanently in the lexicon as native terms. Second, often speakers intend to use English loanwords for special purposes, including the desire to use a euphemism, to create an eye-catching phrase, or to induce a desired emotional response. Under such circumstances, it is the very openness of loanwords that is being exploited. To express things slightly differently, it is not that English loanwords lack meaning; they have the potential to carry much—perhaps too much!—meaning. This is what makes them interesting (and make a discussion of

them sometimes controversial). And because they are sometimes used in relative isolation—as attention-grabbers, this potential is even greater. However, this allows for great individual creativity. The following four simple examples illustrate this, but thousands of even more complicated ones can be found everyday in Japan.[7]

The first example is from a sign outside a convenience store in the mall at the main train station in Yokohama. In capital roman letters is written **IT'S DEMO**. This has any number of layers of interpretation. My first reaction upon seeing it was that it was a clever way of writing Japanese *itsu demo* ("anytime") in *rōma-ji* roman letters to carry the notion of the store always being open to serve you. It can also be thought of as contracted English: "It is a demo." It can demonstrate, and anticipate, all your needs. It might also be some kind of hybrid: "It's でも": It is (**IT'S**) … well (**DEMO**) … anything you might need. Of course all these notions can be conveyed simultaneously, which makes it particularly effective.

The second example comes from a grocery store in Tokyo specializing in goods from northern Japan. Once more we see an interesting blend of orthography and languages: the English phrase **HOKKAIDO FOODIST** and Japanese *kanji/katakana* phrase 北海道 フーディスト being written together. In *hiragana* we see the headline おいしさ こだわり (*oishisa kodawari*, that could be translated to something like "The taste is the thing!"). Again we see puns and games being played in both languages. The English *-ist* morpheme being "incorrectly" attached to the noun *food* creates a new way of saying grocery (akin to other actual productive forms like chem-ist, art-ist, or drug-gist,). The way it is used also suggests the English superlative suffix *-est*, implying not only is this a place to buy foods from Hokkaido, these are the best foods from Hokkaido.

In the three phrases below—all taken from advertising signs—we again see Japanese orthographic linguistic creativity at work, all centering around an English word.

I Need 遊   (I need *yū*)

THIS IS 伊豆   (This is *Izu*)

愛 ランド   (*ai rando*)

In the first case, the particular Japanese character 遊—pronounced *yū*, but meaning 'to be idle' or 'take a holiday'—makes the phrase sound not only like "I need you," but also that I need to play or I need to take a vacation (which is what I am sure the Japan Airlines travel agency wanted the reader to think). This second case—also from a JAL advertisement—finds the character for Izu, a popular historical travel destination, being used in a quasi-English sentence. The end result transmits feelings like "This is Izu," "This is IT!," "Izu is IT!" simultaneously. The last case shows an intriguing way of writing about a tropical *island*: the English morpheme *-land* is written in *katakana,* but the initial part uses a character for love or passion 愛 which is pronounced *ai*. The innuendos are obvious.

  The last two examples below come from print sources. The first is the name of a J-POP song; the second is an advertisement for a calcium vitamin supplement.

Me★セーラーマン   (Mister Sailorman)

カルシウムをたべます Ca (*karushiumu o tabemasu ka?*)

Both of these examples are interesting because they include meta-orthographic appeals. In the first case, the English word *mister* is written with the word *me* and a *star* symbol, seeming to indicate that the *sailor-man* is not only to be addressed occupationally, he is my guiding star as well. In the second case, the question is, "Have you taken your calcium today?" However, the Japanese sentence-final interrogative marker か (*ka?*) is written as **Ca**, the chemical symbol for calcium from the periodic table of the elements.

  In all of these examples we see the incredible amount of creativity that lies behind the judicious use of even the most mundane of English loanwords. Cognitive processes are clearly involved in each of these English loanword

collocations. I believe these examples are representative of the linguistic processes going on all the time in Japanese regarding the presence of English. In my view, loanwords are not only good to hear and see, they are good to think as well.

4. Japanese English and Japanese language teachers

How does Japanese English articulate in the world of the Japanese language teacher? This is a contested issue and has been debated several times. I think—and my Japanese-language teacher friends seem to agree—that there are several problems when discussing English loanwords with foreign students, especially English loanwords with students from English-speaking countries. I will address four major important ones, which I think relate to the notions of categories and emergent meanings that I have already discussed.

4.1 Problem 1: Students believe English loanwords mean the same thing as they do in English.

This is probably the biggest complaint from Japanese-language teachers, and the loudest lament from Japanese-language students. There are hundreds of examples. One of the most famous is the term *wai-shatsu* (ワイシャツ lit. "white shirt") being applied to all Western dress shirts, not just white ones. This leads to some humorous combinations—for native English-speaking Japanese language learners—like *shiroi wai-shatsu* (白いワイシャツ lit. "white 'white-shirt'"), *ki-iroi wai-shatsu* (黄色いワイシャツ lit. "yellow 'white-shirt'") or *burū no wai-shatsu* (ブルーのワイシャツ lit. "blue 'white-shirt'").

4.2 Problem 2: Students believe English loanwords can just substitute for a native Japanese term.

This can be seen as the converse of Problem 1, and there are equally as many examples. For instance, Japanese language students might believe that the English loanword *gārikku* (ガーリック) can substitute for the native term *ninniku* (にん

にく), but this is not quite true. The loanword is more often applied to the powdered form, while the Japanese term refers to the actual plant.

4.3 Problem 3: English loanwords seem simply random and arbitrary.
In both Problems 1 and 2, many semantic processes—such as meaning restriction, expansion, redefinition, and chaining—can makes things very challenging for both students and instructors alike. And if after a while we convince students that English loanwords in Japanese do not mean the same thing as they do in English—nor are they synonymous with their native Japanese equivalents—they then often draw one of two conclusions (or both): (1) they assume that English loanwords appear randomly, as if by chance; and/or (2) they assume that the motivations for English loanwords being imported or created are basically arbitrary.

There are many examples that at first glance seem to support these assumptions. Why would *hotchikisu* (ホッチキス) be used for a "stapler" rather than, say, *sutēpurā* (ステープラー)? Why would *sukuranburu* (as in スクランブル交差点 *sukuranburu kōsaten*, a "scrambled intersection") mean pedestrians crossing an intersection in all directions while traffic is stopped in four directions? In the first case, the tool was named—in Japan—after the American B. B. Hotchkiss, who invented it in the 19th century (Arakawa 1977: 1255), and in the second case everyone indeed "scrambles" around any which way when all the lights are red. These explanations, such as they are, do not allow one to predict or produce understandings of the meaning of English words encountered in their usage in Japanese. They can only be extracted after the fact.

These things might better be seen in an example using a numeral classifier, because there we can observe some semantic property clearly labeled as such, and this is usually not the case with most other terms in the lexicon. Numeral classifiers actually convey a lot of subtle important information, though usually even native speakers do not pay much attention to them during discourse. For example, the phrase *denwa ga ni-hon arimashita* (電話が二本ありました) could

mean something like "You had two phone calls" (for example, while you were away). However, using the *-dai* (台) classifier for machines instead of the *hon* (本) classifier in the phrase *denwa ga ni-dai arimashita* (電話が二台ありました) could mean something like "We had two telephones" (for example, in the house where we used to live).

Generally *hon* is used, of course, to count long thin cylindrical objects such as beer bottles, pens, and so on (as in *ni-hon no enpitsu*, 二本の鉛筆 "two pencils"). But it is also applied to many other nouns that are not long or cylindrical: e.g., *ni-hon no bideo* (二本のビデオ "two videos"), *ni-hon no firumu* (二本のフィルム "two films"), *ni-hon no hōmuran* (二本のホームラン "two home runs"). It can also be applied to such disparate items as rolls of tape, television shows, and even volleyball serves.

What do all these things have in common, and why do they take the classifier *hon*? Lakoff (1987) argues that even though tapes, volleyball serves, phone calls, movies, videos, home runs, and television shows share no objective physical quality, Japanese speakers group them together in the same mental category based on metaphorical extensions of the basic long-thin-cylindrical properties carried by most other nouns that typically take *hon*. Phone calls are carried over long thin wires, baseballs and volleyballs make a long thin arch as they sail through the air, and videos, films, and TV programs are all preserved on long thin tape-like objects. That is, in some sense, all these things are classified and categorized—and indeed, thought about on some level—as long cylindrical things. We might not have been able to predict beforehand that when telephones or videos would be brought to Japan they would be counted using *hon*. But observing which nouns take *hon* afterwards allows us to see an underlying mental metaphorical category that Japanese speakers have.

I would argue that a similar claim could be made for most English loanwords. As seen in the examples in the previous section, one can reason the underlying motivations as to why a certain term is used or created, but would be hard-pressed to see them beforehand. However, these are hardly random or

arbitrary. Nor are they the result of Japanese people just trying to follow the latest linguistic fashions or fads, as is often claimed. No matter what many in the West may say, Japanese people are not copy-cats, which brings us to the last problem I would like to discuss.

4.4 Problem 4: English loanwords seem to reflect a Japanese copy-cat mentality.

The great presence of English in Japan has been called a variety of things by its detractors: a problem (Ishino 1977), a barrier (Hirai 1978), a puzzle (Yokoi 1973), or a kind of pollution (Morris 1970). The implication behind all these laments is that English loanwords are just one more example of the notorious Japanese copy-cat mentality. Previously, I have strenuously argued that nothing could be further from the truth (Stanlaw 2004), and am even more convinced today. To me, the presence of English in Japanese is an example of healthy and voracious creativity, whether in popular music (Moody 2006), journalism (Oshima 2003), television (Ishino 1996), or color nomenclature (Stanlaw 2009).

4.5 English in Japan, English in the world

The linguistic notions underlying all four of the problems above are naïve, of course, and it is important that students be aware of this. I think that examination of English loanwords through the lens of linguistic relativity, cognitive science, and specific cases like the examples given here, not only leads to better conceptual understandings and linguistic maturity, it also fosters better learning and pedagogy. So Japanese English should be taught with enthusiasm; the amount of English in Japanese explored and debated with enthusiasm. Students should see some of the motivations as to why these English loanword terms are present (including labeling different referents, reflecting different cognitive categories, and allowing for personal creativity).

However, students need to be made aware of the polysemy inherent in loanwords (or for that matter, in native terms as well). That is, words in a

language do not mean just one thing, even at a single time. This is something native speakers tacitly know, but sometimes forget for heuristic purposes when teaching foreign language students. When teaching vocabulary, obviously one cannot give students empty semantic bowls or leaky meaning containers—the vessels presented must contain *some* content, after all. For example, a teacher may be very conscientious and tell students that the English loanword *uētto* (ウエット) does not mean the same thing as English "wet" or "damp," but rather "overly sentimental." But sometimes it *does* refer to water, as when we say *uētto sūtsu* ("wet suit" ウエット スーツ). Meaning is always in a state of flux; meanings expand, and contract; this is especially true for Japanese-English.

Ultimately, students should also come to see that not *just any* English loanword can be adopted into Japanese; and when it is, there are important cognitive, linguistic, and cultural constraints on its usage—as well as good reasons for their being there. Students should at least see that these English loanwords do not appear randomly, but are used for very clear sociolinguistic reasons. And most importantly from a pedagogical standpoint, students need to come to understand that the presence of English in Japanese, then, is not due to poor or incorrect acquisition; and it does not matter if native English speakers understand these terms or not. They are "made in Japan" for Japanese, by Japanese, for Japanese purposes.

Notes

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1. For example, director Ridley Scott in his famous Harrison Ford movie *Blade Runner* envisioned a future dystopian Los Angeles were young people spoke a combination

of pop-English, street-Spanish, and techno-Japanese, with borrowings of all flavors going back and forth.

2. In the interest of space I am going to finesse problems of nomenclature here and for the most part use the terms "Japanese English," "English loanwords," (*gairaigo)*, and even "made-in-Japan English" (*Wasei Eigo*) almost interchangeably. They are not synonyms, of course, and using them synonymously clouds over some very important distinctions regarding the role of English in Japanese. However, I give a more nuanced treatment of this elsewhere (cf., Stanlaw 2004: 11–43).

3. Of course, these *are* stereotypes, because, for example, more and more Japanese men are now taking a greater interest in dress, beauty aids, and cosmetics (e.g., Miller 2006).

4. The Japanese writing system, of course, uses four orthographies: Sino-Japanese *kanji* characters, the *hiragana* and *katakana* syllabaries, and *rōmaji* roman letters. If acronyms or "pure" English is included, Japanese could then be considered penta-graphic. English loanwords interact with each of these types of script in different ways (Stanlaw 2004: 83–99).

5. Written, of course, as 日本大学 (*Nihon Daigaku*) in Japanese.

6. I wish to thank my colleague Masanori Yoshida for bringing this reference to my attention.

7. I have chosen examples from written sources and signs here, but that is only for convenience. Similar examples from spoken language abound, with equally valid claims (cf., Stanlaw 2004).

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