

Why Japanglish Won't Languish: A Morphosemantic Analysis of English Loanwords in Japanese

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**Why Japanglish Won't Languish: A Morphosemantic Analysis of English
Loanwords in Japanese**

(Master's Thesis)

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1. Introduction

As a basic element of human communication, words are meant to be exchanged, transferring meaning from one person to another. Bound together by complex sets of rules and embedded into a particular culture, they form languages. However, even though all languages “have the means to create novel expressions out of their own resources“ (Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009: 35), sometimes words move across language boundaries and settle in a foreign linguistic environment. This is a phenomenon known as borrowing, which has been of great interest to various fields of linguistics for centuries. Bloomfield (1973: 444) makes a distinction between “*dialect borrowing*, where the borrowed word comes from within the same-speech area [...], and *cultural borrowing*, where the borrowed word comes from a different language“, while Haugen uses the term *borrowing* broadly to describe the way in which a speaker reproduces new linguistic patterns “not in the context of the language in which he learned them, but in the context of another“ (1950: 212). On the other hand, Haspelmath and Tadmor prefer the term *copying*,¹ but ultimately continue to use *borrowing* as it is well-established and its metaphor does not lead to any significant misunderstandings (2009: 37).

The Japanese language has a long and varied history of word borrowing dating back to the 5th century A.D. (Loveday 1996: 27), when the systematic formation of its writing system began, and this vigorous tendency of sourcing vocabulary from abroad shows no signs of waning in the modern age. This thesis will provide an insight into the ever-expanding pool of English loanwords in Japanese, as well as the linguistic phenomenon known as *wasei-eigo*, colloquially known as *Japanglish*, which refers to Japanese-made expressions based on English-language words or morphemes. Blossoming on the blurry border between loanword and coinage, *wasei-eigo* (Japanese-made English) at once represents a highly productive force in the expansion of the Japanese lexicon and a fertile object of study of the English language beyond the confines of the Anglosphere.

Since the mid-20th century, Japan has been one of the world's major importers of linguistics goods from the United States. Over seventy years later, the country's cultural and political landscape is still overwhelmingly influenced by its closest Western ally. For an isolated island nation once saddled with a reputation for being closed off to the outside world

¹ Because *borrowing* might suggest that the donor language expects to receive its word back and *transfer* a loss of the word in question in the donor language.

and unwilling to turn its back on venerated traditions, this linguistic pollination represents a curious occurrence in and of itself. However, when taking into account the sheer extent and impact the English language has had on all levels of Japanese language production, both public and private (Stanlaw 2004: 2), a compelling opportunity for linguistic research becomes readily apparent.

By delving into the complex game of incorporating English-language words into Japanese — from phonetic and orthographic adaptation to changes in morphological structure, to semantic change — and analyzing the word formation processes involved, we can gain a clearer understanding of the lexical borrowability of English and its position as a contact language. Furthermore, an overview of the history of loanwords in Japanese originating from other languages will provide context on the unique status that English-language expressions enjoy in the morphosemantic constellation of this East Asian language.

The research portion of this study will examine a corpus of English loanwords in Japanese and categorize them on the basis of word formation processes involved in their creation. Although affixation is cross-linguistically the most common way of creating new lexemes or adapting a word's form to its morphosyntactic context (Van Goethem 2020: 1), in Japanese other creative methods of word formation also play a vital role in the transfer of new lexemes from English. In addition, the results will attempt to show that the morphology of the English language shows productivity even when transported into a Japanese-language context.

There are two systems of Romanization widely used in Japan. The author has decided to adopt the more popular Hepburn system due to its convenience of use for non-Japanese speakers. The complex writing system of the Japanese language has made digitalizing texts into feasible corpora quite difficult (Scherling 2012: 51), which is why all examples studied in the research portion of the paper are sourced from two online dictionaries — Jisho (jisho.org), a Japanese-English website which collects data from a variety of open-source projects, and goo 辞書 (<https://dictionary.goo.ne.jp>) — as well as from contact literature: Stanlaw (2004), Irwin (2011a), and Scherling (2012).

2. How loanwords enter the Japanese language

Phonetic and orthographic adaptation are the two main processes involved in the introduction of English lexemes into the vastly different Japanese linguistic environment. This chapter will give a brief overview of these processes in order to provide essential context for understanding how English loanwords are created and further transformed within the rules of Japanese language.

2.1. Phonetic adaptation of foreign words

If we are interested in understanding how the Japanese language acquires loanwords, then we must acquaint ourselves with the assembly line that, by various means, transforms the linguistic source material into a finished lexical product. The first and most basic step in this process is phonetic adaptation, which occurs automatically whenever a loanword is used (Scherling 2012: 40).

Unlike English, which has 15 vowel sounds, standard Japanese has a typical five-vowel system with short and long variants. Generally rare in native words, long vowels in modern Japanese mostly stem from Chinese loanwords and recent loanwords from English and other Western languages (Kubozono 2015: 4). When it comes to consonants, the most characteristic difference lies “not in the number of consonants found in each of the two languages but rather in the unique distribution patterns of consonants in both languages“ (Ohata 2004: 7). Most notably, Japanese lacks the fricative sound /v/ and the liquid /l/. In the process of phonetic adaptation, these and other sounds are replaced with approximate sounds. In this case, the former is replaced by /b/ and the latter by /r/ (Scherling 2012: 41). A typical Japanese person would pronounce the English words *veal* and *beer* the same way — *bīru*.

Gemination, or consonant lengthening, is a regular and very complex element of Japanese phonology which most commonly occurs in the foreign lexical stratum (Kubozono et al. 2008: 960). We will not go into why and how geminate consonants are distributed; it will suffice to acknowledge their large frequency and provide several examples. Having entered the Japanese language, the English word *cut* becomes *katto*, *bug* becomes *baggu*, and *bridge* turns into *burijji*.

As far as syllables are concerned, English allows a wide variety of consonant clusters, allowing both open and closed syllable types (Myers-Scotton 2006: 220), whereas Japanese is restricted to open syllables, which require vowels or consonant-vowel couples (Ohata 2004: 8).

This necessitates that all words that include consonant clusters be modified by inserting a vowel between the consonant clusters or after consonant endings (Scherling 2012: 105). The only exception to this rule is /N/, a syllable-final moraic nasal which acts as a vowel. Thus, English *spurt* becomes *supāto*, a popular loanword used in Japanese sports terminology, and *cabin* becomes *kyabin*.

The basic timing unit in Japanese phonology is the mora, which overlaps with the syllable in most native words, but the two diverge in many Sino-Japanese words and loanwords. This discrepancy arises because some moras cannot constitute a syllable on their own (Kubozono 2015: 11). For example, diphthongs or long vowels usually correspond to one syllable in English, but two moras in Japanese. As a result, a large number of loanwords in Japanese take much more time to pronounce compared to their source counterpart. A simple two-syllable English word such as *birthday* thus transforms into *bāsudē* (バースデー), which amounts to five moras. For this reason, Japanese speakers have a strong tendency to shorten words, bringing forth a large number of abbreviations and contractions (Scherling 2012: 45), which is also evident in the words they borrow from English.

2.2. One language, four scripts

To paint a picture of how Japanese introduces English words into its vocabulary, it is also important to know the functions of its various scripts and how they interact with each other. Officially, the writing system of the Japanese language consists of three main building blocks: the *kanji*, logographic characters adopted from ancient China, and two syllabaries known under the umbrella term *kana*. In rare cases, the Latin script is also used by Japanese speakers for either stylistic purposes or writing acronymized loanwords, which we will touch upon later.

Unlike the *kanji*, in which each character corresponds to one or more meanings, in *kana* every character corresponds to one whole syllable of the Japanese language. The two types of *kana* are *hiragana* and *katakana* (Scherling 2012: 39). *Hiragana*, notable for its flowing curved lines, is primarily used to write grammatical and function words, inflections, as well as those words for which *kanji* are not used.² For the purpose of this study, we will focus on *katakana*, which has the following uses: transcribing foreign-language words into Japanese; writing

² This can happen for multiple reasons. Sometimes the *kanji* symbols used to write the word are outdated or too complex, so *hiragana* is used to save time or avoid confusion. If one does not know the *kanji* (usually children or less-educated people), *hiragana* presents an alternative. Additionally, the two *kana* syllabaries can be used for stylistic purposes.

loanwords, onomatopoeia, and various technical and scientific terms; and for emphasis (similar to italics in English). As *scriptio continua*, Japanese does not have spacing. This, however, does not pose a problem for native speakers, who can tell words apart quickly thanks to the distinctive features of each notational system.

<i>Hiragana</i>					<i>Katakana</i>				
あ a	い i	う u	え e	お o	ア a	イ i	ウ u	エ e	オ o
か ka	き ki	く ku	け ke	こ ko	カ ka	キ ki	ク ku	ケ ke	コ ko
さ sa	し shi	す su	せ se	そ so	サ sa	シ shi	ス su	セ se	ソ so
た ta	ち chi	つ tsu	て te	と to	タ ta	チ chi	ツ tsu	テ te	ト to
な na	に ni	ぬ nu	ね ne	の no	ナ na	ニ ni	ヌ nu	ネ ne	ノ no
は ha	ひ hi	ふ fu	へ he	ほ ho	ハ ha	ヒ hi	フ fu	ヘ he	ホ ho
ま ma	み mi	む mu	め me	も mo	マ ma	ミ mi	ム mu	メ me	モ mo
や ya		ゆ yu		よ yo	ヤ ya		ユ yu		ヨ yo
ら ra	り ri	る ru	れ re	ろ ro	ラ ra	リ ri	ル ru	レ re	ロ ro
わ wa		ん n		を wo	ワ wa		ン n		ヲ wo

Image 1: Tables showing the two native kana syllabaries, which are simultaneously used in Japanese along with imported Chinese characters (Nguyen).

How does transcription into Japanese happen? Let us take the English word *enemy* as an example. Recognizing its foreign origins, a Japanese speaker would immediately scan the syllabic inventory in their memory and pull from it the following symbols: エネミー. The katakana エ corresponds to /e/, ネ to /ne/, and め to /mi/. The final horizontal line is not part of the syllabary, but rather a special symbol which indicates a long vowel two moras in length. Thus めー is pronounced /mi:./.

For a more complex example, we can look at the word *sleeve*. When transcribing it into Japanese, we take into account that consonant clusters have to be broken up by a vowel, and

that there are no /l/ and /v/ sounds in Japanese. As a result, we get the four-mora-long word
スリーブ or *surību*.

3. Then and now: a short history of loanwords in Japanese

3.1. Where does Japanese belong?

Determining the place of Japanese in the world language tree has been a favorite pastime of scholars and amateur linguists alike for as long as there has been systematic study of its inner workings. The shroud of mystery surrounding the country's ancient history reinforced the isolationist myth that Japanese blood constitutes the basis of the language's exclusivity, making its true essence incomprehensible to foreigners (Befu & Manabe 1987: 99). At the turn of the 20th century, this nationalist view was challenged by scholars advocating the Japonic-Koreanic theory, which based its arguments on the similarities between Japanese and Korean such as an agglutinative morphology, SOV word order, and extensive systems of honorifics. This theory would later overlap with the extended form of the now-discredited Altaic hypothesis, which posited that the Japonic and Koreanic languages were related to the Turkic, Mongolic and Tungusic language families. In the 21st century, consensus has shifted to grouping Japanese and the Ryukyuan languages into a single tree branch called the Japonic (also known as Japanese-Ryukyuan or Japonic) language family (Kubozono 2015: VIII). Wherever its roots truly lie, “it can be said that Japanese does share features with other of the world’s languages and it appears that early encounters with different cultures and languages set the pattern for future language contact.” (Scherling 2012: 22).

3.2. First contact: China

So fully and so smoothly was the Chinese writing system adopted into Japanese that with time people ceased to think of it as something foreign; it was perfectly assimilated, along with the words it represented, into the Japanese language, enriching its linguistic pool and effectively altering its overall structure. So perfect was the assimilation that nowadays not a single word of Chinese origin features in loanword dictionaries. (Scherling 2012: 23)

Being isolated from the Eurasian continent, Japan had very limited opportunities for language contact until the arrival of Chinese scholars from the mainland around 200 A.D. laid the foundation for the country's tradition of linguistic exchange (Loveday 1996: 27). Four centuries later the great cultural influx from the Korean kingdom of Paekche (or Baekje) brought writing in the form of Chinese Classics to the shores of Japan (Frellesvig 2011: 11). From there, a complex chain of events led to the development of the Japanese writing system.

Increasingly stronger ties to China led to a massive influx of new loanwords, but the drumbeat of innovation pushed productivity even further. Developments in the areas of philosophy, politics, law, science, and art brought about a great demand for new terminology, a large part of which could not be satisfied with mere borrowing. To solve this deficit, the Japanese started supplementing their native vocabulary by combining imported Chinese words into brand-new compounds called *wasei-kango* (Japanese-made Chinese), similar to classical and neoclassical compounds in European languages (*geography*, *microscope*, *morphology*, etc.). Words that are famously associated with Japanese culture, such as *ninja*, *geisha*, or even *nihon* — the name of the country itself — are all products of this phenomenon. As a result of such extensive borrowing, today the Japanese vocabulary “is around 50 percent Chinese in origin“ (Chung 2001: 1). This relationship between Japanese and Chinese serves as a useful point of comparison to that of Japanese and English and provides insight into possible developments that are yet to come.

3.3. Enter Europe: missionaries, militaries, and morphemes

In the mid-16th century, “new vistas to the outside world were opened by the arrival of European traders and missionaries“ (Yamamura 2008: 491), who brought Christianity, technology, and — most pertinent to our research — the Portuguese language to Japan. Even though the average Japanese would hardly guess it — so great is their frequency — everyday terms like *pan* (bread), *koppu* (cup), *tabako* (tobacco; cigarette), or *botan* (button) all trace their roots to the Portuguese words *pão*, *copo*, *tobaco*, and *botão* respectively.

The rapid spread of Christianity brought about “deep suspicions and tensions among Japanese of all classes. This became a contributory factor that led the authorities to close Japan's doors to all Europeans except the Dutch“ (Hall, J. W. 2006: 5). This relationship is mirrored in the centuries-old loanwords regularly used to this day. Some of them are: *dansu* ('dance' < Dutch *dans*), *garasu* ('glass' < Dutch *glas*), *renzu* ('lens' < Dutch *lens*), *gasu* ('gas' < Dutch *gas*), *kōhī* ('coffee' < Dutch *koffie*), *bīru* ('beer' < Dutch *bier*), *miruku* ('milk' < Dutch *melk*).

When discussing pre-World War II European loanwords in Japanese, it is important to note two things that will provide useful points of comparison when analyzing the extent to which English loanwords have assimilated into the language. The first is the fact that some of the most frequently used words have gone on to receive their own *ateji*, Chinese characters generally used to phonetically represent foreign words. This means that words for *coffee*, *gas*,

tobacco or *tempura* can be alternatively written using kanji (just like native words) alongside their regular katakana spelling. (Yiu 2020: 45) Ateji spelling is stylistically marked and rarely used outside of traditional store signs, menus, or company names. Although in modern times this practice has fallen out of favor and new ateji spellings are rarely handed out, some English loanwords (*club*, *lemon*, *catalog*, etc.) have received theirs. This indicates a high level of integration into the vocabulary of the Japanese language. The second development worthy of notice is the use of European lexemes in the creation of hybrid words, which are created by melting together Japanese words and loanwords (Scherling 2012:109). Some examples are *panya* ('bakery', パン屋), *garasudo* ('glass door', ガラス戸), or *gerirasen* ('guerilla warfare', ゲリラ戦), in which the first element is of European origin, written in katakana, and the second a Sino-Japanese word, written in kanji. We will later see how prolifically English loanwords engage in the process of compounding.

3.4. America comes a-knocking

In 1853, faced with the overwhelming power of U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry's "black fleet", Japan was forced to once again open its borders and accept outside influence. With frightening reports of Western colonization in Asia still fresh in their minds, the Japanese embraced the English language with great fervor (Jansen 2007: 6-7). By the end of Emperor Meiji's rule in 1912, numerous everyday words such as *purin* (pudding), *hankachi*, (handkerchief), *burashi* (brush), and *airon* (iron) had already entered the Japanese vocabulary (Scherling 2012: 27-28).

In the coming decades, the flood of Western culture was met with fierce nationalist resistance spurred on by the militarist regimes in power, with support from politicians and intellectuals who lamented what they perceived to be the decay of tradition and loss of Japanese identity (Stanlaw 2004: 69). It was not until the end of the Second World War that English regained, then surpassed, its prior level of prestige. During the American occupation of Japan under General Douglas MacArthur, 500,000 troops were stationed in the country, causing an unprecedented explosion of language contact that would irreversibly affect the development of the Japanese language (Scherling 2012: 32). "In only 70 years, English had risen from an unknown language to the most popular foreign language in Japan, quickly replacing Dutch and leaving all other Western languages trailing behind its long shadow" (2012: 32-33).

The influence of English was so immense that it affected not only the vocabulary but also the grammar of the Japanese language. Miura (1979) enumerates some of the many syntactical, morphological, even orthographical changes, such as the introduction of new affixes, calqued phrases, noun and verb modifiers, relative pronouns, translation passives³, and punctuation (periods, commas, colons, quotation and exclamation marks). On the phonological level, Scherling (2013: 41) notes that previously impossible sound sequences like /ti, di, fa, fi, fe, fo/ were added to the Japanese phonetic inventory to accommodate the influx of English loanwords.

³ Unlike the old adversative-passive, the translation passive could take both transitive and intransitive verbs.

4. Lexical borrowing from English to Japanese

4.1. Theoretical overview

Today, Japan belongs to what Crystal (2003: 60) calls the *extended circle*, which, in his visual representation of the spread of the English language around the world, “involves those nations which recognize the importance of English as an international language, though they do not have a history of colonization by members of the inner circle [USA, UK], nor have they given English any special administrative status“. So strong is this cultural stranglehold that, according to Stanlaw, “English has pervaded the Japanese language down to almost every level of society“ (2004: 104) and “Japanese today cannot adequately be spoken without the use of English loanwords or English-based vocabulary items“ (2).

Once acquired, borrowed lexical items are often used in a number of ways, such as giving them new meanings or changing their meaning to fit the new cultural environment (Hoffer 2008: 70). These items can be categorized in various ways. According to Haugen (1950: 214-215), there are three types of lexical borrowings: loanwords (which show morphemic importation without substitution), loan blends (which show both morphemic substitution and importation), and loan shifts (which show morphemic substitution without importation). Another method of grouping them is based on the criterion of usage, resulting in two categories: cultural borrowings, which fill gaps in the recipient language's vocabulary,⁴ and core borrowings, which duplicate elements already present in the recipient language's word store (Myers-Scotton 2006: 212).

Using the gathered data, we will examine a variety of English loanwords and demonstrate how copiously they have infiltrated the Japanese language, simultaneously changing its very fabric and showing the potential of English morphology outside of its native framework. It is worth noting that many of these lexemes have been adapted in such a way that their form might not be intelligible to a native English speaker (Hoffer 2005: 59). They belong to a special category which encompasses Japanese-made words created from English-based morphemes. This fascinating and controversial phenomenon has been the subject of a long-standing debate over whether it represents original native vocabulary or simply a butchering of English (Miller 1997).

⁴ Cultural borrowings are most commonly associated with advancements in science and technology, which bring about a constant need for new vocabulary items. Japanese is no exception, as the majority of its English-language loanwords come from those fields (Stanlaw 2004: 77).

4.2. What exactly is wasei-eigo?

Direct contact between two languages, especially those as genetically divorced as English and Japanese, brings about a felicitous set of circumstances in which linguistic alchemy is allowed to transpire. In this case, much to the chagrin of the proponents of Nihonjinron,⁵ the result was a gold rush to produce a vast wealth of lexical novelty. What started out as simple borrowing from English into Japanese soon turned something much more creative, as Japanese speakers began modifying and combining those borrowed lexemes to produce their own unique English words and phrases. In Japanese literature, these coinages are called *wasei-eigo*.

Irwin considers this term not only unwieldy, but also vague, as it can refer to morphologically reduced English loanwords and compounds, to English compounds that were borrowed directly and subsequently reduced, and even to English loanwords and compounds that have undergone semantic change (2011a: 143). He suggests calling these words *semantically remodelled* or *SR compounds* (155). Stanlaw questions the metaphor of borrowing, deeming that nothing is borrowed nor returned, and proposes the rather bulky term *English-inspired vocabulary items* to describe this “complex patterning of cultural and linguistic contact” (2004: 35). Despite some overlap between Japanese terms and their corresponding English items, Stanlaw still considers a vast majority of Japanese English words to be of the indigenous variety — created, negotiated, and recreated in Japanese society (35-36). Some examples of wasei-eigo, SR compounds, or English-inspired vocabulary items in Japanese are: *tenshon* ('excitement' < Eng. *tension*), *gōsutoppu* ('traffic light' < Eng. *go-stop*), *penshon* ('Western-style boarding house' < Eng. *pension*), *tarento* ('TV celebrity' < Eng. *talent*), *jendāfurī* ('unisex' < Eng. *gender-free*), *naitā* ('sports game played at night' < Eng. *nighter*), *saidā* ('carbonated soft drink' < Eng. *cider*). Irwin states that current research on the motivation behind these words is lacking and that a rigorous theoretical morphosemantic analysis is yet to be published (2011a: 155).

Regardless of which theoretical framework we apply to this phenomenon, in practice its effect on Japanese society is very concrete and palpable. A study by Olah shows that young Japanese people have a positive view towards English loanwords, considering them fashionable and cool (2007). Another study by Hatanaka and Pannell (2016) finds that the

⁵ Nihonjinron ('theory of the Japanese') is a genre of texts that stress the purity and uniqueness of the Japanese culture compared to that of the Western world (Scherling 2012: 40).

meanings of wasei-eigo words are hard to guess by native English speakers and that a large number of Japanese speakers are surprised, even ashamed, to hear that many wasei-eigo terms do not exist in English. They suggest that, in the eyes of native speakers, this lessens the air of sophistication and cosmopolitanism associated with the usage of such expressions.

5. Word formation processes involved in the creation of English loanwords in Japanese

While loanwords remain conspicuous because they are written in the katakana syllabary, they are structurally and semantically treated as Japanese words. All these loanwords are, upon their arrival in the Japanese language, subjected to what many linguists have referred to as “Nipponicization,” i.e. they are japanized, as it were, to fit into the overall structure of Japanese grammar and phonology (Scherling 2012: 102)

Once they are borrowed, a vast majority of English words function as nouns in Japanese. (Irwin 2011a: 137). On the morphological level, there are several processes of loanword formation that can be observed, but clipping, affixation, compounding, blending, and acronymization are among the most frequent, (Scherling 2012: 106) so they will be given priority, with other processes following suit.

5.1. Clipping

Clipping, also known as truncation or shortening, is a process of abbreviation in which one or multiple parts of a word are cut off (Scherling 2012: 106). Three types of clipping occur in Japanese: back-clipping, fore-clipping, and mid-clipping, with back-clipping being dominant by a considerable margin (Irwin 2011b: 73). We will take a look at all three examples.

Loanword back-clipping		
English word	Japanese loanword before back-clipping	Japanese loanword after back-clipping
operation	operēshon	ope
mistake	misutēku	misu
husband	hazubando	hazu
(cash) register	rejisutā	reji
animation	animēshon	anime
television	terebijon	terebi
impotence	inpotensu	inpo
convenience (store)	konbīniensu	konbini
centimeter	senchimētoru	senchi
character	kyarakutā	kyara

illustration	irasutorēshon	irasuto
chocolate	chokorēto	choco
building	birudingu	biru

Table 1: Examples of loanword back-clipping

We can observe that Japanese speakers tend to shorten loanwords without regard to morpheme borders in the donor language. All of the loanwords in Table 1 retain their original meaning in Japanese. Once these English-derived morphemes are lexicalized, they can be combined with native words or other loanwords to form novel compounds. From *ope*, we get *opekan* (operating room nurse), *wanope* (one-person operation, i.e. staffing a business with one worker); from *choko* we get *girichoko* ('obligation chocolate', given by women to men on Valentine's Day), *bitāchoko* (bitter, dark chocolate); from *biru* we get *haibiru* (derelict building) *birujakku* ('building hijack', hostage situation); from *reji* we get *serufureji* (self-checkout), *rejibukuro* (shopping bag).

Loanword fore-clipping		
English word	Japanese loanword before fore-clipping	Japanese loanword after fore-clipping
platform	purattohōmu	hōmu
propeller	puropera	pera
velveteen	berubecchin	becchin

Table 2: Examples of loanword fore-clipping, taken from Irwin (2011b: 78)

It is difficult to establish clear rules from such a small sample, but it appears that fore-clipping usually occurs in loanwords four or more moras in length. It is also worth mentioning that, if observed as syllabic compositions, the loanwords in Table 2 would be four-syllable loanwords shortened to two syllables. From *hōmu*, Japanese speakers have created compounds such as *shimashikihōmu* (island platform) and *hōmudoa* (platform screen door at a train station); from *pera* we get *oripera* (folding propeller).

Loanword mid-clipping		
English word	Japanese loanword before mid-clipping	Japanese loanword after mid-clipping
entertainment	entatēmento	entame

correspondence	koresupondensu	korepon
transparency	toransuparensū	torapen

Table 3: Examples of loanword mid-clipping

Just like fore-clipping, mid-clipping is not a common phenomenon in Japanese loanword formation, but we can observe that in all three examples present in Table 3 mid-clipping occurs simultaneously with back-clipping. Mid-clipped words are used for creating compounds as well. From *entame* we get *entamegyōkai* (entertainment world), *entamenyūsu* (entertainment news); from *korepon* we get *korepongyōmu* (correspondent services in business affairs).

5.2. Affixation

Affixation is a morphological process which involves attaching a bound morpheme (affix) to a morphological base. If the affix precedes the base, it is called a prefix, and if it follows after, it is called a suffix. Suffixation and prefixation are the two most common types of affixation in the world's languages, with circumfixation (placing one part of the affix before and one after the base) and infixation (inserting an affix inside the base) occurring only sporadically (Van Goethem 2020: 1). The latter two types seem to be virtually nonexistent in Japanese.

When introduced into the Japanese language, some English words, usually adjectives and function words, start exhibiting affix-like behavior. They attach themselves to a morphological base and add a specific shade of meaning to it. We will illustrate this phenomenon with several examples.

Prefixation		
Prefix	New word	Meaning
mai-	maikā (my + car)	one's car
	maiwaifu (my + wife)	one's wife
	maipēsu (my + pace)	doing things at one's own pace (usually slower than others)

	maibūmu (my + boom)	one's current personal obsession or trend
nyū-	nyūōpun (new + open)	newly-opened
	nyūtora (new + tra)	New Tra(ditional), a Japanese fashion style popular in the 1980s
	nyūhāfu (new + half)	a transgender person who has undergone a sex change
puro-	puroresu (pro + wrestling)	professional wrestling
	puroyakyū (pro + <u>yakyū</u>)	professional baseball
	puroishiki (pro + <u>ishiki</u>)	professionalism; professional awareness
	puroban (pro + <u>ban</u>)	professional version (of software)

Table 4: Examples of prefixation in English loanwords in Japanese. Underlined words are of Sino-Japanese origin.

We can observe that prefixes mostly combine with other English-derived morphemes (with *puro-* proving a particularly versatile exception) and retain all or part of their original meaning. The prefix *mai-* exhibits the most interesting behavior as it, although still indicating possession, appears to have lost its first-person singular marking and can refer to anyone's possession. In Japanese, it is perfectly normal to ask someone how their *maiwaiifu* is doing.

Suffixation		
Suffix	New word	Meaning
-daun	imējidaun (image + down)	worsening of one's image
	bēsudaun (base + down)	(base) salary decrease
-appu	ueitoappu	gaining weight

	(weight + up)	
	manāppu (manner + up)	improving one's manners, learning proper etiquette
-in	gōruin (goal + in)	reaching the finish line; scoring a goal
	beddoin (bed + in)	going to bed (usually with someone)
-shippu	sukinshippu (skin + ship)	intimate physical contact (between lovers, friends, family member)
-ā	shanerā (Chanel + er)	someone into Chanel goods

Table 5: Examples of suffixation in English loanwords in Japanese.

English-derived suffixes also predominantly combine with other loanwords. The examples *-daun* and *-appu*, which are in semantic opposition, are frequently used in Japanese. A person can just as easily experience *imējiappu* (improvement of image) and *ueitodaun* (loss of weight). The choice of the suffix *-ship* was most likely influenced by semantically and morphologically similar words such as *friendship* and *relationship*. Irwin (2011a: 140) comments on the word *shanerā*, noting that the meaning of the English derivational suffix *-er* (adapted as *-ā*) broadens to 'someone who is into'.

5.3. Compounding

Plag loosely defines compounding as the “combination of two words to form a new word“ (2003: 133). In the case of Japanese loanword compounds, they can be categorized into two groups based on their etymological composition: ready-made compounds borrowed directly from the donor language (imported compounds) and novel compounds created in the recipient language from two independent loanwords (assembled compounds) (Irwin 2011a: 143). Loveday states that, due to the morphosyntactic pattern of loanword integration, “a great variety of compounds is possible in Japanese“ (Scherling 2013: 45).

Imported compounds		
Original English word	Japanese Loanword	Meaning
manpower	manpawā	manpower
overdrive	ōbāдораibu	overdrive
countdown	kauntodaun	countdown
cyberspace	saibāsupēsu	cyberspace
blackboard	burakkubōdo	blackboard
stardust	sutādasuto	stardust
boyfriend	bōifurendo	boyfriend; male friend

Table 5. Examples of imported compounds in Japanese

As we can see from Table 5, imported compounds behave rather straightforwardly, undergoing phonetic and orthographic adaptation while retaining their original meaning. They generally belong to the category of cultural borrowings as they are used to fill lexical gaps in Japanese.

Assembled compounds		
Original English words	Japanese compound	Meaning
salary + man	sararīman	office worker, company employee
paper + driver	pēpāдораibā	a person who has a driver's license but does not drive (i.e., a driver only on paper)
cherry + boy	cherībōi	male virgin
loss + time	rosutaimu	added time in sporting competitions
magic + tape	majikkutēpu	velcro
barcode + hair	bākōdohea	comb-over; hair combed in stripes across a bald pate
baby + car	bebīkā	pushchair, baby carriage, stroller

one + pattern	wanpatān	predictability; repetitiveness; being set in one's way
pink + salon	pinkusaron	type of Japanese brothel; erotic nightclub
high + tension	haitenshon	excitedness; enthusiasm
one + man + car	wanmankā	conductorless bus or train
live + house	raibuhaisu	small venue where live music is played
virgin + road	bājonrōdo	wedding aisle

Table 6. Examples of assembled compounds in Japanese

The examples in Table 6 are all endocentric or right-headed compounds, in which the final element is the dominant constituent of the construction. This element serves as the profile determinant, which is modified by the left-hand element(s). The component nouns then “activate various semantic networks or domains, which serve in fact as input spaces to the blending process by which the composite meaning can be unravelled“ (Benczes 2004: 14). Japanese assembled compounds appear to have a strong affinity for metaphorical or metonymical meaning. For instance, the word *sararīman* is a metonymical compound in which the first element refers to an office job with a steady salary, while *bākōdohea* is a metaphorical compound based on the visual similarity between thinning hair and a barcode.

5.4. Blending

Plag (2003: 122) describes blends or portmanteaus as words that combine two (rarely three or more) words into one, deleting material from one or both of the source words. We have already established that the Japanese language is prone to both clipping and compounding, so it comes as no surprise that blending is another highly productive method of adapting English loanwords (Scherling 2012: 107). In Japanese, loanword blends can be created solely from foreign-language elements or by combining foreign-language and Japanese elements. The resulting word can be either a total or partial blend⁶.

⁶ Irwin (2011a: 144) categorizes partial blends as clipped compounds, whereas Mattiello deems them as a subsection of blends “in which only one source word is reduced, the other being left in its full form“ (2013: 120). We find the latter approach more conducive to our research as it makes the categorization of gathered data more straightforward.

English-English blends			
Original English words	English loanword	Japanese blend	Meaning
air + conditioner	ea + kondishonā	eakon	air conditioner
remote + controller	rimōto + konturōrā	rimokon	remote controller
mass + communication	masu + komyunikēshon	masukomi	mass communication
personal + computer	pāsonaru + konpyūtā	pasokon	personal computer
pocket + monster	poketto + monsutā	pokemon	Pokémon (Japanese media franchise)
erotic + game	erochikku + gēmu	eroge	erotic (video) game
sex + friend	sekkusu + furendo	sefure	sex friend
sexual + harassment	sekusharu + harasumento	sekuhara	sexual harassment
American + football	amerikan + futtobōru	amefuto	American football
image + change	imēji + chenji	imechen	image change
skate + board	sukēto + bōdo	sukebo	skateboard
digital + camera	dejitaru + kamera	dejikame	digital camera

Table 7. Examples of loanword blends created only from English elements

It is interesting to note that, in the process of blending, the English words *sex* and *sexual* experience reduction in different ways. Integrated into Japanese, *sex* become the four-mora-long word *sekkusu*. Thus we can conclude that in *sefure* clipping has occurred after the first mora, while in *sekuhara*, first there there is a loss of gemination, then clipping after the second mora. This irregularity is a common phenomenon in loanwords, which are

indiscriminately shortened by Japanese speakers without regard to morpheme boundaries or consonant clusters in the donor language.

Japanese-English blends			
Original words	Constitutive elements	Japanese blend	Meaning
kara (Jap. 'empty') + orchestra	kara + ōkesutora	karaoke	karaoke
ton (Jap. 'pork') + cutlet	ton + katsuretsu	tonkatsu	breaded pork cutlet
shiro (Jap. 'white') + bike	shiro + baiku	shirobai	(white-colored) police motorcycle
man (Jap. 'full') + tank	man + tanku	mantan	full tank (of gasoline)
shōchū (type of Japanese alcoholic drink) + highball	shō chū + haibōru	chūhai	type of alcoholic drink

Table 8. Examples of loanword blends created from both Japanese and English elements

The examples in Table 8 show that in English-Japanese blends, the English element tends to be the right-hand constituent. Interestingly, the blends *karaoke* and *tonkatsu* (or even just *katsu*) are themselves Japanese loanwords in English. This is an example of what Haugen (1956) calls reborrowing, a process in which a word is loaned to another language and is later borrowed back in a different form or with a different meaning.

5.5. Acronymization

Acronyms are a peculiar phenomenon in the Japanese language as they are the only words written using the Latin script.

Loanword Acronyms		
Original English words	Japanese acronym	Meaning
office lady	OL (ōeru)	female office worker
commercial message	CM (shīemu)	commercial, ad
promotional video	PV (pībui)	music video

background music	BGM (bījīemu)	background music
one living (room), dining (room), kitchen	1LDK (wanerudīkē)	one-room apartment with a living, dining and kitchen area
four-wheel drive	4WD (yondaburyūdī)	four-wheel drive
unidentified flying object	UFO (yūfō)	unidentified flying object

Table 9. Examples of Japanese acronyms created from English loanwords

The examples in Table 9 show that Japanese acronyms created from English loanwords can be expressed in various ways. They can be spoken as one word (*UFO*) or as a string of letters (*OL, CM, PV, BGM*), as well as combined with numbers, in which case the number can be said in English (*1LDK*) or in Japanese (*4WD*).

5.6. Verbalization

We have already established that loanwords in Japanese predominantly function as nouns and so far we have not touched upon other parts of speech. However, virtually all nouns in Japanese can easily become verbs by using the verbalizer *suru* 'to do' (Irwin 2011a: 137), which functions similarly to the infinitive marker *to* in English. Thus *baiku* 'motorcycle' becomes *baiku suru* 'to bike'. This is a pattern established centuries ago when Chinese loanwords first started flooding the Japanese language.

There is also another, highly marked and less frequent method of verbalization that is much more pertinent to our research. It involves attaching the native suffix *-ru* to a mora-clipped loanword (Irwin 2011a: 138), resulting in the new word being inflected like a native verb.

Verbalization of English loanwords			
Original English word	English loanword + suffix -ru	Japanese verb	Meaning
mistake	misutēku + ru	misuru	to make a mistake
harmony	hāmonī + ru	hamoru	to harmonize
memo(randum)	memo(randamu)	memoru	to make a note
McDonald's	Makudonarudo + ru	makuru	to eat at McDonald's
demonstration	demonsutorēshon + ru	demoru	to protest, demonstrate

parody	parodī + ru	paroru	to parody
Google	guguru + ru	guguru	to google
trouble	toraburu + ru	toraburu	to get into trouble; to cause trouble

Table 10. Examples of verbalization in English loanword nouns

Irwin states that only a small number of loanword nouns ending in *-ru* are verbalized as in Table 10, with most using the verbalizer *suru* instead (2011a: 138). It is worth noting that, after the phonetic adaptation of the English nouns *Google* and *trouble* to Japanese, they become *guguru* and *toraburu*, written ググる and トラブル respectively. Like all English loanwords, they are transcribed using katakana. However, a curious change happens during the process of verbalization. The suffix *-ru* is added to the morpheme base, which should result in the forms *gugururu* and *torabururu*. Instead, haplology occurs, one mora is dropped and the resulting verb ultimately appears to retain the form of the loanword noun. But is that really the case? If we analyze all the elements written in their original Japanese scripts, katakana and hiragana, the answer will become evident.

Verbalization using the suffix -ru			
Loanword noun	Loanword noun + suffix -ru	Verb prior to haplology	Verb after haplology
ググル (guguru)	ググル + る (guguru + ru)	ググルる (gugururu)	ググる (guguru)
トラブル (toraburu)	トラブル + る (toraburu + ru)	トラブルる (torabururu)	トラブる (toraburu)

Table 11. Examples of verbalization in Japanese loanword nouns ending in -ru

By observing the process of verbalization on the orthographic level, we see that in the loanwords in Table 11 the final mora is clipped and the ending *-ru* present in the verb after haplology is actually the inflectional affix, written in hiragana.⁷

⁷ Because Irwin's analysis works only with Romanized spelling, he does not recognize that suffixation and reduplication have occurred, as he states that, if a loanword noun itself ends in *-ru*, "then it may function as a verb without a suffix" (2011a: 138).

5.7. Adjectivization

The Japanese language has two types of adjectives and English loanwords are represented in both groups, albeit rather disproportionately. The first group consists of adjectival nouns (or *na-adjectives*), which are nouns that can be used attributively by taking the particle *na*, a form of the copula (Irwin 2011a: 139). Examples include *pawafuru* 'powerful', *kyūto* 'cute', *erochikku* 'erotic', *gurotesuku* 'grotesque', *uetto* 'wet', along with many others.

A very small number of English loanwords belong to the second group, which consists of true adjectives (or *i-adjectives*), created by adding the *-i* suffix, which indicates non-past, as well as other conjugational endings (139). Some of them are *naui* 'modern; hip; trendy', *pinkui* 'pink', *eroi* 'erotic', created from *now*, *pink*, and *erotic* respectively.

5.8. Semantic change

Semantic change is a phenomenon in which the meaning of a word alters over time to adapt to the speakers' needs. (Scherling 2012). When it comes to English loanwords, Scherling recognizes semantic restriction, semantic extension, and semantic shift as the three main processes involved. In semantic restriction, the particular word has multiple meanings in its donor language, but only one in the recipient language. Semantic extension pertains to loanwords that acquire new meaning in the recipient language. Lastly, semantic shift is a “slight shift in meaning between a word’s original meaning and its meaning in the recipient language“ (113). Irwin finds restriction and extension to be the most common types of semantic change during the borrowing process (2011a: 154).

Semantic change		
Type	English loanword	Newly gained meaning in Japanese
Extension	sābisu (service)	free item or gift; extra service
	handoru (handle)	steering wheel
	hōmupēji (home page)	any web page
	torampu (trump)	(Western) playing cards
Restriction	raisu (rice)	rice served on a plate
	mishin (machine)	sewing machine
	jūsu (juice)	fruit juice

	guddzu (goods)	promotional item
Shift	sutairu (style)	one's figure, physique, shape
	bodikonshasu (body-conscious)	tight-fitting (clothing)
	sain (sign)	signature; autograph
	kaningu (cunning)	cheating (on an exam)

Table 12. Examples of semantic change in English loanwords

All three types of semantic change are conducive to the creation of wasei-eigo, novel Japanese expressions whose meaning radically differs from that of their donor-language counterparts, often to the point of being unrecognizable to native English speakers.

6. Conclusion

Due to unprecedented American cultural influence in the Asia-Pacific region since the 19th century, the Japanese language has experienced a dramatic influx of English loanwords — rivaling the great wave of lexical borrowing from Chinese that started in the 5th century and set the blueprint for all future cross-linguistic pollination in Japan. After supplanting Dutch as the country's main source of new loanwords, English has permeated every facet of Japanese society and irreversibly changed its vocabulary and grammar to the point that the Japanese language today cannot be imagined without its English loanword stratum and *wasei-eigo*, Japanese-made expressions based on those same loanwords. In order for them to be Nipponicized or adapted to the overall structure of the Japanese language, English loanwords undergo a variety of changes on a phonological, orthographic, morphological, and semantic level, with many of them being subjected to additional word processes that result in the creation of brand new lexical items, many of which are semantically divorced from their donor-language counterpart. Clipping, affixation, compounding, blending, acronymization, verbalization, adjectivization, and semantic change all play a significant role in the lexical expansion of the Japanese language. Japanese speakers have a strong predilection for shortening English words and combining them with either native Sino-Japanese or other borrowed words to create novel expressions not present in Standard English, often endowed with new meanings unintelligible to native English speakers. These new Japanese-made lexemes demonstrate the productivity of English morphology even when transported into a vastly different linguistic environment. To better understand the extent of this productivity and the potential for lexical innovation, an exhaustive, theoretically rigorous study is needed, aided by a representative corpus of English loanwords in Japanese.

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8. Abstract

Starting from the mid-19th century, then increasing dramatically after the Second World War, the influx of English loanwords in Japanese has become a driving force behind the rapid lexical expansion of this East Asian language. Just as American cultural influence has pervaded every facet of Japanese society, the English language has transformed the landscape of both its vocabulary and grammar to the extent that Japanese today cannot be proficiently spoken without the use of English loanwords. One result of this prolonged language contact is the development of wasei-eigo, original Japanese expressions based on borrowed English-language words. This paper aims to describe how English lexemes and morphemes are introduced into Japanese, modified to suit their new linguistic environment, then used in various ways to create novel English-derived forms and meanings that are not present in Standard English, demonstrating morphological productivity beyond the Anglosphere.

Keywords: English, Japanese, loanwords, lexical borrowing, wasei-eigo, morphological productivity