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Material Foreign Loanwords and the Emergence of English in Japanese

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I. Introduction

Lexical borrowing, the process of incorporating words of one language into another, has long been an integral part of how languages are formed and how they evolve (Holmes, 2013). Despite a strong national sentiment of cultural uniqueness in Japan, the Japanese language proves to be no different in the amount of lexical terms borrowed from foreign languages (Backhaus, 2011). This paper first seeks to investigate how loanwords have been historically introduced into Japanese as a function of Ito and Meyer's Core-Periphery Model of vocabulary stratification (1999). Afterwards, the authors will introduce a new type of foreign lexicon in Japanese, which does not fit the Core-Periphery Model. This lexicon has not undergone a process of assimilation, but rather, it retains its foreign orthography as well as its original semantics. A small-scale study of signs inside a train station in Japan will provide an insight into the prevalence of these new 'material foreign' words in Japanese. Finally, a closer investigation of these 'material foreign' terms, utilizing critical discourse analysis, will offer an understanding of the cultural relevance and stylistic choice these types of loanwords hold in modern Japanese.

II. Historical Background of Language Borrowing in Japanese through Ito and Meyer's Core-Periphery Model

In order to investigate the types of loanwords that have been introduced into the Japanese language, we must first look at Ito and Meyer's Core-Periphery Model of Vocabulary Stratification (1999) (Figure 1.1). This model outlines four types of words and loanwords that are used within a language. At the center of the lexicon are 'native' words followed by 'established loans', 'assimilated foreign'

loanwords and ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords. A historical discussion of the types of lexicon in Japanese will illustrate the distinctions between these groups.

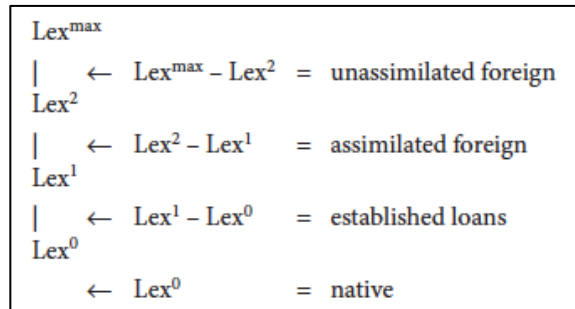


Table 1.1 – Ito and Mester’s Core-Periphery Model of Vocabulary Stratification

An investigation of the ‘native’ words of the Japanese language reveals a plethora of foreign loanwords. Ancient spoken Japanese lacked a native system of writing, and consequently, the earliest existing texts in Japanese are written through the use of Chinese pictographic characters to represent the phonological sounds of Japanese. Eventually, a simplified phonological syllabary was adapted from these Chinese characters to create the first written system for spoken Japanese. During the same time that this system was developed, many words from Chinese were assimilated into the Japanese language, and were written using adopted Chinese characters and new syllabary. As a testament to the influence of Chinese, modern Japanese contains an abundance of words of Chinese origin and they now make up a large proportion of the modern Japanese lexicon (Irwin, 2011). Modern Japanese linguists do not consider these words to be foreign loanwords, but instead, are included as part of the ‘native’ Japanese lexicon, much like French loanwords that were incorporated into English following the Norman French invasion of England (Irwin, 2011). Therefore we can see that the term ‘native’ is relative to the cultural and linguistic perceptions of the people who use the language. At the ‘native’ stage of the Core-Periphery Model for Japanese, we can include the oldest spoken Japanese words as well as Chinese loanwords that were adopted in ancient Japan, which now make up the vast majority of the lexicon in Japanese.

After the waning of Chinese influence in Japan following the collapse of the Han Dynasty in the 9th century, Japan was predominantly linguistically isolated until the 16th century, when Portuguese missionaries came to Japan. Although these missionaries operated in a small area of western Japan, some of the specialized cultural lexicon they introduced still remains in modern Japanese. The Japanese word ‘*karuta*’ (かるた) meaning ‘traditional playing cards’ comes from

the Portuguese ‘carta’ and the Japanese word ‘*tempura*’ (天ぷら) meaning ‘deep-fried seafood or vegetables’ is derived from the Portuguese ‘temperar’. These are both examples of Portuguese loanwords that are now so ingrained into Japanese culture that their origins are typically assumed to be native to Japan (Irwin, 2011). Accordingly, we come to another distinction in the Core-Periphery Model as to what constitutes ‘native’ or ‘established loans’ in the Japanese language. Chinese loanwords, in addition to words like ‘*karuta*’ and ‘*tempura*’, are all considered by the public to be ‘native’ Japanese and not foreign loanwords (Gottlieb, 2005). As a result, they are written in Chinese characters, the hiragana syllabary, or some combination of the two. Many historians and linguists mark this point in the mid-16th century as the border between classes of loanwords in Japanese, but this point is debated and many exceptions exist (Irwin, 2011). This again shows the rather flexible barrier between the different categories in the Core-Periphery Model.

Following Portuguese missionaries, Dutch merchants arrived in western Japan and were limited to a single island outside of Nagasaki. However, their medical knowledge proved useful, and much of the linguistic influence from Dutch is in the form of medical terminology, some of which persists in modern Japanese. Examples of this are ‘*renzu*’ (レンズ) from the Dutch ‘lens’ meaning ‘lens’, as well as ‘*mesu*’ (メス) from the Dutch ‘mes’ meaning ‘scalpel’. These are both examples of how the terms that were introduced often had no Japanese lexical equivalent, so the need for words to fill these lexical gaps increased the receptiveness of Japanese to adopting these loanwords (Carroll, 2001). These words, all of which are written in the ‘*katakana*’ syllabary, are considered to be ‘established loans’ in Japanese. We can see that while these words are based on foreign lexical terms, they have undergone phonetic and orthographic changes in their assimilation into Japanese.

After a long period of self-imposed political isolation, the Meiji era (1868-1912) brought about vast changes to Japan, as the country embraced new political, economic and societal practices in order to quickly modernize. During this period, words from English, German and French, among others, entered the Japanese lexicon as Japan adopted medical, military, educational and legal knowledge from around the world. In the same way Portuguese cultural terminology and Dutch medical terminology were introduced to Japanese, the new ‘established loans’ introduced at this time from each language depended on how Japan sought to incorporate specific knowledge from each country (Irwin, 2011). For example, many educational practices were adopted from France and hence words such as ‘*meeturu*’ (メートル) from the French ‘mètre’ meaning ‘meter’, as well as many other French words describing the metric system were introduced.

Medical knowledge was incorporated from Germany which led to the use of loanwords like *'rentogen'* (レントゲン) from the German *'Röntgen'* meaning 'x-ray', as well as *'uirusu'* (ウイルス) from the German *'virus'* meaning 'virus'. This is more evidence of 'established loans' filling a lexical gap, in addition to being selectively chosen dependent on the cultural sphere of influence. However, English had the largest impact on the culture and language as a result of the varied systems and technology that were incorporated into Japan from the United Kingdom and the United States (McKenzie, 2008). This led to a boom in English study for the wealthy, educated classes in pre-war Japan, and accordingly, there was a sharp increase of the number of English 'established loans' in Japanese in many diverse areas of the lexicon (Irwin, 2011). As a result, cultural imports such as *'jyazu'* (ジャズ) meaning 'jazz', *'suutsu'* (スーツ) meaning 'suit' and *'gorufu'* (ゴルフ) meaning 'golf' were all incorporated from the Anglosphere into Japan during this time.

Following Japan's defeat after WWII and the American occupation of Japan, English loanwords exploded in popularity. As America became a superpower and the military guardian of Japan, English loanwords in areas such as technology, education, business, sports, pop culture, and many others became conventional in Japanese. These 'established loans' with English origins now account for a few of the most commonly occurring words in both written and spoken Japanese as well as a majority of new words added to Japanese dictionaries (Honna, 2005). English has come to dominate 'established loans' to the extent that historic loanwords from Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany, France and other countries are often perceived within Japan to be of English origin (Kubota, 1998). The fact that English has many influences from both Germanic and Romantic languages only further conflates the perception in Japan of 'established loans' as being predominantly of English origin.

III. Emergence of 'Assimilated Foreign' and 'Unassimilated Foreign' Loanwords in Modern Japanese

We have established that the distinction between 'native' and 'established loans' is often a matter of historicity and cultural perceptions, as well as a choice in the style of orthography in Japanese. We now move on to the next stage in the Core-Periphery Model, between 'established loans' and 'assimilated foreign'. In Japanese, 'established loans' utilize the *'katakana'* syllabary, which leads to a shift in orthography from the foreign original. This in turn creates a shift in phonology as 'assimilated foreign' loanwords keep their original orthography and phonetics (Ito & Mester, 1999).

It is important to note here that these ‘assimilated foreign’ words are in fact quite common and readily understood by the majority of Japanese people (Gottlieb, 2005). The most common ways that ‘assimilated foreign’ words are utilized in Japanese is for acronyms, abbreviations and transliterations of Japanese words (Irwin, 2011). Common examples are ‘CD’ (Compact Disc), ‘CM’ (Commercial), ‘VTR’ (Video Tape Recording), ‘Dr.’ (Doctor), and ‘Sun.’ (Sunday). Additionally, many brand names in Japan will use Roman letters for written representations of their name. While ‘Toyota’ and ‘Sony’ have Japanese orthographic portrayals, the Roman lettering depiction of their name is commonly used in advertisements, magazines and on television.

‘Assimilated foreign’ loanwords are often used according to the stylistic choice of the author, which can be associated with a desired culture or image (Irwin, 2011). The use of ‘TEL’ prior to a telephone number in an advertisement rather than the Japanese ‘*denwa*’ (電話), which means ‘telephone’, can be seen as a stylistic choice, as they have the same semantic meaning. However, as both are common and mutually understood by Japanese nationals, we can see that there would need to be a conscious choice by the author when deciding which form to use. While a doctor’s office specializing in a complex and modern field of medicine could use ‘TEL’ to symbolize an association with foreign information and experience, a doctor specializing in traditional medicine and practices might choose ‘*denwa*’ to associate itself with Japanese culture and history. Thus, we can see how ‘assimilated foreign’ loanwords, even more so than ‘established loans’, are a representation of ‘foreignness’ or ‘uniqueness’, in comparison to traditional Japanese language and culture (Kubota, 1998).

Moving beyond the idea of ‘assimilated foreign’ loanwords, the last stage of the Core-Periphery Model is ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords. As stated above, ‘assimilated foreign’ loanwords are easily understood by Japanese speakers and are incorporated into Japanese syntactic phrases. However, ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords are not easily understood by Japanese speakers and usually exist separately from Japanese. A common example of this in Japanese is ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords used for decoration. Disregarding the informational signage that is targeted towards tourists or foreign nationals in Japan, the common perception of ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords amongst Japanese nationals is that they primarily serve decorative purposes (Hyde, 2002). Examples can be seen on signs, clothing, and advertisements throughout Japan. This type of use can be categorized as language that does not convey information, but rather is used to display a sense of cosmopolitanism or to associate the user or product with foreign, commonly Anglosphere, culture. Thus a division between ‘assimilated foreign’ loanwords and ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords in Japanese

can be seen as one dependent upon the wish of the author to convey information, or on the other hand, to display a stylistic flourish. While English seemingly dominates the sphere of ‘unassimilated foreign’ words in Japan; French, Italian, German, Spanish and other western languages are also frequently seen (Backhaus, 2011).

These four groups encompassed by Ito and Meyer, ‘native’, ‘established loans’, ‘assimilated foreign’ words, and ‘unassimilated foreign’ words, exhibit the many ways in which loanwords are utilized within languages, including Japanese. However, we contend that there is a fifth group existing outside of the common interpretation of Ito and Mester’s Core-Periphery Model (1999) that has seen recent popularity in Japanese.

IV. The Rise of ‘Material Foreign’ Loanwords in Modern Japanese

Ito and Mester’s Core-Periphery Model (1999) gives us a good overview of the different ways in which loanwords are incorporated into and interact with a target language, and we have seen how loanwords in Japanese have fit this model. However, we argue that a new variety of ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords, which do not fit into the previously mentioned definitions, have recently become popular in modern Japanese. While ‘assimilated foreign’ loanwords have been limited to acronyms, abbreviations and Roman representations of Japanese words, and ‘unassimilated foreign’ displays foreign language removed from Japanese contexts for decorative purposes; this new category of ‘unassimilated foreign’ language is distinguished by its use of foreign loanwords which retain their orthography and semantics used in Japanese syntactic phrases to convey information to a Japanese audience.

For the purposes of this paper, the authors will categorize this new classification as ‘material foreign’ loanwords. It is defined as a foreign lexical term, excluding abbreviations and acronyms, incorporated into a Japanese syntactic phrase without semantic or orthographic changes. A further distinction from other categories in the Core-Periphery Model is necessary as ‘assimilated foreign’ loanwords often undergo semantic and orthographic changes upon assimilation and ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords are often used outside of syntactic phrases as decorative images. The fact that ‘material foreign’ words do not undergo orthographic assimilation and are not accompanied by a Japanese translation or counterpart, means that the foreign language is the sole means of conveying important information, and therefore, it serves as more than decorative language. As well, the fact that ‘material foreign’ loanwords are not limited to abbreviations,

acronyms and transliterations means that the semantics of the original word are incorporated into the target language. Based on anecdotal observations in the major Japanese city of Osaka, signs can be seen that use English words as the sole means of disseminating information to a Japanese target audience. Examples such as 'web *de*' (web で) meaning 'on the web' and 'beer *arimasu*' (beer あります) meaning 'beer is available' are further examples in which 'material foreign' words are used to convey information in Japanese syntactic phrases. Therefore, comprehension of 'material foreign' loanwords depends on the Japanese national audience's understanding of the 'material foreign' loanword being used. In addition, the readily available 'native' words and 'established loans' in Japanese make the choice and use of these 'material foreign' words all the more intriguing.

Unlike 'established loans' and 'assimilated foreign' loanwords, 'material foreign' terms require a high level of knowledge of a foreign language to be understood. The previous example of 'beer *arimasu*' (beer is available) is an example of a situation in which there are several Japanese lexical and orthographic counterparts, in addition to iconographic representations for beer that could be used. However the use of 'beer' requires a higher knowledge of English to be understood. In this way, we can see the prevalence of English not only within 'established loans', 'assimilated foreign' loanwords and 'unassimilated foreign' loanwords, but also used in a Japanese context and intended for a Japanese audience though without changes to its lexical or orthographic origin, as is the case with 'material foreign' words.

In order to understand how each type of lexicon is chosen, depending on the author's intent and the purpose of the writing, a more thorough study of the use of each type of lexicon in modern Japanese is necessary. In order to further investigate the prevalence of the different types of loanwords in Japanese, a small-scale study was conducted in a train station in Japan to record the usage frequency of all discussed types of lexicon.

V. Methodology

Data was collected from a train station on a private railway in Northern Osaka Prefecture. The station is located in a residential area on the outskirts of the Osaka metropolitan area. Only local or sub-express trains serve the station. As well, there are no connecting lines that operate through the station, meaning it does not function as a major travel hub. The surrounding area does not have a particularly large foreign population, nor does it see much traffic from tourists, either foreign or domestic. It is an expected representation of a suburban area in Japan, populated primarily by Japanese nationals. This aspect is important as the

signs in this station primarily target Japanese nationals, rather than foreign residents or tourists. Thus, the study would portray a more accurate depiction of how these different lexicons are used when targeted at a Japanese audience.

The definition for ‘sign’ was taken from Backhaus’ study as a “piece of written text within an especially definable frame” (2011 p.42). The area of the study was restricted to inside the station, defined as any public area inside the ticket turnstiles. Signs were counted and then categorized based on their linguistic content. Signs were coded into one or more of the areas from the Core-Periphery Model including: ‘native’, ‘established loans’, ‘assimilated foreign’, and ‘unassimilated foreign’, as well, the new category of ‘material foreign’ was included. The definitions of each category are found in Table 1.2. As signs could be coded into multiple categories, a single sign could be counted in all five categories if all types of lexicon were present in the sign. Identical signs located in different areas of the station were counted separately. Signs were not limited to advertisements, but also official statements posted by the railway, and safety information posted around the station. The proportion of use of each type of lexicon would be determined by the number of signs including the language as a percentage of total signs in the station.

Native	‘native’ Japanese or historic loanwords written in Chinese characters or ‘ <i>hiragana</i> ’
Established Loans	Established loanwords in Japanese written in ‘ <i>katakana</i> ’
Assimilated Foreign	Acronyms, abbreviations, and Japanese transliterations written in Roman letters, incorporated into Japanese syntactic phrases. These are meant to be read and understood by Japanese readers.
Unassimilated Foreign	Words or phrases written in Roman letters, existing outside Japanese syntactic phrases. These are not meant to be read and understood by Japanese readers.
Material Foreign	Foreign lexical terms written in Roman letters, incorporated into Japanese syntactic phrases. These are meant to be read and understood by Japanese readers.

Table 1.2 – Definitions of the five categories of lexicon

VI. Results and Analysis

The study of the signs yielded 201 separate signs within the station. A breakdown of the prevalence of each type of language contained in these signs can be seen in Table 1.3.

Type	Total	Native	Established Loans	Assimilated Foreign	Unassimilated Foreign	Material Foreign
Count	201	200	164	78	64	25
%	100%	99.5%	81.5%	38.8%	31.8%	12.4%

Table 1.3 – Data of language occurring in signs

Not surprisingly, ‘native’ language appeared on all but one of the signs in the station. The single sign (pictured in appendix 1.1) that did not include ‘native’ language consisted solely of ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords, and seemed to be a placeholder advertisement that was not in current use. The 99.5% saturation rate is consistent with expectations of having near absolute penetration of the native language in a context where nationals are the target audience. The few signs were exclusively written with ‘native’ language included various safety signs posted by the railway that were written in formal Japanese, which largely lack loanwords, and advertisements for Japanese cultural events. This can be seen as evidence of the stylistic choices of the authors in their restricted use of the ‘native’ lexicon, as advertisements for Japanese historical museums and travel to domestic historical sites would have a desire to remove the use of ‘established loans’ in an effort to seem more traditional or historically authentic.

Nevertheless, when we look at ‘established loans’ we can see that there is a very high rate of frequency (81.5%) in all signs. This is evidence of how ‘established loans’ have become commonplace within modern Japanese. However, the rate of occurrence of ‘established loans’ might be higher in advertisements compared with other media that might be read at length, such as a newspaper or novels. The ‘*katakana*’ orthography, when contrasted with the kanji or hiragana orthography for ‘native’ Japanese, is eye-catching and attractive, which would thus benefit the creators of the advertisement. There were several instances of ‘established loans’ serving as a focal point for an advertisement, displayed in larger or bolder typeface, seemingly in an attempt to draw attention to it. The contrast would provide a visually engaging display, and would also provide an advantage in attracting attention. A comparative corpus analysis between ‘native’

language and ‘established loans’ in a variety of materials could provide added insight into these differences.

The number of signs including ‘assimilated foreign’ loanwords occurred at a much lower frequency than ‘established loans’, but still appeared in over a third of the signs studied. The most frequent were the abbreviations ‘TEL’ used prior to a telephone number, ‘URL’ used before a website address, as well as representations of company names or place names. However, it is impressive that these types of words occur in over a third of the signs observed, making them just slightly less frequent than Japanese orthographic counterparts, highlighting their popularity in Japanese. One reason for the high usage rate could be their association with English and the West, possibly as an association with internationalism, professionalism, and specialized knowledge (Kubota, 1998). Abbreviations of dates such as ‘Sun.’, ‘Mon.’ and ‘Fri.’ also appeared on advertisements for theatre, displaying the dates of the performance (pictured in appendix 1.2). These were advertisements for a type of musical performance that was adopted from the Anglosphere, and therefore, as these performances are cultural imports, this could be seen as an attempt by the author at cultural authenticity by using these ‘assimilated foreign’ loanwords.

Signs including ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords occurred slightly less, at 31.8%. Examples of this include slogans and decorative language (pictured in appendix 1.3). The use of ‘unassimilated foreign’ words in a slogan is often an attempt by the creator to make a visually engaging advertisement that will attract an audience, due to the contrast between the Roman and Japanese orthography. This is similar to the use of ‘established loans’ mentioned previously as they both are used in an attempt to draw attention to the advertisement. The second way that ‘unassimilated foreign’ terms were used was as a cultural association for the advertisement. Signs to advertise products or services directly related to Western culture, for example, an Italian restaurant and museums displaying Western art were most common. An attempt at authenticity in relation to Western culture would necessitate the creator of an advertisement to try to use these ‘unassimilated foreign’ terms to create a perception of legitimacy.

As expected, ‘material foreign’ words were the least frequent type of loanword observed, but still occurred on over a tenth of all signs. A list of ‘material foreign’ loanwords and their frequency can be seen in Table 1.4. These occurred most frequently on advertisements for travel and theatre, but many other occurrences were observed. As well, all instances of ‘material foreign’ loanwords were from English.

WORD	COUNT
day	10
web	6
off	3
ok	3
point	1
cool	1
me	1
TOTAL	25

Table 1.4 – List and count of ‘material foreign’ terms

The most frequently used ‘material foreign’ word encountered was ‘day’. This occurred in several different signs, all of which advertised travel packages (example pictured in appendix 1.4). ‘Day’ was used as a counter, commonly placed together with an Arabic numeral to indicate the number of days the package had. This is in contrast with the ‘native’ Japanese word *‘nichi’* (日), meaning day, which would be the word that was removed in favor of the ‘material foreign’ loanword. Interestingly, none of the travel advertisements using ‘day’ were for foreign excursions, but rather for domestic travel. This could be seen as evidence for the relative meaning that the English word ‘day’, and English in general, would have for a Japanese audience. International travel has a strong cultural association with ‘uniqueness’ and ‘rarity’ while domestic travel lacks such associations. Thus, in an attempt to associate domestic travel with ‘exoticness’ and ‘excitement’, these advertisements include English within their texts to associate them with ‘foreignness.’ As stated previously, English has come to signify all things ‘foreign’ in Japan, and its use might have more associations with the concept of ‘non-Japanese’ rather than direct connotations with the Anglosphere in Japan (Backhaus, 2011; Kubota, 1998).

The second most occurring ‘material foreign’ word was ‘web’, meaning ‘website’. In this case, the website belonging to the company which produced the advertisement would be present in the sign. This could represent a semantic shift as we can possibly interpret ‘web’ as an abbreviation of ‘website’, but we feel that the term ‘web’ is common enough in English to classify this occurrence as ‘material foreign’ language. As ‘web’ connotes the audience to identify with the Internet and its cultural associations, the choice of English here over its Japanese counterparts might be an attempt to associate the product or service in the advertisement with western online culture. The United States is home to such popular websites such as Twitter, Facebook, Amazon, Google and many others that are quite popular in

Japan. The use of ‘web’ could be seen as an attempt to associate the target of the advertisement with these accepted companies.

‘Off’ was another frequently occurring word, appearing on many safety signs posted by the railway (pictured in appendix 1.5). The use of ‘off’ was signaling passengers of the railway to switch off their phones when located near special seating. This usage might be a case of trying to have the audience of the sign remember the message by using an eye-catching word, as there is an established loan ‘*oofu*’ (オーフー), as well as ‘native’ Japanese counterparts that could have been used. The use of a ‘material foreign’ loanword as contrasted with the surrounding Japanese is very eye-catching and the use of larger typeface would allow the viewers attention to be drawn to that one word.

From these results we can see that the use of ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords has gone far beyond the use of foreign language solely for decorative purposes. The use of English as a means to convey information to a Japanese audience is not just an affectation, but rather, an authentic pervasive cultural phenomenon, as seen in the results of the study. In order to accommodate the use of these types of loanwords in modern languages, a reinterpretation or re-categorization of terms within the Core-Periphery Model is necessary. A closer look at the cultural role of English in Japanese language and culture is necessary in order to help explain and understand this phenomenon.

VII. Conclusion

English as a foreign language holds an exceptional place within Japan. As explained previously, English has been at the forefront of many different areas of development in Japan for the last 150 years. As well, for the last 60 years, English has come to symbolize all things foreign within Japan (Kubota, 1998). In education, English is almost always the only option for students who want to or have to study a foreign language. While Chinese and Korean are gaining popularity, and French and German are offered in some private institutions, English still encompasses the overwhelming majority of foreign language education in Japan (Kubota & McKay, 2009). This has been the case for the last 150 years, and the study of English and its incorporation into Japanese has created its own unique consequences.

While English is not typically spoken as a first or second language in Japan, the authors believe that this type of saturation of English in Japan could eventually lead to a type of “Japanese-English” such as the different types of World Englishes, as described by Kachru (2006). While it might be in its infant

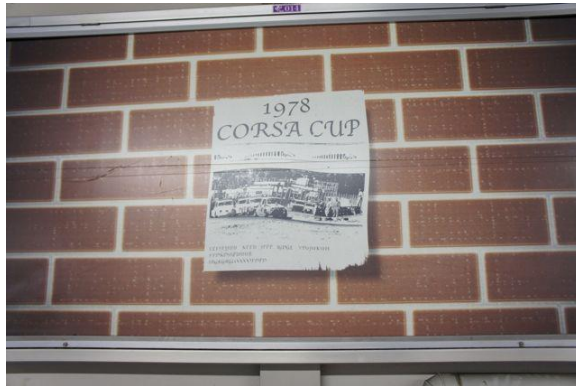
stages, it would be unique, as Japan has never had a strong colonial influence, despite being under American occupation since World War II. If we look at the recent proliferation of both ‘assimilated foreign’ and ‘unassimilated foreign’ loanwords, we can see how English, even using its original orthography, has become routine in modern Japanese. This of course requires the vast majority of the population in Japan to have some cursory knowledge of the English language, and largely thanks to the compulsory standardized education in Japan, this use of English in Japanese is possible. While abbreviations and acronyms might not signify a large foreign lexical repertoire possessed by a majority of the population, there is strong evidence of cultural implications due to the fact that these foreign items exist at all in Japanese. As a way to study the development of each type of lexicon in Japanese, a chronological study of different types of lexicon would prove useful. A study of language shift between the use of ‘established foreign’ to ‘unassimilated foreign’ to ‘material foreign’ loanwords over the course of the last several decades might provide insight into how English and other foreign languages have been assimilated and represented in Japanese.

The rise of ‘material foreign’ terms, almost exclusively originating from English, shows again how English is slowly shifting from an adapted ‘established loan’ to an embraced lexicon that retains its original semantics and orthography. This type of language requires a much higher level of English understanding, and as these types of words become more common, English without adaptation could become normal as a means of communication in Japan. While this might fall short in the eyes of many as a true variety of World English, we believe it is a signal that English in Japan is expanding to involve not only communication with foreign entities but also communication between Japanese nationals.

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IX. Appendices



Appendix 1.1 – Sign without native language



Appendix 1.2 – Example of ‘assimilated foreign’ abbreviations



Appendix 1.3 – Example of ‘unassimilated foreign’ decorative language



Appendix 1.4 – ‘Day’ used as ‘material foreign’ language



Appendix 1.5 – ‘Off’ used as ‘material foreign’ language