

“English Loanwords in Japanese and Telugu – Pedagogical Implications”

Mahender K. Gakkula¹
Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University,
Nanded

Abstract:

This paper highlights some key linguistic processes in syllabification and their pedagogical application with regard to English Loanwords in Japanese and Telugu and the advantages they offer to both native Japanese learners of English and to non-native learners of Japanese. Learners of Japanese language have increased many folds in the past decade due to increasing work opportunities coupled with easing of immigration norms for foreigners in Japan. Jobs in various fields like automobile, IT, communications, media, finance, medical, manufacturing, distribution, services etc., have opened up for foreigners and are also predicted to offer many more in the near future, partly also due to a rapid increase of aged population and a decline in Japan’s population. And, Japanese language being the only language that is in official use in Japan requires one to be proficient to be able to work in Japan. Same is the case for Japanese people alike, who are required to have a business level English proficiency to be able to assume a position with foreign based companies operating in Japan or aboard. In this context, an understanding of linguistic processes in syllabification in loanwords or *katakana* English could help language learners familiarize themselves with these processes, and their pedagogical application could help them learn their target language better.

Key Words: linguistic processes, syllabification, loanwords, *katakana* English, pedagogical application, communication.

Introduction

Japanese language has a long history of borrowing words from other languages, especially English. Due to the economic, political and cultural influence of US and UK on Japan, many loan words have been absorbed and adapted from English into Japanese (Backhaus,2011). Similarly, in Telugu, a Dravidian language from the southern part of India, we see many words that are borrowed from English. These loanwords are commonly used with phonological modifications that make it easier for a native Japanese or a native Telugu speaker to naturally utter them without much difficulty, by adapting the English words into the phonotactics of Japanese or Telugu. This paper proposes that understanding the similarities in nativization of loanwords could have pedagogical implications that could contribute to areas like material development and methods of learning of Japanese as a second language. Also, an understanding of syllabification of loanwords could aid better learning of English among native Japanese speakers

¹ Mahender K. Gakkula is currently a Ph.D Scholar at Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded. He is an English and a Japanese teacher by profession. He has lived and worked in Japan from the year 2007-2017. He can be contacted by email at <mahenderkumarg@gmail.com>.

Loanwords in Japanese: an Overview

Many historical exchanges and a dynamic continuous fast paced globalization have exposed Japanese society to foreign cultures. Yet, preserving its own culture, Japanese has the phenomena of borrowing of loanwords as an essential process for its society to merge with the global society allowing them to find new ways to express themselves without replacing their original language. In Japanese language, borrowed words are written in a Japanese orthographic form called *katakana*.

Let's have a closer look at loanwords in Japanese language before we look into the pedagogical implications. Loanwords in Japanese are referred to as *gairaigo*. A classification of *gairaigo* has been done in a previous research by Irwin(2011), where *gairaigo* is broadly classified into three distinct areas:

- (1) 英語外来語 (*eigo-gairaigo*/English words coming from outside),
- (2) 英語外国語 (*eigo-gaikokugo*/English foreign words) and
- (3) 和製英語(*waseieigo*/made-in-Japan English words).

The first one refers to words that have been fully integrated into Japanese language system, in terms of phonology, syntax, morphology etc. The second refers to loanwords that are used in Japanese which are not so popularly used for daily use. Such words keep largely appearing in specific domain areas like manufacturing, medicine, finance etc. The third term entails the words that have been created in Japan from originally English language elements, for example salaryman → *sarariiman* which refers to a white-collar worker in Japanese. (see Irwin, 2011 for a detailed description of these loanword varieties). These categories are further referred to, in a paper by Hatanaka&Pannell (2016) by a term, English Derived Words (EDWs), which includes all the above three categories. For a linguistic discussion, it can be noted that the former classification is better for understanding and analysis, while for a pedagogical discussion, the latter can be observed to be a convenient one, especially while applying the term for vocabulary materials development or instructional design and so on. It should be acknowledged that no single term is of a greater importance than the other as each of these terms carries its own special value and importance.

Loanwords in Japanese and Telugu

In Japanese and in Telugu, loanwords undergo phonological changes viz., palatalization, voicing/devoicing etc., the result of which allows for a loanword transformation to become intelligible for native speakers.

Examples: Japanese

- i. bus → *basu*
- ii. comment → *komento*
- iii. performance → *pafomansu*
- iv. special guest → *supesharu gesto*

- v. video clip → *bideo kurippu*

Examples: Telugu

- vi. bus → *bassu*
vii. comment → *kaamentu*
viii. performance → *perpormansu*
ix. special guest → *speshal gestu*
x. video clip → *veedio klippu*

These modifications are beyond phonology and orthography as there can also be further changes at morphological level which are not too difficult to assimilate for a second language learner of Japanese language having a prior knowledge of consonant-vowel syllabary as L1 plays a role in second language learning (Nation, 2003). For instance, unlike in English, a syllable in Japanese does not allow consonant clusters. In words borrowed from English, when English consonant clusters are broken up with vowels, they tend to become too long to pronounce. So, loanwords in Japanese are often abbreviated, either on or after entering Japanese. The changes undergone could be something like clipping where the last part of the word, usually a syllable or two, get reduced as in examples (i) and (ii). Here, the final and/or the penultimate syllables are clipped as Japanese does not allow the consonant cluster of the fricative and the nasal in "-tion". Further, two clipped words can be combined to form a blended word as in examples (iii) and (iv).

Examples:

- i. collaboration → *korabo*
ii. television → *terebi*
iii. smart phone → *sumaho*
iv. professional wrestling → *puroresu*

Above examples demonstrate the phonological adaptation paving a way for a smooth assimilation of these words into Japanese language.

Syllabification in Japanese and Telugu Loanwords

On analyzing some data of loanwords from English in Japanese and Telugu, commonalities are observed in syllabification - vowel insertion, insertion of a glide and gemination. Let's look at a few examples. Both Japanese and Telugu do not allow a coda in word-final position. Therefore, we can notice examples of vowel insertion in word final position of the borrowed word, as in Table 1 below. Even while the words in English end with a consonant sound, the borrowed version of these words in Japanese and Telugu end with a vowel sound. For instance, "mask" in English ends with the consonant /k/ while in Japanese and Telugu it ends with the vowel /u/ to satisfy no-coda condition.

Similarly, in both the languages, instances of glide-insertion in words like "camp" are found. Since, both Japanese and Telugu do not have the sound /æ/, the glide, /y/ is inserted between

the initial consonant and the following vowel, /a/, to get *kyampu*.

We can also observe gemination of consonants when words like "cup" are borrowed. In both Japanese and Telugu, there is gemination of the plosive /p/ to derive the loanword, /kappu/. However, it is interesting to note that while we can see gemination of nasals and fricatives in Telugu, as in "gum" and "bus" that derive, *gammu* and *bassu*; we don't see gemination of nasals and fricatives in Japanese, *gamu* and *basu*.

	English	Japanese	Telugu
1	mask	<i>masuku</i>	<i>masku</i>
2	ice cream	<i>aisu-kuriimu</i>	<i>ais-kriimu</i>
3	camp	<i>kyampu</i>	<i>kyampu</i>
4	cup	<i>kappu</i>	<i>kappu</i>
5	bus	<i>basu</i>	<i>bassu</i>
6	gum	<i>gamu</i>	<i>gammu</i>
7	stage	<i>suteiji</i>	<i>ste:ji</i>

Table 1: Examples of loanwords in Japanese and Telugu

An Area for Exploration

The process of nativization of the borrowed words from English into Japanese from both a linguistic and a pedagogical point of view has been a potential area to explore for both policy makers and instructional designers. For a language researcher, it would be interesting to see the changes and generalize these processes of assimilation making it easier for the research community to capture a concise picture of linguistic phenomena related to loanwords in Japanese. Considerable amount of work has been done through research in loanwords at a fundamental level focusing on linguistic, sociolinguistic and pedagogical issues of loanwords (Kay, 1995; Miyaoka&Tamaoka, 2003; Daulton, 2008, 2011; Irwin 2011; Olah, 2007; Inagawa, 2015 among others). However, no significant work has been done in the area of applying these linguistic analyses in the area of syllabus/instructional design. For a practitioner, capitalizing on these for syllabus and instructional design can be both interesting and rewarding for maximizing the results of imparting foreign language vocabulary knowledge at a relatively earlier stage of learning. Previous research has revealed many crucial challenges of loanwords related to semantic equivalence of the word use in language of origin with their cognates in the target language. It is found in a study that the lexical

representations of English equivalents are not processed by Japanese speakers while using loanwords (Miyaoaka&Tamaoka, 2003). Also, in a study related to students' attitudes towards loanwords, Olah noted the reality that "If Japanese have a negative attitude toward loanwords then using them as an aid for teaching spoken English would be difficult" (Olah 2007, pp. 182). However, there has not been any considerable research undertaken to examine the issues of learning Japanese language by experimenting with the loanwords particularly in case of non-native Japanese speakers learning Japanese language. This area of study, if taken up thoroughly can help many learners of Japanese language in discovering and emerging with more effective learning materials and methods.

Pedagogical Implications

Considering the present context, the tremendously growing interest to learn Japanese has been a notable one due to growing economic ties of Japan especially with developing countries like India. While it is believed that there may be similarities between Japanese and most of the official Indian languages, there is an interesting area of lexicon that makes learning Japanese easier due to largely used English vocabulary in Japanese in the form of loanwords or *gairaigo*. Considering the vocabulary learning theory of vocabulary chunks (Nation, 2001), English loanwords in Japanese being not only single words but also sometimes multiple words which either have been taken directly from, or made of word compounds from other languages, supports the vocabulary acquisition principle of learning in chunks.

As the process of borrowing continues, learners/teachers of both Japanese and English must consider the prior knowledge of loanwords which can prove to be a first set of active vocabulary in retention and use. In case of learners from India, exposure to loanwords helps develop a latent Japanese vocabulary base as learners are at an advantage given the prior knowledge of syllabary which is adhered by most of the official Indian languages where Telugu is one among them. Also given the fact that Indian students' exposure to English language from early educational years, use of English in either a similar or a modified way (as loanwords in their native Indian language), depending on how the word semantically behaves in Japanese, can be a comfortable language learning experience which helps in acquiring phonological and semantic knowledge of a large set of Japanese vocabulary with a relatively less effort. Both these knowledges of syllables and English use, I believe contribute to a blended understanding of how English phonological form can be easily broken down to an intelligible syllabic form used in Japanese. Such ability is believed to enhance a Japanese language learners' accuracy of pronunciation as it would call upon the pre-existing phonological systemic knowledge in the learner's active use (Nation, 2011; Meyer, 2008).

The Advantage of Loanwords in Learning Japanese

Japanese has three different orthographical forms viz., *kanji* (logographic representation borrowed from Chinese), *hiragana* and *katakana* (syllabic representations). In syllabic representations, each syllabary or a letter carry no meaning. On the other hand, each kanji unit carries a meaning making it a morpheme (the smallest unit in a language that carries meaning). Almost all native Japanese words are represented in *kanji* and *hiragana*. The logographic writing system in Japanese does prove to be a challenge to learners of Japanese Language. Although it is interesting that every kanji can be represented in a simplified reading form called *hiragana*, most occasions prefer *kanji* as these are pictograms carrying an aesthetic/symbolic value of word and its meaning, while the exception always remains with loanwords. Loanwords in some sense are referring to objects and ideas of the outside world which comes to prove that borrowing preserves native ideas and vocabulary from undergoing changes and can be traced back through etymology in a relatively simpler manner.

As discussed earlier, loanwords use *katakana* for writing, and loanword knowledge and use, is easier to retain compared to *kanji* (one of the three orthographic forms of Japanese) as there are no derivations to combine and form new meaning using loanwords. Loanwords are firm words with firm syllabic structure and are represented in the phonetic alphabet that can be straightly read, which is seldom the case with *kanji*. These facts lead us to assume that if there were no *hiragana* and *katakana*, like in the case of Chinese, then Japanese language learning will perhaps be a more difficult journey with greater dependence on *kanji* system. For most Japanese language learners except for the learners with pre-existing *kanji* knowledge like in Chinese language, loanwords prove to be the springboard of vocabulary knowledge base as *kanji* based knowledge retention is poor and needs repetitive exposure and use, for a better retention.

Conclusion

Learning Japanese for Indian learners could be a necessity and also an opportunity to new possibilities in a globalized context of the world today. An understanding of loan words in Indian languages such as Telugu for instance and the processes of syllabification or word formation may be similar among many Indian languages - could help the Japanese language learners and teachers alike in improving their experience of learning Japanese. This paper presents a view that a prior knowledge of the structure of loanwords could help in better learning of Japanese as against no exposure to loanwords.

To understand these phenomena better, a further study could be undertaken which can compare and analyze the vocabulary of Japanese language learners having prior exposure to Japanese language aspect such as, syllabary, with learners having no such exposure. The key here is both the exposure to English and syllabic system.

References:

- Brown, J.B. and Williams, C.J. (1985) Gairaigo: A latent English Vocabulary base? *Tohoku Gakuin Review: Essays and studies in English Eibungaku* 76, 129-146.
- Daulton, F.E. (1996) *Katakana* English and the teaching of pronunciation. *Journal of Nanzan Juniou college* 24, 43-54.
- Daulton, F.E. (1998) Loanword cognates and acquisition of English vocabulary. *The language teacher* 20 (1), 17-25.
- Daulton, F.E. (2008) *Japan's Built-in Lexicon of English-Based Loanwords*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Hatanaka, M. & Pannell, J. (2016). English loanwords and made-in-Japan English in Japanese. Hawaii Pacific University TESOL Working Paper Series 14, 14-29.
- Kay, G. (1995) English loanwords in Japanese. *World English* 14, 197-220.
- Nation, I.S.P. (2008), *Teaching Vocabulary: Strategies and Techniques*, Boston: Heinle Cengage Learning.
- Olah, Ben (2007). English Loanwords in Japanese: Effects, Attitudes and Usage as a means of Improving Spoken English Ability. *Bunkyo Gakuin Daigaku Jinmongakubu Kenkyukiyou*. Vol.9, No.1, p.178, 2007.12
- Oshima, K. (2004) *The movement of Gairaigo Usage: The case of the Asahi Newspaper from 1952 to 1997*, Bunkyo Gakuin Daigaku Gaikokugo Gakubu Bunkyo Gakuin Daigaku Tankidaigaku Kio, 3, 91-102.
- Seargeant, P. (2011b) Introduction: English in Japan in the era of globalization. In Seargeant, P. (ed.) *English in Japan in the era of globalization*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 187-204.
- Schmidt, C.K. (2009) Loanwords in Japanese. In Haspelmath & Tadmor (eds.), 545-574
- Schmitt, N. (2010). *Researching vocabulary: A vocabulary research manual*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Sugimoto, Y. (1997) *An introduction to Japanese society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tamaoka, Katsuo and Miyaoka, Yayoi (2003). The Cognitive Processing of Japanese Loanwords in Katakana. *Japanese Psychological Research* 2003, Volume 45, No.2, p.69. 14 March, 2003.
- Yule, G. 1996. *The Study of Language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.