

# Japanese English in Travel Brochures

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**Abstract**—This study investigates the role and impact of English loan words on Japanese language in travel brochures. The issues arising from a potential switch to English as a tool to absorb the West's advanced knowledge and technology in the modernization of Japan to a means of linking Japan with the rest of the world and enhancing the country's international presence. Sociolinguistic contexts was used to analyze data collected from the Nippon Travel agency "HIS"'s brochures in Thailand, revealing that English plays the most important role as lexical gap fillers and special effect givers. An increasing mixer of English to Japanese affects how English is misused, the way the Japanese see the world and the present generation's communication gap.

**Keywords**—English, Japanese, loan words, travel brochure.

## I. INTRODUCTION

THE work described in this paper is part of a broader project "The Influence of English on Japanese Language and Culture". English is regarded as a new way of communication across nations and cultures during the past few decades. It is the predominant language spoken in many countries around the world, either as a native, second or foreign language. It is considered as a language of opportunity by helping the people and also helping the nation's economy grow [1]. English provides people from different parts of the world with the opportunity to become closer and express themselves to each other more and more. Because of widespread use both in official and international modes as in communication, business, technology, education, diplomacy, media, etc., English has become a global language. This has caused fragments of its lexicon to surge into other languages, and without exception the Japanese language. The Japanese language began to borrow many western words around the 17 century, most are English which is the origin of most modern loan words today. The "borrowed words" or "loan words" with the exception of Chinese borrowed in ancient time are called *gairaigo* in Japanese, which means a Japanese word of foreign origin written in katakana script. Katakana is also used for onomatopoeic words, colloquialisms, slang or words which are to be emphasized. Because of the limited usage of katakana, it stands out and is often made use of in advertising [2]. This specific usage of katakana in Japanese writing raises the attention into the public. In Japan, English is learned as a foreign language and is used for international communication, business, diplomacy and tourism [3]. The most obvious evidence revealing the influence of English on Japan is the steady increase of English loanwords written in katakana. The influx of English loan words in Japanese is inevitable and this

phenomenon is often seen in all types of media. Perhaps one example of the Japanese admiration for Western culture is to be found in the travel brochures' extravagant use of English and other European language loan words [4]. It seems particularly so that descriptive adjectives and nouns are almost used when talking or writing about the Western influenced topics. With an overwhelmingly endless spread in recent years of this loan words into Japanese brings controversy and worries among the public. The use of *gairaigo* in the Japanese language is at such a rate that many Japanese are now unable to fully understand each other [5], and this phenomenon seems to be so much greater due to the globalization. This implies that the older generation of Japanese people must face difficulties understanding the meaning of loan words in Japanese language today. The pronunciation of loan words is Japanese and quite different from the original pronunciation. Furthermore, the meaning of some loan words are changing so a lack of meaning or a vague meaning thus *gairaigo* makes it more difficult for Japanese people to immediately grasp the semantic meaning [6]. Because of this vague meaning, *gairaigo* often appears in advertising

As described the loan words are often found in travel brochures therefore it is worth examining how they are used. Brochures are advertising media mainly used to introduce or inform people about products and/or services in the tourism industry to a target audience. The Japanese people love to travel and Thailand has been a popular travel destination from the past to the present. According to statistic of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 1.3 million Japanese visited Thailand in 2012. Thus it is interesting to investigate the phenomenon of English loan words used in the travel brochures in Thailand. The English loan words borrowed into Japanese in the travel brochures can clarify their roles and effects on the Japanese language. This study attempts to investigate two issues: What are the roles of English loan words in Japanese? How do English loanwords affect the Japanese language in the travel brochures.

## II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The aims of this study are to investigate the roles of English loan words in Japanese as well as the impact of the loanwords on the Japanese language used in travel brochures.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In collecting the data, the research began with a critical review of the history of English loan words in Japan. This was followed by examining the loan words used in the travel brochures of the Nippon Travel Agency: H.I.S. for advertising promotion from October in 2012 in Thailand. The data focuses on three plans of optional sightseeing tours and the coupon

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provided: the palace and temples in Bangkok, Damnern Saduak Floating Market in Ratchaburi Province and the Rose Garden in Nakornpathom Province.

#### IV. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

##### A. The History of English Loan Words in Japan

Taking a look into the history of the loan words in Japan, English was given the highest priority. English was learned not only for a tool to absorb modern knowledge and advanced technology from the West but also for the massive importation of its culture.

According to the history, the foreign loan words in the Japanese language can be divided into three broad streams [7]: Iberian (mid-16th to the mid-17th century), Dutch (mid-17th to 19th century) and Western (19th century to present)

The Iberian period is the first phase of Japan contacted with European world. This began in 1543 with the coming of Portuguese sailors landing on the small southern island of Kagoshima Prefecture. They were soon followed by the first Christian missionary to the country, Francis de Xavier, and then the Spanish. These paved a way for the loan words related to the European ideas, religion and everyday objects came into the Japanese language. Their impact is obvious in the mass of borrowings dating from this period, not just from Portuguese, but also from Latin. Portuguese loan words are as *bisupo* ビスポ “bishop”, *pan* パン “bread”, Latin as in *supiriku* スピリク “spirit”, and Spanish as in *meriyasu* メリヤス “knitting”. The secular borrowed words in this period can be put into five broad semantic classes [8]: foodstuffs, cloth and clothing, drugs and medicinal goods, a small group of tools and appliances, and place names. This clarifies that the loan words in this period played a role as a lexical gap filler in the Japanese language.

The Dutch borrowing period was a great established source of the loan words in the Japanese language. Being confronted with the Western colonial value, Japan had to avoid a colonial fate. The Spanish missions were expelled in 1624, followed by the Portuguese missions in 1636. The Dutch merchants were the only European permitted to remain in Japan during the so-called *sakoku* period (a closed country from 1640 to 1853) because of their concentration in trade, so they were not seen as a potential conquering force.

Consequently there was a great popularity in Dutch Studies during this period, which allowed the Japanese to learn the about Western scientific knowledge and technology. All of the Western knowledge was transmitted to Japan through the Dutch language [9] thus the Dutch played the most important Most Dutch loan words are related to medical science and mercantile vocabulary, such as the words *kobaruto* コバルト “cobalt”, *koohii* コーヒー “coffee” and *biiru* ビール “beer”.

We can see in this period that Japanese had not have an admiration in the Western faith or culture, but they did have an interest in contemporary European scientific learning. The knowledge gained through the Dutch studies provided a knowledge base to enable Japan to undertake rapid modernization of the country. Thus the loan words in this

period played its role as a medium to absorb the Western advanced knowledge as well as a lexical gap filler in the Japanese language.

The Western borrowing period was the westernization of the country at a rapid rate. With the Meiji Reform in the late 19th century, following the rapid modernization policies, Japan absorbed and imported the Western literature, politics, technology, science, education system and culture. European culture and language were considered to be the symbol of modernization and sophistication [10] What Japan did at this time was characterized as “rational shopping”, by selecting the best things from countries around the world and adapting and fitting them to their own needs and culture.

In the early Meiji period, whatever originated in the Western countries was demonstrated as innovations of the West and used as models to promote the development of the nation. Japan took the challenge of the West by imitating its model for rapid modernization of the country. It caused great change in Japanese political, social, economic systems and everyday life. Therefore, the modernization that occurred in Japan in this period enlarged the scale of Japanese life in ways such as thinking, patterns of behavior and worldview [11]. Japan shaped its own cultural system into a new form. By the adoption of Western elements and culture, many loan words flooded into the Japanese language from English, French, German, Italian and Russian as follows; from English *saizu* サイズ “size”, from French *zubon* ズボン “trousers”, from German *arubaito* アルバイト “part-time job”, from Russian *iruka* イルカ “salmonroe”.

The loan words importation during this period concentrated on different fields of interest. Japan has been accepting Western influence without resistance where circumstance differed from the next wave of loan words.

The next major wave of importation of Western values and culture was mostly directly from the U.S. after World War II. It was a result of the condition stipulated by both the Allied occupation from 1945 to 1952, and the public social motivation to embrace and become part of the Western world and its economic success [12]. Oversea travelling and English language learning were promoted and gained greater popularity to the public. English seems to be continually add a number of loan words every year.

##### B. The Function of Katakana

We can categorize Japanese words into three groups according to their origin: *wago* 和語, *kango* 漢語, and *gairaigo* 外来語. *Wago* are native Japanese words, while *kango* refers to Chinese loan words and *gairaigo* to words borrowed from foreign countries other than China. The Japanese language uses three different scripts; *hiragana* (ひらがな), *katakana* (カタカナ) and *kanji* (漢字). *Hiragana* and *katakana* are purely phonetic symbols while *kanji* shows the meaning of words though it also has pronunciations. In practice, the written language of Japanese uses a mixture of the three scripts. Each of these scripts serves definite

functions. However, in this study *katakana* is the focus of attention.

Originally, *katakana* was considered to be “men’s writing” since it was closely associated with science and learning. *Katakana* began to be widely used for the substitution of Chinese loan words at the turn of the 20th century. In general, it is used for foreign – derived words, foreign words and foreign proper names (with exception of Chinese), names of plants and animals (especially, in scientific contexts), some female given-names and it is also used for writing words as an unconventional writing style for emphasizing, and in attention-getting like advertising [13]. Thus, *katakana* plays a role not simply for written English loan words.

#### C. The Functions of English Loan Words in Japanese

The English loan words perform the important roles in three aspects: as lexical gap fillers, as special effect givers and euphemisms [14]. Lexical gap fillers are used to express new concepts, objects or phenomenon introduced from other cultures. For example: the loan words for the body sliming, health and wellness as in *bodisurimin* ボディスリミン “body sliming” and *aromaoiru* アロマオイル “essential oils”

Special Effect Giver is often used to express the symbolic of progress and modernization as Western. It emphasizes certain aspects of the product and puts a modern twist to it as in *kicchin* キッチン “kitchen”, *gaadeningu* ガーデニング “gardening” These can explain that the loan word *kicchin* is replaced with the Japanese word *daidokoro* 台所 “kitchen” to express the image of a wide and modern kitchen. The same occurred in the word *gaadeningu* which is substituted for the word 園芸 *engei* “gardening”. With the English loan word, we can see the image of an English- style garden while with the Japanese we can see the Japanese style- one.

Filling Semantic Avoid is used to avoid a negative meaning in a Japanese word such as *watashi* わたし “I” or the word *jibun* 自分 “myself”. These words are replaced with *mai* マイ “my” as in a word *maipeesu* マイペース “my pace”, which means at one's own pace or doing things at one's own time or schedule.

#### D. The Categories of English Loan Words in “HIS” Brochure

There are a total of 75 English loan words (*katakana*) in the data sourced from the NIPPON Travel Agency: HIS brochure. All the English loan words are grouped in 4 categories as shown in Table I. It can be seen that the category “nouns” has the highest number with 69.33% of English loan words following by the category “proper nouns” with 26.67, adverbs with 2.67%, while the category “adjectives” has the lowest with 1.33%. The figures also show that “proper nouns” quite prominently occurred due to the function of *katakana* within the local context. In other words, the tour plans described in the brochure involved around the matters of Thailand context, which are regarded as foreign to Japanese, therefore it is no surprise that a high number of Thai proper names are often mentioned and English loan words are highly used.

TABLE I  
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF 4 TYPES OF ENGLISH LOAN WORDS

| Category     | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Nouns        | 52        | 69.33      |
| Proper Nouns | 20        | 26.67      |
| Adverbs      | 2         | 2.67       |
| Adjectives   | 1         | 1.33       |
| Total        | 75        | 100        |

#### E. The Function of English Loan Words in Travel Brochure Context

The findings on English loan words found in the NIPPON Travel Agency: HIS brochure reveal that they occur within the category of noun, with most used for transcription of foreign language words into Japanese as in these examples:

TABLE II  
THE FUNCTION OF ENGLISH LOAN WORDS IN TRAVEL BROCHURE CONTEXT

| Romaji              | Katakana  | English Words   |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| <b>Proper Nouns</b> |           |                 |
| tai                 | タイ        | Thailand        |
| bankoku             | バンコク      | Bangkok         |
| watto poo           | ワット・ポー    | WatPho          |
| watto purakeeo      | ワット・ブラケオ  | Wat Phrakaew    |
| wattoarun           | ワット・アルン   | Wat Arun        |
| sampran             | サンブラン     | Sampran         |
| roozugaaden         | ローズガーデン   | Rose Garden     |
| chittoromu          | チットロム     | Chidlom         |
| baiyookusukai       | バイヨークスカイ  | Baiyoke Sky     |
| <b>Nouns</b>        |           |                 |
| maaketto            | マーケット     | market          |
| kuupon              | クーポン      | coupon          |
| booto               | ボート       | boat            |
| dinaa               | ディナー      | dinner          |
| ranchi              | ランチ       | lunch           |
| byuffe              | ビュッフェ     | buffet          |
| karuchaashoo        | カルチャーショー  | cultural show   |
| elefantoshoo        | エレファントショー | elephant show   |
| shoppingu           | ショッピング    | shopping        |
| biru                | ビル        | building        |
| famirii             | ファミリー     | family          |
| gurando             | グラウンド     | ground          |
| <b>Adjectives</b>   |           |                 |
| dainamikuna         | ダイナミックな   | dynamic         |
| <b>Adverbs</b>      |           |                 |
| yuumorasu           | ユーモラス     | humorous        |
| gyutto              | ギュッと      | hard or tightly |

#### F. The Special Use of Redundant English Loan Words

From the data it reveals that the English loan words are used as a lexical gap fillers and for giving a special meaning to raise an attention to the public. Most of these loan words have

become popular even though there are already existed Japanese words for the elements or concepts expressed. Writing loan words with the *katakana* script conveys a sense of modernity.

Honna[15] notes that because of such parallel vocabulary items are used “for a new version of an old thing to impress that something is different between the two”. On the other word, the connotations triggered by these noun loan words are different from their Japanese counterparts as these followings: *dinaa* ディナー “dinner” is substituted for *yuushoku* 夕食, *booto* ボート “boat” is substituted for *fune* 船 and the same with *shopping* ショッピング “shopping” is substituted for *kaimono* 買い物.

Adjective loan words are also used in Japanese and all should be regarded as na-adjectives when used as a modifier. In the study, only one adjective was found as in “*dainamikku-na erefantoshoo* ダイナミックなエレファントショー “dynamic elephant show” In English it means the elephant show is very active and energetic.

Adverbs found in the study are derived from nominal adjectives by means of *ni*; as in *yuumorasu-ni* ユーモラスに “humorous”, the another adverb is *gyutto* ギュッと “hard or tightly” which was used as onomatopoeic.

As writing loan words does not require the memorizing of Chinese characters, it is easy to use among the person who is familiar with English, technology and international culture, therefore, the increasing trend of using English loan words is more and more. This may cause the problem in communication between the generations.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study provides insight into the elements of English loan words in the Japanese language with a special discussion on the effects of the loan words on Japanese writing in the travel brochure. The sampling data is collected on the considering that NTA: HIS is claimed as the oldest travel agency in Japan. It serves both visitors to Japan from overseas and domestic travelers in almost market segments thus the language use in the brochures can give the broaden view of the Japanese language use as well as in depth interpretation how English loanwords have effects on Japanese language.

The findings on English loan words occur with the category of noun the most are as mentioned by Moeran. However, the descriptive adjective is occurred in a small number. In the study, adverb which is used as an unconventional writing style as Igarashi stated or colloquialisms and slang as described by Henshall and Takagaki is found. The English loanwords play the roles in Japanese language as lexical gap fillers and special effect givers. As Japanese continues to borrow a massive of English loan words and written them with *katakana* scripts which convey only the sound of a word cause their meanings are vague. This brings to the confusing and facing problem in communication among most of people or faces generation's communication gap. This implies that the English loan words may have effect on vocabulary acquisition by native speakers

of both languages; English and Japanese and also by learners of Japanese language.

The English loan words may lead to the misuse of English by Japanese people both usage and meaning. When the loan words came into Japanese, their meanings are so far removed from their original or have semantic change either narrowing or widening. This is the great risk with the use of English among Japanese due to they believe that English sounding expressions that have been entirely created in Japanese society.

## VI. DISCUSSION

Japan inevitable faced with the new wave of concepts and new things arrived in the country since launching itself into the modern world. However, this was not the burden for ordinary Japanese people to understand and absorb the change since Chinese script or kanji are generally used to describe new innovations. This phenomenon is a sharp different with rushing into a flood of English loan words later and is overwhelming in the recent year. The adoption of new loan words or *gairaigo* which are excessively related to the abstract terms causes a meaning lost in communication in Japanese society as Otake mentioned.

Languages change and involve with people in the society over time thus the language users should make a language choice within a social situation for a successful communication. But how, when and where and why people make a language choice is interesting to further investigate.

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