



The English influence on the Japanese Language

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Abstract: This article provides a comprehensive review of research on the Anglicization of the Japanese lexicon, tracing its development from the mid-19th century to the present day, when Japan reopened its doors to Western countries. It examines the characteristics of Anglicisms in Japanese, utilizing a typology of lexical borrowings proposed by Pulcini, which categorizes them into loanwords, Anglicisms, semantic loans. Additionally, the article suggests potential avenues for future qualitative and quantitative comparative analysis to deepen our understanding of Anglicisms in Japanese and their implications for global business language.

Key words: global language, anglicization, loanwords, Meiji era, jargonistic, business language.

English has played a significant role in the Japanese language, especially in modern times. It is the most widely studied foreign language in Japan and is often used in business, technology, academia, and international communication. Many English words have been borrowed into Japanese, particularly in fields such as technology, pop culture, and everyday



vocabulary. English loanwords, known as "wasei-eigo," are integrated into Japanese speech, creating a unique linguistic landscape. Moreover, English serves as a lingua franca in international contexts, influencing Japanese language education and shaping the linguistic and cultural exchanges between Japan and the rest of the world.

The comparative study by Kowner & Rosenhouse (2008) examined Anglicisms in twelve languages, including Japanese, considering psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociohistorical factors. However, methodological constraints, such as the lack of a comparable list of loanwords, have left questions unanswered regarding differences in phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic characteristics of Anglicisms across languages. To address this, the Global Anglicism Database Network (GLAD) was established in 2015 to create a comprehensive Anglicism database. This scholarly network aims to facilitate comparative studies on Anglicisms, allowing researchers to delve deeper into the process of Anglicization. As Haspelmath (2009) emphasizes, the goal of comparative study is to understand why certain words are borrowed between languages. Upon completion of the GLAD database, detailed comparative studies between Anglicisms in Japanese and other languages will be crucial for advancing our understanding of the Anglicization process in Japanese and its broader implications for global language dynamics.

Indeed, the influx of English loanwords into Japanese has surged since Japan's establishment of diplomatic relations with the West following the end of its long-standing isolation from international trade. The transition from an isolated feudal society to the Meiji era marked a significant turning point, as Japan experienced rapid modernization and industrialization with substantial cultural influence from the West. This cultural exchange led to the adoption of numerous English loanwords in Japanese, reflecting the integration of Western ideas, technology, and cultural elements into Japanese society.



Western loanwords were introduced to Japan by intellectuals who had studied abroad and were familiar with foreign languages, including English. These intellectuals played a crucial role in popularizing loanwords by incorporating them into their literary works, academic writings, and other publications. Through their works, they helped familiarize the Japanese populace with these loanwords, gradually integrating them into the Japanese lexicon. Over time, as Japan's engagement with the Western world increased, these loanwords became more widespread and commonly used in various aspects of daily life.

The use of English loanwords in Japanese is often driven by the perception that English represents intellectually advanced cultures. Knowledge of Anglo-American concepts, followed by the use of English loanwords, particularly in academic or professional contexts, is strongly associated with intelligence.¹ Employing these loanwords, along with the new concepts they embody, is often a subconscious way to demonstrate expertise in a given field, even if the speaker or writer lacks actual expertise. Additionally, it's common for authors and speakers to replace Japanese native words with English ones solely for the intellectual impression they convey. This phenomenon, termed "jargonistic" by Yamada (2005), means comprehension is limited to those familiar with the terms, rather than the general public.

The influence of English on the Japanese business language has been profound, reflecting the global nature of business and Japan's position in the international economy. Here are some key aspects of this influence: *Business Terminology*: English loanwords are extensively used in Japanese business terminology, especially in fields like finance, marketing, and technology. Terms such as "marketing," "sales," "CEO," "PR," and "IT" are commonly used in Japanese business communication. *Global Communication*: English serves as the primary language for global business communication, and Japanese professionals often use English terms and phrases when interacting with international

¹. Kavilova, Tamara. "Speech Culture and Communication Effectiveness."



partners, clients, and stakeholders. *Internationalization of Companies*: Many Japanese companies have adopted English names, slogans, and branding to appeal to global markets and convey a modern, international image. This includes well-known companies like Toyota, Sony, and Honda. *Cross-Cultural Collaboration*: English facilitates communication and collaboration between Japanese companies and their international counterparts. It is often used in meetings, negotiations, and conferences where participants come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. *Business Education*: English proficiency is highly valued in the Japanese business world, and many business schools and professional development programs offer courses taught in English. This reflects the importance of English as a tool for career advancement and global business opportunities.²

In conclusion that the current trend of promoting English as the language of business in Japan could continue and even intensify in the future. Government policies and company strategies aimed at benefiting from globalization and maintaining competitiveness may further accelerate the influx of English language and borrowings into Japanese business communication. If these policies prove successful, the increased prominence of English in Japanese business organizations, along with the influx of English-speaking professionals, could contribute to another wave of Westernization in Japan.

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