

# „Wasei-eigo”: English Made in Japan

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**Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad**

**2024**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Pula / Sveučilište Jurja Dobrile u Puli**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:137:211933>

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-11-06**



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**„Wasei-eigo”: Engleski jezik skovan u Japanu**

Završni rad

JMBAG: 1003120336, redovna studentica

Studijski smjer: Preddiplomski dvopredmetni sveučilišni studij

Engleski jezik i književnost i Japanski jezik i kultura

Kolegij: Semantika engleskog jezika

Znanstveno područje: Humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: Filologija

Znanstvena grana: Anglistika

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Pula, 2024.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

As human beings, we are wired for connection. One of the ways we try to connect to others is through verbal communication. Words, which are a fundamental part of this type of communication, are designed to be exchanged and to convey meaning between people. When words are deeply rooted in specific cultures and are formed in sentences while following a set of rules they form languages. Haspelmath and Tadmor (2009, p. 35) state that all languages can create new expressions from their own elements, however they sometimes cross language boundaries and become integrated into a different linguistic environment. This process where words come from a different language into a new one, is known as cultural and linguistic borrowing, as a phenomenon that has intrigued various linguistic fields for centuries, as cited in Bucić (2023, p. 1) from Bloomfield's work on language (1973). With this in mind, we will take a look at a global phenomenon of English words being incorporated into many languages across the globe, where Japanese is no exception, and this combination will be the center of this thesis. Although, in the case of English loanwords in Japanese, we can say that there are examples of "invention" of their own language, which at a first glance looks like typical English loanword but cannot really be classified as that. This linguistic phenomenon, *wasei-eigo*, refers to English words coined in Japan, which we will explain in detail, straddles the line between loanwords and coinages.

The history of incorporating words from various languages into Japanese has been long. It is a practice that began with the development of its writing system, when in the mid-sixth century A.D. Chinese logograms were first introduced with Buddhism (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 84). This thesis will try to provide a deeper insight into the history of Japanese borrowing words from different languages with an emphasis on the effect of English as a global and international language, and the usage, as well as the difference between "real loanwords"- *gairaigo* and the linguistic phenomenon known as *wasei-eigo*, which is colloquially called *Japanglish*. The reason for focusing on these two languages in particular is rather simple - the vast influence of English on Japanese language. According to J. Stanlaw (2009, p. 1) English can be considered as air in Japan since it is used everywhere, which is evident in citing commentator Matsumoto Toru (1974) who states that the use of English linguistic devices even in basic conversation in the Japanese language is inevitable. In some of Japanese statistical surveys it is clearly stated that English loanwords and phrases make up between 5

and 10 percent of the daily used Japanese vocabulary (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 1). However, as we will analyze further in this thesis, many of them are not easily understood by native speakers.

The aim of this thesis is to provide an overview of the *wasei-eigo* phenomenon, a distinctive blend of English and Japanese. In this thesis we will compare *wasei-eigo* with *gairaigo* (“true” loanwords), setting out to pinpoint the differences between them. While providing and examining a variety of examples of both loanwords, the purpose of this thesis is to shed light on what makes these Japanized English terms stand apart from standard loanwords. Furthermore, the thesis also explores the cultural and linguistic impact of *wasei-eigo* within the broader context of the development of Japanese language and its interaction with English as global language. To be able to understand this, qualitative approach was used, i.e., the phenomenon was analyzed through a comprehensive review of existing literature, including academic papers, books, and linguistic studies. With the analysis and comparison of numerous examples of *wasei-eigo* and *gairaigo*, this thesis highlights the phonological, morphological, and semantic changes that these loanwords undergo in their incorporation into the Japanese language. Transcription used in the thesis for romanization of Japanese words is *waapuro roomaji* (ワープロローマ字) or “kana spelling”. It was initially developed for inputting Japanese text into word processors (ワードプロセッサ, *waado purosessaa*, abbreviated *waapuro*) using a Western QWERTY keyboard. In this system, long vowels are represented exactly as they appear in Japanese writing. To provide an example, native Japanese words and Sino-Japanese words of Chinese origin are transcribed like this: 行動 (こうどう) as *koudou* (“action”), and loanwords and hybrids written in *katakana* like カー *kaa* (“car”).



## 2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

According to statistics from the year 2018, Japanese is spoken by approximately 127 million people and ranked ninth globally by the number of speakers (Srdanović and Špica, 2022, p. 30). Elmer (2020, p. 213) notes that despite being a major world language, its origin remains a mystery to this day, as well as being the only language in the world with such a vast number of attempts for determining its ancestry. Þórdísarson (2016, p. 3) quotes Schelring's (2015) work on the main contributing factor to this, which could be Japan's long history of isolation as an island nation. Nevertheless, there have been many theories trying to determine the place of Japanese in the world language tree. One of the most widely accepted theories, as Srdanović and Špica (2022, p. 33) conclude, is that the Japanese language belongs to the Japonic language family, including the Japanese-Ryukyuan languages. The Ryukyuan languages from Okinawa islands in southern Japan are thought to have evolved from a shared ancestor known as the Japanese-Ryukyuan proto-language, dating back 1500 years or even earlier (Srdanović and Špica, 2022, p. 33). Þórdísarson (2016, p. 3) points out that, unlike most European languages which experienced frequent language contact because of easy migration across the continent, Japan's isolation during the Edo period (1603-1868) had resulted in very limited linguistic, scientific, and social exchanges during those years. However, outside the Edo period, Japanese has had a rich history of borrowing words, and it has evolved significantly with new influences throughout centuries which we will examine in the following paragraphs.

### 2.1. Language contact

To understand how a language develops we have to understand language contact, as well. We can say that a language is a living organism, much like we are, which keeps developing and changing with time. One of the contributors to a language's development is the contact it has with other languages. To simplify, Thomason (2001, p. 1) says that language contact happens when "more than one language is used in the same place at the same time". Correspondingly, this leads to languages influencing each other, typically in a way that the more dominant language stays mostly unchanged, while the less dominant one changes. Winford (2003, pp. 30-31) classifies Japanese-English language contact as an example of casual borrowing, but through this thesis we will see evidence of how today it can be

considered intense. In the following paragraphs we will mention several instances of language contacts Japanese has experienced throughout history and analyze them to gain a deeper understanding of the Japanese language and the origins of *wasei-eigo*.

## 2.2. Contact with China

Most commonly known and thought of part of Japanese culture when mentioning borrowed aspects from other cultures is, in fact, one part of the language's writing system. The modern Japanese writing system consists of four components: *kanji* (Chinese characters) and two syllabaries, *katakana* and *hiragana*, and the alphabetic script. *Kanji* are sinograms that underwent various degrees of modification. They stem from Chinese characters/logograms and are used for individual words. On the other hand, *hiragana* is used for inflected word endings, particles, grammatical elements, and other words, while *katakana* is typically used for foreign words, names and in scientific terminology. Additionally, words written in *kanji* can also be represented using the formerly mentioned syllabaries. Scherling (2012) quoted in Bucić (2023, p. 7), comments on the integration of Chinese writing system, which was so seamless and comprehensive, that over time people stopped thinking of it as borrowed and foreign. He notes it became so thoroughly assimilated into the Japanese language, along with the words it represented, that today no Chinese-origin words are listed in loanword dictionaries. However, it is important to note that traditionally Japanese lexicon is divided primarily by word origin into: *wago* (native Japanese words), *kango* (Sino-Japanese words of Chinese origin), *gairaigo* (loanwords), and *konshugo* (hybrid words of mixed origin) (Srdanović and Špica 2022., p. 132-133). Later in the thesis, we will explain the Japanese writing system in detail, as well as the influence of the Chinese language.

Since Japan was so isolated from Eurasian continent, its opportunities for language contact were scarce. As, mentioned previously, in the fifth century Chinese scholars besides their most influential import *kanji*, brought with them vast knowledge in various areas like agriculture, metalwork and religion (Buddhism). The vast influence of Chinese language in Japan is evident in its usage through history, particularly as Joshi and Aron (2006, p. 483) note that during the Nara period (710-794) both languages were used, although differently; Chinese was used for scholarly, religious, administrative, and legal matters, while Japanese was used for everyday conversation.

### 2.3. Contact with Europe

As mentioned previously, during the Edo period as Japan was isolated from the Western part of the world for an extensive amount of time, it resulted in non-existing contact with the languages and cultures of Western countries. This changed in the 1540s when the Portuguese were the first recorded Europeans to step foot on Japan's ground. With them came the Latin alphabet and new words. Spanish and Dutch missionaries soon followed, bringing and spreading Christianity. Later, in 1587 this led the ruling class to feeling anxious and they banned the religion. Furthermore, influx of foreigners and new influences led to Japan implementing a self-isolation policy, *sakoku* (鎖国), restricting foreign contact to a few Dutch and Chinese merchants (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 47). During this time, first European loanwords, like パン *pan* ("bread") and タバコ *tabako* ("tobacco") from Portuguese which are still used now centuries later, entered the Japanese language (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 46). Other examples of significant Portuguese influence are words such as コップ *koppu* ("cup") (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 250) and ボタン *botan* ("button") (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 46) while Dutch influence can be seen from words like レンズ *renzu* ("lens"), ガラス *garasu* ("glass"), コーヒー *koohi* ("coffee") and ビール *biiru* ("beer") which are used on a regular basis today (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 48). Kay (1995, p. 67) notes another great contribution of contact with these languages which is the enrichment of the Japanese vocabulary and comprehension of various foreign fields and disciplines that lead to advances in medicine and science. A prominent historic figure of this period, who we can say contributed to new knowledge gain, was renowned for his deep fascination and interest in Western culture was the military leader Oda Nobunaga. He had admiration for European cultures, including clothing, technology, and products like firearms which became essential to his samurai forces, significantly contributing to his rise to power (Ebisawa, 2024).

In the period before the World War II there was a great influx of European and English loanwords in Japanese. Their level of assimilation into Japanese language is evident in the use of another phenomenon known as *ateji*. Srdanović and Špica (2022, p. 144) explain that this phenomenon, in which some native Japanese words were written using *kanji* regardless of the meaning behind the logogram itself, was very common in the early stages of

adopting Chinese characters. For example, the word *sushi* (寿司), which describes a traditional Japanese dish made of cooked rice with fresh fish, vegetables, and seaweed, is written using two *kanji* whose meanings, "longevity" and "official", have no relation to the actual concept of *sushi* (Srdanović and Špica, 2022, p. 167). This practice also extended to foreign loanwords, such as “coffee” 珈琲, typically written in *katakana* コーヒー *koohii*, “tobacco” written as 煙草 with *kanjis* for "smoke" and "grass/plant", instead of frequently used *katakana* タバコ *tabako* (Srdanović and Špica, 2022, p. 167). Another example that they provide is for the word “club”, which is represented with *kanji* 倶楽部, representing the morphemes *gu* "material," *raku* "comfort," and *bu* "section," but here they only have phonetic value—*ku* (as an allophone of /gu/), *ra* (the first mora of *raku*), and *bu*. In this way, the Chinese characters approximately convey the phonetic value of *kurabu* "club", commonly written in *katakana* as クラブ (Srdanović and Špica, 2022, p. 167). Coulmas (1989, p. 128) notes the importance of *ateji*, as well, since some frequently used terms adopted from European languages have received it and emphasizes that the meaning of *ateji* is usually used in a “playful, rebus-like fashion”. For instance, Bucić (2023, p. 9) mentions examples of this for words like “gas” and “tempura” which makes them writeable in *kanji*, the same ways as the native words. Although, *ateji* is rarely used nowadays, besides in specific contexts like traditional signs in city districts, in manga, menus and elsewhere, the *katakana* script is far more common and standard for writing loanwords (Srdanović and Špica, 2022, p. 167). As mentioned before, this constitutes as a clear sign of their deep integration into Japanese language. The integration of European words also had a great contribution to the assimilation, especially in formation of hybrid words, where they are combined with Japanese words (Scherling 2012, cited in Bucić, 2023, p. 9). Examples include *panya* (パン屋, “bakery”), *garasudo* (ガラス戸, “glass door”), and *gerirasen* (ゲリラ戦, “guerrilla warfare”). With hybrid terms, the Western components are written in *katakana*, while the Japanese components are written in *kanji*. The reason behind it will be explained in the chapter about Japan’s writing system. In chapters that follow, we will see different types of loanwords, explain their construction and their differences.

## 2.4. Contact with English

At the time of English initial contact in 1600s, compared to Dutch and Portuguese, linguistic impact on Japanese was not major (Dudden, 2002, cited in Trusk, 2016). However, Barjaktarević (2015, pp. 22-23) cites Beasley's (2008) explanation on how this changed with the end of Japan's isolation policy in 1853, which led to increasing Western influence, when Japanese elites began embracing Western customs and English influence started to grow. Furthermore, in 1868, the Meiji Restoration was a beginning of modernization and marked a new era of openness, at which time English began to spread and gained popularity, even making the use of English considered fashionable (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 267). During the late 1800s, English was so highly regarded that the Minister of Education of that time, Mori Arinori, proposed replacing Japanese with English completely (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 64). With the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912, many common terms like プリン *purin* ("pudding"), ハンカチ *hankachi* ("handkerchief"), ブラシ *burashi* ("brush"), and アイロン *airon* ("iron") had become part of the Japanese language (Scherling, 2012 cited in Bucić, 2023, p. 9). During the 1920s, English loanwords continued to be steadily incorporated, and at this point some of the most commonly used English terms today, such as タクシー *takushii* ("taxi"), ラジオ *rajio* ("radio"), and サラリーマン *sarariiman* ("salaried man" or male white-collar office worker) found their way into the Japanese language (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 68). According to Stanlaw (2009, p. 68) Japanese students and the ハイカラ *haikara* ("high collar" sophisticates) often incorporated English borrowings into their daily conversations. Various "-girl" terms were popular at the time, such as キャンプガール *kyampu gaaru* ("camp girl"), デパートガール *depaato gaaru* ("department store girl"), and オフィスガール *ofisu gaaru* ("office girl"), which persists today as the acronym OL ("office lady") for female office workers (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 68).

Regarding language influence, Kay (1995, p. 68) points out that English became more embedded in Japanese post-World War II. Results of the study that was conducted in 1980 by the Japan Association of Libraries, revealed that out of twenty-five-thousand loanwords in Japanese, more than half were adopted after the war, with majority coming from English. The expansion of mass media from 1945 onwards played a significant role in introducing

thousands of English terms into Japanese (Kay, 1995, p. 68). Stanlaw (2009, p. 69) highlights the strong influence of mass media which is evident in the use of terms such as アナウンサー *anaunsaa* (“announcer”) and レコード *rekoodo* (“[gramophone] record”), even though the nationalist military regimes of the 1930s and 1940s unsuccessfully attempted to replace them. The military made various attempts to eliminate English loanwords from the Japanese language, but ultimately failed. Both governmental and private initiatives aimed to cleanse all foreign linguistic influences from *Yamato-kotoba* (“the original Japanese, divine language of gods”) (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 69). However, in the post-war years, the American occupation was the main reason behind an influx of even more English loanwords into Japanese. The war itself greatly reduced natives’ chance for English education, leaving a generation with minimal or no English proficiency. During this period, the Japanese were faced with two options: either quickly learn standard English or communicate with the American occupiers using a simplified form of English, known as pidgin English. Pidgin is a basic form of language that emerges as a way for speakers of different native languages to communicate when they don't share a common language (Stanlaw, 2009, pp. 69-70). The impact of American occupation was so substantial that it led to an unmatched influx of loanwords, a trend that continues today. As a result, it is challenging for native Japanese speakers to understand and differentiate between true loanwords and foreign terms. Moreover, this constant influx of American English led the National Institute for Japanese Language to create a committee in 2003 to monitor and manage foreign loanwords, suggesting alternatives for complex or unnecessary English borrowings (Clarke, 2009 in Barjaktarević, 2015, p. 25). Irwin’s (2011, p. 57) provides examples of borrowed terms from this period: プライバシー *puraibashii* (“privacy”), ストレス *sutoresu* (“stress”), セクシー *sekushii* (“sexy”), レジャー *rejaa* (“leisure”), ジャンクフード *jankufuudo* (“junk food”), インセンティブ *insentibu* (“incentive”), カルト *karuto* (“cult”), スポンサー *suponsaa* (“sponsor”), etc.

The extent of a profound impact that English has on Japanese is evident in its alteration not only in vocabulary but grammar, as well. Miura (1979) highlights these grammatical alternations such as syntactical, morphological, and orthographical, which include new affixes, calqued phrases, noun and verb modifiers, relative pronouns, and punctuation marks. Scherling (2013, p. 41) observes that previously unpronounceable sound sequences, such as

/ti, di, fa, fi, fe, fo/, were incorporated into the Japanese phonetic system to accommodate English loanwords. In the last half of a century, this influence has become even greater. However, as Stanlaw (2009, p. 81) points out, despite its significant influence and contrary to what one might expect, English in Japan did not result in a widespread near-native fluency among Japanese speakers. Instead, the influence is reflected in incorporation of English words and newly coined English terms into Japanese through various processes, resulting in phonological and morphological modifications, as well as changes in grammatical and semantic features (Stanlaw, 2009, pp. 81-82). The reason behind this could be as Stanlaw (2009, pp. 16-17) states the English's predominate use in advertising and attracting consumers of all ages, rather than enhancing cultural and linguistic knowledge. However, he emphasizes how this is not the true reason behind English being so widespread in Japan. Despite the compulsory and extensive presence of English in Japan's educational system (Stanlaw, 2009, pp. 16-17), this non-educational and sometimes incorrect utilization of English had led to the creation of a new term. Currently, this term not only describes certain mistakes encountered in daily life but has also come to denote a variant of English commonly used in East Asian countries for known for its many names such as *Engrish*, *Japanglish*, *Japlish*, *etc.* (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 265). As a result, this led to the broader cultural and linguistic issues that we will explore later.

### 3. JAPANESE WRITING SYSTEM

After we have provided a brief review of the history of Japanese language and have browsed through some language contacts it has had over the centuries, in order to understand how English loanwords fit into the Japanese writing systems, it is essential to familiarize ourselves with it. As mentioned before, it consists of four different scripts: Chinese ideograms, known as *kanji*, and two phonetic syllabaries called *hiragana* and *katakana*, which are collectively called *kana*. The fourth one as Tengse and Gakkula (2021, p. 308) mention, referred to as *romaji*, is the Roman alphabet, which utilizes English letters and optionally incorporates phonetic symbols. In the beginning stages of learning the Japanese writing system and reading in Japanese, *romaji* is very helpful, as well as for people who have no knowledge of reading Japanese.

China's cultural influence had a major role in development of the writing systems in Asian countries. According to Coulmas (1989, pp. 111-113), until the 19th century, Classical Chinese works were the foundation of higher education across East Asia. In the beginning, these texts were studied in their original form, and only later translated. Overall, the reason behind China's cultural impact on East Asia was the written content and its role in education, rather than the writing system's ability to be universally understood, which is a common misconception about Chinese writing system being ideographic and language-independent (meaning it could be read in any language) (Coulmas, 1989, pp. 111-113). However, because of the structural differences between Chinese and Japanese, Japanese writing has evolved significantly to form a unique system. The Japanese adaptation of sinograms (*kanji*) was complex. In Chinese, characters typically represent words or meanings while *kanji* in Japanese were used in a way that evolved significantly from their original Chinese forms. Joshi and Aron (2006, p. 483) explain how in Nara period Japanese scholars developed *kunyomi* (訓読み, "meaning reading"), to be able to read Chinese texts with Japanese pronunciation. After this, they created *man'yōgana* (万葉仮名, "syllabary of the *Manyōshū*", an anthology of Japanese poems from the Nara period), which used *kanji* phonetically to write Japanese words, first seen in the early 6th century. Since no standard system existed, authors freely selected *kanji* when they were writing (Joshi and Aron, 2006, p. 483). At the end of the 7th century, grammatical components, such as particles and auxiliaries, were also written using *manyōgana* (Joshi, and Aaron, 2006, p. 483). Since in the beginning, Japanese writing meant using Chinese characters, the early writing system led to the development of *Kanbun*, a style of writing Chinese that was adapted to fit the Japanese syntax and language (Coulmas, 1989, pp. 122-123). Their role was similar to how Latin functioned in Europe as a language of scholarship and religion. However, their usage declined due to practical reasons, favoring simpler characters but it became a base for two syllabic alphabets that are in use today: *hiragana* and *katakana*, known together as *kana*. Both will be explained in the next paragraph. Although the Japanese writing system's development lasted over a thousand years and was independent, in the year 1900 to remove variations it was standardized (Joshi and Aaron, 2006, p. 484). Currently, *kana* includes 46 basic symbols and 25 symbols with diacritics. What makes contemporary Japanese writing system so complex is using a mixed character-*kana* orthography. Here are some examples of orthographic forms in the Japanese language, along with their readings and meanings:



## 1. Kanji

<b>Kanji</b>	<b>Hiragana</b>	<b>Romaji</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
夏	なつ	<i>natsu</i>	summer
秋	あき	<i>aki</i>	autumn
冬	ふゆ	<i>fuyu</i>	winter
手	て	<i>te</i>	hand
体	からだ	<i>karada</i>	body

**Table 1:** Orthographic examples of *kanji* with their reading and meaning

## 2. Hiragana

<b>Hiragana</b>	<b>Romaji</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
やま	<i>yama</i>	mountain
はな	<i>hana</i>	flower
しゃしん	<i>shashin</i>	photograph
はる	<i>haru</i>	spring
くま	<i>kuma</i>	bear

**Table 2:** Orthographic examples of *hiragana* with their reading and meaning

## 3. Katakana

<b>Katakana</b>	<b>Romaji</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
アメリカ	<i>Amerika</i>	America
アナウンサー	<i>anaunsaa</i>	announcer
テレビ	<i>terebi</i>	television
ホテル	<i>hoteru</i>	hotel
バス	<i>basu</i>	bus

**Table 3:** Orthographic examples of *katakana* with their reading and meaning

*Hiragana* and *katakana* both represent the same forty-six syllables, but *hiragana* is recognizable for its rounded shape, while *katakana* characters are more angular and sharper. *Hiragana* is used for Japanese verb inflections and particles, as well as in place of Chinese characters in simple texts like children's books. Whereas *katakana* is primarily used when

writing Western loanwords, non-Japanese names (except Chinese and Korean names), and onomatopoeia. In addition, it is also used for emphasis, similar to italics in English and for names of some plants and animals. *Katakana's* use as a script for loanwords is closely related to the role that loanwords play in written discourse, especially advertising. The sharp-cornered script of *katakana* enhances the eye-catching nature of loanwords (Rebuck, 2002, p. 53-54). Rebuck (2002, p. 54) quotes Fukumitsu (2001) that the reason behind *katakana's* eye-catching nature may be because it is less familiar than *hiragana* in a sense that children learn *hiragana* first, which makes them less "familiar" with *katakana*. Consequently, this unfamiliarity then delivers a loanword with a more significant effect than when using *hiragana* (Rebuck, 2002, p. 54).

Stanlaw (2009, p. 84) notes that with evolution of Japanese through interaction with other languages, in the recent decades mostly with English, new syllabary symbols were created to accommodate these changes. Since Japanese language acts in accordance with a mora-timed phonology, consonant clusters are typically simplified by inserting necessary vowels to achieve mora-timed pronunciation. In other words, the pronunciation of loanwords must be altered to fit the syllabic structure of the Japanese language (Tengse and Gakkula, 2021, p. 309). This was typically achieved by modifying existing syllable symbols with a diacritic- a smaller symbol placed at the bottom right of the original character. To illustrate, in using the sound *f* more frequently in Japanese, the symbol for "fu" (フ) was paired with smaller vowel signs to create symbols like "fa" (フア). This approach has been effective, enabling the integration of numerous new forms into the language (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 85).

While *katakana* allows for the transcription of many loanwords into Japanese, it can actually hinder their full integration. This paradox arises because, although Japanese adopts numerous foreign terms, it doesn't fully assimilate them. As Rebuck (2002, p. 54) quotes Heitani (1993), the clear distinction between loanwords and native Japanese or Chinese-derived words is maintained by the bold lines of *katakana*, preventing the complete integration of these foreign terms. He argues that this is what could likely be the probable reason of the minimal opposition towards loanwords in Japan. In other words, we could say that *katakana* acts as a "silent protector" of the Japanese language (Rebuck, 2002, p. 54). On the other hand, we can argue that this does not apply to every *katakana* word, since some of

them are very integrated. Let's take ミルク *miruku* ("milk") as an example. It is used in everyday conversations, even though there is a Japanese equivalent - 牛乳 (*gyuunyuu*).

#### 4. *GAIRAIGO* (外来語)

As we have determined so far, Japanese has a history of borrowing words from various languages, particularly from English. This process has led to two main types of borrowed words: *gairaigo* (外来語) - a term that encompasses all words coming from foreign languages (other than Chinese), and *wasei-eigo* (和製英語) - Japanese version of English (Tengse and Gakkula, 2021, p. 310). As mentioned, *gairaigo* refers to loanwords borrowed from languages other than Chinese, i.e. Western languages like Portuguese, Dutch, French, and particularly English. As Stanlaw (2009, pp. 12-13) states these terms make up over 10% of Japanese language and they have become an important component of it. The percentage of English loanwords in *gairaigo* is the highest, with the prevalence of 94.1% (Stanlaw, 2009, pp. 12-13). This is apparent since English is widely used, especially by Japan's younger generation as seen in communication and fashion (Meerman and Tamaoka 2009, p. 1). Evidence of this can also be seen in Japanese marketing companies, which actively support this trend of including English phrases in their commercials, products, labels, and clothing. One example of such marketing that Rebeck (2002, p. 59) provides is an advertisement for a women's razor. Given that hair removal is a sensitive topic for many women, the ad's copywriter used loanwords to emphasize femininity in the product and the act of shaving. This ad illustrates how loanwords can positively enhance a product's image. Writing on the ad was:

1. "*derikeeto na o-hada ni yasashii san-maiba*" (デリケートなお肌にやさしい三枚刃)

Translation: "Three blades, gentle on delicate skin"

2. "*onnanoko no bodii you kaeba shiki rezaa*" (女の子のボディー用替え刃式レーザー)

Translation: "The razor for a girl's body with changeable blades"

In the first line, the loanword *derikeeto* (delicate) modifies *hada* (skin), which is made to sound more feminine with addition of the honorific "o." In the second line, *bodii* (body) replaces the Japanese word *karada*, softening the tone as native speakers found *bodii* less explicit. Similarly, *rezaa* (razor) sounds more feminine than the Japanese *kamisori*, typically associated with men's shaving. The slogan in the ad, "*Watashi no tsurutsuru, tsuuru*" (わたしのツルツル、ツール), translates to "My tsuru tsuru tool" (where "*tsuru tsuru*" is onomatopoeia for smooth). Here, ツール *tsuuru* ("tool") is used as a pun, reinforcing the ad's soft tone (Rebuck, 2002, pp. 59-60). English phrases are also common in popular Japanese songs, TV themes, and morning radio broadcasts. However, the meaning of these English words often changes, resulting in *wasei-eigo* that, outside of Japan, does not make sense. This is where the importance of English teachers' job lie in assessing how well Japanese students understand that this Japanized English expressions are incorrect in English-speaking countries, and they have to teach their students proper expressions and comprehension.

In the previous chapter where we introduced the Japanese writing system, we talked about how borrowed words had to undergo some changes to fit in Japanese language and culture, as well. Some of these adaptation processes are phonological changes - the pronunciation of these words is adjusted to fit the Japanese phonetic system, morphological changes - words undergo changes in their form to better integrate with Japanese grammar and syntax, and lastly, semantic changes - the meanings of these loanwords shift to align with Japanese cultural and linguistic contexts (Tengse and Gakkula, 2021, p. 310). In the next few paragraphs, we will provide explanations and examples for all the mentioned processes, except semantic changes since we will deal with them in more detail when explaining *wasei-eigo* separately.

#### 4.1. Phonological changes

As we got familiar with the Japanese writing system, which employs 4 complex orthography systems, we will be focusing on *katakana* here since it is the script used for non-Chinese loanwords. Since using *katakana* means orthographic adaptation, there is also a need for phonetical changes. This adaptation involves two main processes: inserting vowels to separate consonant clusters and substituting sounds that do not exist in Japanese (Scherling,

2013, p. 39). Stanlaw (2009, p. 13) provides a table of the top twenty loanwords (from two registers of Japanese) which are still in use today, and within these we can see and analyze the two phonological changes. The examples are: *nyuusu* ニュース (“news”), *taipu* タイプ (“type”), *supootsu* スポーツ (“sport”), *chiimu* チーム (“team”), *reberu* レベル (“level”), *peeji* ページ (“page”), *pointo* ポイント (“point”), and *saabisu* サービス (“service”). Here we can see notable changes mentioned above. The inability to have consonant clusters in Japanese phonotactics comes from its syllabic structure, which results in vowels being added after the consonant cluster (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 73) as show in examples including *taipu*, *supootsu*, *pointo*. The other necessary change is sound substitution which happens because of the differences between Japanese and English phonemic structure. In Japanese, there are some sounds and sound combinations which are not permissible, like /θ/, distinction between /l/ and /r/, or between voiced /z/ and voiceless /s/. This is when substitution with approximate Japanese sounds happens (Scherling, 2013, p. 41). To illustrate with previously mentioned examples, level becomes *reberu*, team becomes *chiimu*, and service *saabisu*. Another great example of this is the phrase “thank you”, which was integrated into Japanese pronunciation as *sankyuu* (サンキュー), where /θ/ is replaced by /s/ (Scherling, 2013, p. 41).

Stanlaw (2009, pp. 91-92) explains that English loanwords in Japanese can be borrowed either visually or through auditory. Visual borrowing occurs when loanwords are adopted based on their written form in the source language. This happens because much of Japan's interaction with English has historically been, and to some extent still is, through written text, as evidenced by the enduring popularity of the grammar-translation method in Japanese education. In Japanese, when English words are borrowed, they often undergo phonological changes to align with Japanese phonotactics. For instance, the word "news" becomes *nyuusu* ニュース, where the voiced /z/ in English is replaced by a voiceless /s/ sound, and a vowel is added to comply with Japanese phonotactics. Another example is "motto," which is borrowed directly as モットー *mottoo* in Japanese, preserving the double consonant in the spelling. However, unlike in English, the double consonant in Japanese is pronounced with a distinct pause, though it does not correspond to a glottal stop in this example as it might in other languages. This “double” consonant is used sometimes to make

pronunciation easier, as well (Stanlaw 2009, pp. 91-92). Similarly, English words ending in "-age," such as "page," in Japanese becomes ページ *peeji*. This change involves both the elongation of vowels and the insertion of vowels between consonants, again to fit Japanese phonotactic rules. These examples illustrate how the phonological system of Japanese adapts foreign words, often altering them significantly from their original pronunciation to accommodate the sounds and syllable structures that are natural to Japanese speakers. Auditory borrowing happened more frequently in the earlier period of contact between the two languages, i.e. during the Meiji Period (1868-1912) and in the years after WWII. Examples of words borrowed aurally include *purin* (プリン), or “pudding”, 'U-turn' as *yuutaan* (ユーターン), and *sukaato* (スカート) for “skirt”. These were clearly borrowed by ear based on their perceived pronunciation (Stanlaw, 2005, p. 92). Similarly, *kurisumasu* (クリスマス) for “Christmas” drops the /t/ sound as it would be in English (Scherling, 2013, p. 42). Acronyms and abbreviations, as we will see in the next paragraph, are also adapted to Japanese pronunciation like CD, which is pronounced *shiidii* (シーディー).

#### 4.2. Morphological changes

Looking at the morphological level, various processes such as truncation, acronym formation, affixing, and compounding can be observed. To simplify, truncation involves clipping of English loanwords. For instance, abbreviations like *kiro* キロ from “kilometer”, *puro* プロ from “professional”, *reji* レジ from “cash register”, *suupa* スーパー as “supermarket”, *eakon* エアコン for “air conditioner”, and *depaato* デパート from “department store” (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 75). Other examples of abbreviations and acronyms in Japanese include シーエム CM (*shii emu*) which stands for “commercial message”, ユーフォー UFO (*yuufoo*) for “unidentified flying object”, ジェイポップ J-pop (*jee poppu*) for “Japanese popular music”; ジェイラップ J-rap (*jee rappu*) for “Japanese rap music” and ジャル JAL (*jaru*) for “Japan Airlines” (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 75). Compounds and blends are

crucial in adaptation of English loanwords into Japanese, with approximately two-thirds of these loanwords entering the language through compounding, according to Stanlaw (2009, p. 75) quoting Sonoda (1975). Examples of such compounds include: マスコミ *masukomi* (“mass communications”), ボデイコン *bodikon* (“body consciousness”), ワープロ *waapuro* (“word processing”), エンジンストップ *engin-stoppu* (“engine stop”), which is abbreviated as エンスト *ensuto* (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 76). Besides compounds, there is a large quantity of blends, which are words or phrases combined of two words coming from different languages and borrowing the meaning from the donor language (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 34). I will provide some examples of English and Japanese hybrid compounds, since they are languages of primary focus in this thesis. Examples are as follows:

<i>English word + Japanese word</i> <i>Japanese word + English word</i>	<i>Japanese pronunciation</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
nude + shashin (picture)	nuudo shashin	nude picture
denki (electric) + stand	denki sutando	standing electric light
uchuu (space) + rocket	uchuu roketto	space rocket

**Table 4:** Examples of English and Japanese hybrid compounds

Stanlaw (2009, p. 76) notes affixation as another significant method for integrating loanwords into Japanese. This process usually means adding Japanese prefixes and suffixes to loanwords, which can then be combined with a native Japanese words or other loanwords. For example, when affix “-jin” is added to the English word "America" it becomes アメリカ人 *Amerika-jin* (American person/person from America). Other examples that Stanlaw provides include: サービス料 *saabisu-ryou* (“service charge”), ストリップ劇場 *sutorippu gekijou* (“strip show”), アメリカ式 *Amerika-shiki* (“American style”), and アメリカ製 *Amerika-sei* (“made in America”). Besides English loanwords being combined with affixes, they can also serve as them. Stanlaw (2009, p. 76) cites Horiuchi’s dictionary (1999), and

singles out the prefix *wan* (derived from "one") as particularly “productive”. According to the dictionary, there are over a hundred entries where *wan* is used as a prefix, such as ワンピース *wan-piisu* (“one-piece dress”), ワンウェイ *wan-uei* (“one-way street”), and ワンルームマンション *wan-ruumu manshon* (“one-room mansion, or studio apartment”) (Stanlaw, 2009, p. 76). These examples highlight the inventive ways of English loanwords being assimilated into Japanese, not just as independent terms but also as components that help create new expressions.

As shown above, most loanwords in Japanese primarily serve as nouns, but they can also be converted into verbs. This is usually achieved by attaching the verbalizer *する suru* (meaning “to do”) and works in a way similar to the English infinitive marker "to" (Irwin 2011, p. 137). Bucić (2023, p. 23) illustrates verbalization with バイク *baiku* (motorcycle) turning into バイクする *baikusuru*, meaning “to bike”. Another, less common way of verbalization that Irwin (2011, p. 138) mentions is adding the native suffix “-ru” to either the full or shortened version of a loanword. Bucić (2023, p. 23) notes that this later method transforms the new word to a native Japanese verb, in grammatical sense and provides some examples:

<i>Original English word</i>	<i>English word with suffix -ru</i>	<i>Japanese verb</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
mistake	misuteeku + ru	misuru	to make a mistake
harmony	haamonii + ru	hamoru	to harmonize
memo(random)	memo/ramamu) + ru	memoru	to make a note
McDonald's	Makudonarudo + ru	makuru	to eat at McDonald's

**Table 5:** Examples of verbalization in English loanword nouns

Even though most loanwords function as nouns, there is also a process of adjectivizations. Two types of adjectives exist in Japanese language, with English loanwords appearing in both, though unevenly. The first type includes “na-adjectives”, which are nouns that become attributive with the particle *な na*. (Irwin 2011, p. 139). For instance, パワフル



*pawafuru* (“powerful”), キュート *kyuuto* (“cute”), エロチック *erochikku* (“erotic”), グロテスク *gurotesuku* (“grotesque”), and ウエット *uetto* (“wet2”). In comparison, a number of the second type, true adjectives (“i-adjectives”), is much smaller. They are formed by attaching the suffix *-i* which signifies non-past tense and other conjugations (Irwin 2011, p. 139). Irwin (2011, p. 139) provides examples which include ナウい *nauī*, ピンクい *pinkui* and エロい *eroi* derived from “now,” “pink,” and “erotic”.

## 5. WASEI-EIGO (和製英語)

To be precise *wasei-eigo* is a form of pseudo-anglicism, where words or phrases are created by combining English terms or modifying them in ways that are not used in native English contexts, therefore we cannot call them “true” loanwords (*gairaigo*) (Miller, 1997, p. 123-124). In other words, English words coined in Japan. Srdanović and Špica (2022., p. 133) explain the reason behind its origin in the Japanese language was the need to explain certain social concepts. They also note that these pseudo-anglicist terms consist of elements, morphemes, or words borrowed from English, but they as a whole are not considered borrowings. Looking only at the *kanji* characters used in the term it can be directly translated as “English words made (or produced) in Japan”, since *eigo* (英語) means “English” and *wasei* (和製) means “produced/made in Japan.” However, more specifically, the term refers to Japanese vocabulary created from English words or morphemes using *katakana* (Duc, 2012, p. 39), resulting in another native term *katakana eigo* (Miller, 1997, p. 124). Despite its strong connection to English, we must keep in mind that the meanings of these words have been altered from their original English meanings, and as stated before it would be difficult for native English speakers to presume their meanings.

Widely known as *Japanglish*, according to Miller (1997, p. 123) this pseudo loanwords have been the center of debate for a long time, debating on whether they represent “a type of pollution of the native language” or a distortion of English. Even the traditional studies on language contact are not very helpful in understanding the numerous English neologisms found in modern Japan (Miller, 1997, p. 123.) So far, we have seen that Japanese language

includes a vast number of English loanwords and neologisms known as *wasei-eigo*, which contribute to the significant growth of this foreign-derived modern vocabulary. But one may wonder why English, why is it so popular and why its trajectory is still growing. Meerman and Tamaoka (2009, p. 4) explain that English sounds “exotic” to native Japanese speakers just like clothing with *kanji* characters and tattoos seem the same way to many Westerners. They argue this is the reason behind Japanese society’s attraction to English words and phrases, although its primary appeal is of aesthetic nature. Despite its popularity, the widespread use of *wasei-eigo* in Japanese society causes negative responses. On the other hand, it merges different aspects of familiar English words to form new expressions that seem English-like but are often unrecognizable, amusing, or strangely odd to native English speakers (Meerman and Tamaoka 2009, p. 4). This is, in my opinion, what makes it an intriguing linguistic and cultural phenomenon.

There is also a debate over whether certain changes, like clipped versions of English words or phrases adapted into Japanese, should be considered as loanwords. These versions are often unrecognizable when borrowed back into English, but they pose a challenge to the definition of *wasei-eigo*. According to Þórdísarson (2016, p. 23), its broadest definition includes all such morphed words, as they need to be expanded to make sense in English. I would agree with to Þórdísarson’s view that *wasei-eigo* should refer to “words or phrases that have no meaning in English and can be unintelligible at a glance to non - Japanese”. Furthermore, trying to distinguish the difference between Japanized English and other English loanwords is not an easy task. As Miller (1997, p. 124) highlights, misclassifying words as *wasei-eigo* can occur if one is unaware that a similar term exists in some specialized English jargon or dialect. She provides the following examples: キャッチフレーズ *kyatchi fureezu* "catch phrase", which was also used in American advertising, and リベート *ribeeto* "rebate," meaning kickbacks, similarly used in the American heart pacemaker industry. Another major issue, she adds, is that nearly all English words are intentionally selected when incorporated into Japanese (Miller, 1997, p. 124). In order to understand its complexity, in the following paragraphs we will explain semantic changes it undergoes and provide numerous examples of changed meaning in these seemingly English words.

## 5.1 Semantic changes

Bucić (2023, p. 25) quotes Scherling's work (2012) on semantic change, where he defines it as the evolution of a word's meaning over time to suit the needs of its speakers. Scherling identifies three primary processes in this context for English loanwords: semantic restriction, semantic extension, and semantic shift. Semantic restriction refers to a word which has multiple meanings in the original language but only has one in the new language. In contrast, semantic extension involves loanwords gaining additional meanings in the language it is adopted to. On the other hand, semantic shift is a more subtle change, where the meaning of a word gradually changes as it transitions from one language to another (Bucić, 2023, p. 25). Irwin states (2011, p. 154) that out of these three, restriction and extension are the most frequent types in the borrowing process. To better understand all three, let's take a look at some examples Bucić (2023, p. 25) provides:

### A) Extension:

English loanword: *saabisu* (service) → free item or gift, extra service  
*handoru* (handle (N)) → steering wheel

### B) Restriction:

English loanword: *raisu* (rice) → rice served on a plate  
*guddzu* (goods) → promotional item

### C) Shift:

English loanword: *bodiikonshansu* (body conscious) → tight-fitting (clothing)  
*kanningu* (cunning) → cheating (on an exam)

All of them contribute to the formation of *wasei-eigo*, which are unique Japanese expressions with meanings that significantly diverge from their original language counterparts. Its uniqueness lies in combination of Japanese and English words, resulting in new terms with meanings derived from both languages. These coined terms are not mere English loanwords but rather hybrids that have evolved over many years of borrowing. Þórdísarson (2016, p. 23) points out that Japanese lacks immediate context and connection when borrowing from English, which is a contrast to European languages that share similar lexical and cultural background with it. Because of this, Þórdísarson adds that the original meanings of the words often become secondary, and the focus shifts to the image or impression the word creates within the Japanese language. Although this can lead to misunderstandings, its growing use is unavoidable.

## 5.2. English + English

*Wasei-eigo* often combines two English words to create new expressions or concepts. These words are used in various contexts, including technology, social interactions, and products. Some of the outdated examples for this type of combinations are: ロマンズグレイ *romansu guree* (“romance grey”) with meaning referring to a middle-aged lover, アイスキャンデー *aisu kyande* (“ice candy”) for a popsicle, シンボルマーク *shinboru maaku* (“symbol mark”) for a company logo. With technology improvements and its use in everyday life, a lot of newer terms are connected to it. For example, フリーダイヤル *furii daiyaru* (“free dial”) for a toll-free call, キャッチホン *kyacchi hon* (“catch phone”) for call waiting, and プッシュホン *pusshu hon* (“push phone”) for touch tone telephone (Miller, 1997, p. 125). Some of the examples using only English words, for which we could guess approximate meaning, are シェイプパンツ *sheipu pantsu* (“shape pants”) referring to tight shorts, フィットネスウォーキング *fittonesu wooringu* (“fitness walking”) with a meaning of walking to keep fit (Duc, 2012, p. 41), ナイター *naita* (“nighter”) referring to a night game in sports, and ガソリンスタンド *gasorinsutando* (“gasoline stand”) referring to gas station (Þórdísarson, 2016, p. 23.). Furthermore, new modern combinations include terms like エコグッズ *eko guzzu* (“ecological goods”) for recyclable items, ホームパーティー *hoomu paati* (“home party”) for hosting gatherings at home, and マネートーク *mane toku* (“money talk”) for bribery (Duc, 2012, p. 41). The most typical method in combining the two words as Duc (2012, p. 42) states, involves taking the initial two moras from both words and merging them to create a new, single word, and it often involves abbreviation, as well. To illustrate he uses the following examples: デコトラ *deko tora*, contraction of デコラティブトラック *dekoratibu torakku* (decorative truck), セクハラ *seku hara*, from セクシャルハラスメント *sekushuaru harasumento* (sexual harassment), パソコン *pasokon* from パーソナルコンピュータ *paasonaru konpyuuta* (personal computer) referring to a laptop (Duc, 2012, p. 42).

Besides, technology and various things, Miller (1997, p. 125) notes that there are *wasei-eigo* terms that reference people. For example, バイリンギヤル *bairin gyaru* (“bilingual girl”) refers to a young woman fluent in a foreign language, ゴシップメーカー *goshippu meka* (“gossip maker”) denotes someone who spreads rumors, シンデレラボーイ *shinderera boi* (“Cinderella boy”) is for someone who gains fame overnight. Additionally, Miller adds some derogatory terms of women who do not follow societal norms exist, as well: セブンイレブン *sebun irebun* (“7-11”) implying a woman who is always available for sex and イエロータクシー *ieroo takushii* (“yellow taxi”) for Japanese women who seek relationships with foreigners. While some meanings can be perplexing, some are easier to deduce. Remembering the example of ハンドル *handoru* (“handle”), which literal meaning is “steering wheel”, it is safe to say that we could conclude the meaning of ハンドルキーパー *handoru kiipaa* (handle keeper), i.e. in English designated driver. While “handle” is a proper word in English, it would not be used in the same context in both languages. To clarify, English native speakers would not say “keep both hands on the handle” (Gollin, 2013, p. 16).

### 5.3. English + Japanese

There are numerous hybrid combinations of *wasei-eigo* terms using Japanese and English morphemes like エネルギー源 *enerugiigen* (“energy source”). Miller (1997, p. 126) notes that some of these blends can be seen in the business world, such as バブル経済 *baburu keizai* (“bubble economics”) for Japan's hollow 1980s economy; エリート社員 *eriito shain* (“elite worker”) for a white-collar worker; and アポなし *aponashi* (“appointment not”) for “without an appointment.” Other well-established blends include ブランド商品 *burando shouhin* (“brand goods”), referring to brand-name goods ミニ住宅 *mini jutaku* (“mini housing”) for compact housing; ミニ解説 *mini kaisetsu* (“mini explanation”) for brief

explanation. Newer blends include クールコン的 *kurukon-teki* (“cool conservative-like”) for a fashion trend, トリム運動 *torimu undou* (“trim exercise”) for weight-reduction exercises, 失恋シンドローム *shitsu-ren shindoroomu* (“unrequited love syndrome”) for romantic relationship problems, 行動パターン *koudou pataan* (“action pattern”) for repetitive movements and クッション言葉 *kusshon kotoba* (“cushion words”) for socially lubricating expressions (Miller, 1997, p. 126). The following table shows some more creative examples:

Wasei Eigo	Romaji / Reading	Composition of Words	Meaning
省エネ	<i>shoene</i>	省(kanji representing energy) + <b>energy</b>	energy-saving
ガス欠	<i>gasuketsu</i>	<b>gas</b> + 欠 (Kanji that represents “lack”)	running out of gasoline (petrol)
懐メロ	<i>natsumero</i>	懐 (Kanji that represents “nostalgic”) + <b>melody</b>	nostalgic song / all-time favorite song
ドタキャン	<i>dotakyan</i>	土壇場 ( <i>dotanba</i> ), meaning “last moment” + <b>cancel</b> lation	cancellation at the last moment
イタ飯	<i>itameshi</i>	<b>Italian</b> + 飯 (meal/food)	Italian food

**Table 6:** Wasei-eigo examples (Source: JapanesePod101(2021). Available at: <https://www.japanesepod101.com/blog/2021/05/13/english-loanwords-in-japanese/#3>)

Muller also notes that blends referring to different types of individuals are always popular. The term 教育ママ *kyouiku mama*, meaning “education-obsessed mom”, has been in use since at least the 1960s. More recent terms include オヤジギャル *oyaji gyaru*, meaning “daddy girl”, symbolizing young women trying to infiltrate into men's spheres, オバタリア

ノ *obatarian*, a blend of *obasan* (“middle-aged lady”) and *battalion*, describing women who are as tough as monsters, ガイタレ *gaitare*, a shortened form of 外人タレント *gaijin tarento* (“foreign talent”), for non-Japanese celebrities, and 日本人プラス *nihonjin purasu* (“Japanese plus”) for those who have returned from abroad, bringing international experience with them (Miller, 1997, p. 126). タレント *Tarento* “talent” is another easy-to-understand *wasei-eigo* term, meaning “celebrity”.

#### 5.4. Intriguing *wasei-eigo* lexems

With a great number of English loanwords in Japanese, comes a great number of amusing and interesting, sometimes even baffling examples, as well. In this paragraph, I will try to provide many examples, starting with loanwords which meanings are not as confusing to the surprising ones. Examples of easily understood lexemes that include abbreviation and are blends are: デジカメ *dejikame* (digital + camera) and カーナビ *kaanabi* (car + navigation) (Tengse and Gakkula, 2021, p. 310). Following examples will refer to terms whose meanings have undergone certain changes, expansions or restrictions in their meanings compared to their original terms. Stanlaw (2009, p. 41) provides a questioner with numerous examples of *wasei-eigo* with their meanings. For instance, the adjective ウエット *uetto* (wet), actually refers to a person who is overly sentimental. Its opposite is ドライ *dorai* (dry), which you guessed it, does not mean “moisture-free”. This term can describe a detached, businesslike person or attitude (Miura 1979, cited in Gollin, 2013, p. 17.). There are more examples that expand the original meaning of the terms borrowed, such as ナイーブ *naiibu* (naive), which can have the same meaning as its English source “naïve,” but it can also mean emotionally sensitive, uncomplicated, or unpretentious, according to the dictionary Jisho.org. Unlike the extensive English definition of “naïve,” センス *sensu* (“sense”) in Japanese has a much narrower definition, referring specifically to “good taste” (for music, style, tact, etc.). In Japanese, ドライブ *doraibu* (“drive”) refers to a “short pleasure trip by car” and is not used to denote the act of driving or to ask if someone can drive (Miura 1979, cited in Gollin, 2013,

p. 17). A term for a handout or a flyer in Japanese is プリント *purinto* (“print”) not as one might expect it to be “handauto” or “furaiyaa” (Gollin, 2013, p. 18). The exact reasoning for this term, as with many more, is not entirely known.

Next examples could lead to slight confusion when used in English: *konsento* コンセント, meaning “electrical outlet”, derived from the English term concentric plug, and *gattsupoozu* ガッツポーズ, meaning “fist pump”, derived from the English term guts pose (Pórdísarson, 2016, p. 23). When thinking of this pose, brightly lit landmark of *Glico Man* in Osaka and tourists copying this pose while taking pictures in front of it comes to mind. If you ever find yourself in Osaka, in front of the sign, do not hesitate and take advantage of シャッターチャンス *shattaa chansu* (“shutter chance”), in other words an opportunity for a photo (Miller, 1997, p. 127). Miller provides some more examples of *wasei-eigo* terms which are constructed with the word “chance”: アタックチャンス *ataku chansu* (“attack chance”, a chance to meet someone of the opposite sex), and ラブチャンス *rabu chansu* (“love chance”, marking an opportunity for romance). In Stanlaw’s questionnaire (2009, pp. 39-41) I would highlight these examples as mildly confusing: ベテラン *beteran* (“veteran”) which signifies a professional or an expert, ベビーカー *bebii kaa* (“baby car”) which’s direct translation is a stroller (American English) or pram (British English), and バージンロード *baajin roodo* (“virgin road”) referring to the aisle on which bride walks down in a church.

Whereas former examples could be easily understood when given a little bit of explanation and context, the following examples will be of those whose meanings change entirely when translated back into English. For instance, Pórdísarson (2016, p. 23) includes following examples; derived from the word “guarantee”- ギャラ *gyara*, which refers to a performance fee for artists in Japanese and クランクアップ *kurankuappu* (“crank up”) which refers to the end of film shooting. This significant semantic narrowing can cause major confusion. One of the examples I use when explaining the theme and meaning of my thesis is ペーパードライバー *peepaadoraibaa* (“paper driver”), a term that Stanlaw (2009, p. 42)



defines as a person who possesses a license but gets behind the wheel only seldomly. Again, taking examples from Stanlaw's questionnaire (2009, pp. 39-41), following terms could be categorized as confusing: スクランブル交差点 *sukuranburu kousaten* ("scrambled intersection") which describes an intersection crowded with pedestrians moving in all directions, a term used even in official documents and appears in written driving test questions, and ロンパリ *ron-pari* ("London Paris") refers to being cross-eyed. To explain further "London Paris" reference, someone who directs their right eye toward Paris and their left eye toward London will inevitably have eye issues. This is why a cross-eyed or squinting individual is sometimes referred to as ロンパリ *ron-pari* (Stanlaw, 2009, pp. 39).

One reason for this confusion might be that loanwords are often used when native terms feel too blunt, carry negative associations, or touch on taboo subjects. This is especially true in areas like sex and personal hygiene, where loanwords frequently serve as euphemisms. An example of this is the word *herusu* ヘルス ("health"), when combined with *deribarii* デリバリー ("delivery") forms *deribari herusu* (デリバリーヘルス; "delivery" + "health"), which indicates the delivery of sexually oriented massage to private locations (Rebuck, 2002, p. 61). Similarly, the loanword *pinku* ("pink") is widely used in Japanese to describe anything with sexual connotations. Examples include, *pinku saron* ("pink salon") for clubs offering sexual services, and *pinku eiga* ("pink movies") for pornographic films (Miller, 1997, p. 127). Regarding hygiene and delicate products, the advertising example of "lady razor" given in *Gairaigo* chapter (p. 11), can also be examined through this euphemistic perspective. Furthermore, Rebuck (2002, p. 61) notes that companies often use loanwords to create ambiguous product names, such as a drink for relieving constipation named *kuria* ("clear"). As expressed previously, euphemisms frequently appear with advertising in the health and beauty sectors, with the likely reason as Rebuck states, which is tactfulness. It is more crucial in these aspects of life, and perhaps because Japanese culture and people are often described as more indirect and shy. Moreover, euphemistic use of loanwords extends to various contexts, often with the aim of making certain terms sound more appealing or less harsh. Rebuck (2002, p. 62) gives an example that a job listing might employ *kurinnesutaffu* ("cleanness

+ staff”) instead of the more direct 掃除夫 *soujifu* (“cleaner”). Similarly, numerous authors show how loan companies favor terms like *kaado roon* (カードローン, "card loan") or *kyasshingu* (キャッシング, "cashing") over *shakkin* (借金) to make borrowing seem more acceptable since social stigma surrounds this Japanese word (Rebuck, 2002, pp. 61-62; Tengse and Gakkula, 2021, p. 313). While these euphemisms can be helpful when discussing sensitive or uncomfortable topics, they can also be misleading, as they often mask the true nature of the terms, making them seem less daunting. In both Japanese and English, euphemisms are often used to soften harsh realities. Let’s take an English phrase "between jobs" as an example. This phrase is a gentler way of saying "jobless". Similarly, in Japanese, the blend ジョブハンティング中 *jobu-hantingu-chuu* is a softer version of "I’m now looking for a job." (Tengse and Gakkula, 2021, p. 313).

As shown above, the extensive incorporation of English loanwords into Japanese results in numerous intriguing examples. To make their way into Japanese language, loanwords have to undergo certain changes, like expansion, or restriction, which we elaborated in this chapter. This leads to their unique interpretations, which can sometimes be perplexing. These terms are frequently used as euphemisms to soften harsh realities or make certain terms more appealing to the public. Their intentional use in advertisements highlights the cultural preferences of Japanese people for subtlety and indirectness. This practice of borrowing and coining new terms not only reflects the nuances of Japanese society but also demonstrates how language evolves. Moreover, studying these loanwords, including *gairaigo* and *wasei-eigo*, shows how a language adapts to social needs and constantly changes over time.

## 6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the phenomenon known as *wasei-eigo*, or more commonly known as *Japanglish*, is providing us with an interesting perspective on the language contact between Japanese and English. This thesis briefly covered their interaction over many years, which began with Japan's encounters with West in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and had the most significance during the Meiji Restoration period and after The Second World War. Even if the line between *gairaigo*, whose terms are considered "true" loanwords, and *wasei-eigo* considered as "false" loanwords, is hard to establish, and it is still debated on to this day, it is agreeably a unique creation. Moreover, it is safe to say that it is a reflection of the country's efforts to modernize and incorporate foreign ideas into its own culture and language. Throughout numerous examples given of these hybrid terms it is evident how English has transformed to fit into Japanese, undergoing many types of linguistic changes which were mentioned and explained. As shown before, *wasei-eigo* can sometimes be misleading when trying to figure out the meaning behind it, especially for native English speakers<sup>1</sup>, but at the same time it adds depth and cultural nuances which are without a doubt distinctly Japanese.

Overall, its continued use in everyday conversations and development highlights the strong, lasting impact that English language has in Japan. Furthermore, it points out how linguistic innovation can come from cultural exchange. This thesis underscores the importance of understanding a phenomenon like this, which is not interesting only to linguists but also to those who are interested in how cultures adapt in our globalized world.

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<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon can be particularly confusing for English native speakers who encounter familiar elements from their mother tongue but find them used in ways that feel unnatural or even counterintuitive, which can ultimately lead to misunderstanding, rather than facilitating comprehension.

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## SUMMARY

This thesis examines *wasei-eigo*, a distinctive blend of English and Japanese that straddles the line between loanwords and newly coined terms. To provide a closer explanation of this phenomenon, the thesis begins with an overview of the history of how foreign words, with an emphasis on English, have been absorbed into the Japanese language, reflecting cultural changes in Japan. Throughout the integration of English into Japanese, this interesting phenomenon creates English-like terms which can be puzzling to native English speakers. The thesis also explains the difference between *wasei-eigo* and *gairaigo* (“true” loanwords), with a focus on the changes these terms underwent to adapt into the Japanese language, such as phonological, morphological, and semantic changes. The thesis gives numerous examples of both types of loanwords and highlights the extensive influence of English as a global language, while also showcasing the richness and cultural uniqueness of Japanese language and its development over time.

Ultimately, the study emphasizes that *wasei-eigo* is more than just a linguistic phenomenon; it is a significant cultural marker that illustrates Japan’s unique way of blending foreign influences into its own language and society.

**Key words:** *wasei-eigo*, *gairaigo*, language contact, loanwords, pseudo-anglicisms



## SAŽETAK

Ovaj završni rad proučava fenomen nazvan *wasei-eigo*, tj. specifičnu mješavinu engleskog i japanskog jezika koja se nalazi na granici između posuđenica i novotvorenica. Kako bi pobliže objasnili taj fenomen, rad počinje s pregledom povijesti kako su strane riječi, s posebnim naglaskom na engleski jezik, bile apsorbirane u japanski jezik, odražavajući kulturne promjene u Japanu. Kroz integraciju engleskog jezika u japanski, ovaj zanimljiv fenomen stvara izraze nalik engleskim, koji mogu biti zbunjujući za izvorne govornike engleskog jezika. Rad također objašnjava razliku između pojmova *wasei-eigo* i *gairaigo* ("pravih" posuđenica), s naglaskom na promjene koje su ti izrazi prošli kako bi se prilagodili japanskom jeziku, a neke od njih su fonološke, morfološke i semantičke promjene. Rad sadrži brojne primjere oba tipa posuđenica i ističe opsežan utjecaj engleskog jezika kao globalnog, dok ujedno prikazuje bogatstvo i kulturnu jedinstvenost japanskog jezika i njegov razvoj kroz vrijeme.

Na kraju, rad naglašava da *wasei-eigo* nije samo lingvistički fenomen, već i značajan kulturni pokazatelj koji ilustrira jedinstven način na koji Japan uklapa strane utjecaje u vlastiti jezik i društvo.

**Ključne riječi:** *wasei-eigo*, *gairaigo*, jezični kontakt, posuđenice, pseudo-anglicizmi