

Impact of globalization on Japanese language and culture

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Preamble

Globalization 世界化 leaves no stone unturned. As current globalization seems to demand comprehensive transformation of a society, its impact on language and culture can be detected in every facet of life. The global economy has been influencing traditional values and ways of thinking for a long time. The concept of the global village has changed the outlook of future society. In Japan, 'internationalization' 国際化 has been a powerful slogan promoted by the government and supported by society, without much in-depth scrutiny as to what it actually entails, who is pushing this process, for whom, what constitutes internationalization, or whose values are being advocated. Observing the ongoing process of the formation of the EU, it appears that main stream cultures, such as French and German may remain dominant; but many fear that the remaining cultures might be marginalized in the end. For Japan and many other nations, globalization is equated with North Americanization. When one looks at the rampant use of English loan words in Japanese, for example, it is almost impossible to live in Japan without knowing English. This process of internationalization has proceeded at the expense of a loss of Japanese culture and identity among young people. Japan can be said to be witnessing the marginalization 周縁化 of Japanese culture in the name of globalization. The main objective of this paper is to identify recent phenomena that reveal some deep-rooted changes in Japanese culture and language in that context.

I. Impact on culture and society

If the term globalization is used to refer to phenomena that involve sweeping and comprehensive changes across the world, then, needless to say, globalization is not a new concept. The whole world, and human beings, have been experiencing globalization since ancient times. Human history can be perceived as the process of globalization from its inception. The Roman Empire globalized its values within its own world. Modernization and industrialization based on the industrial revolution have clearly been globalization processes, although they have not yet reached every part of the world. Throughout history, many cultures and races have been destroyed or forced to change by other cultures and races. Until recently, however, many other countries and races have been able to maintain their cultural and racial identities, more or less protected by borders. Ironically, the cold war situation prevented the world from joining together, although in both the communist and capitalist camps, the globalization process was proceeding. The end of the cold war era coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union and opened the floodgates of globalization; the demand for a global economy has accelerated the process. It should be noted, however, that people's earnest desire for permanent world peace has also been a driving force. Geographically, in the western world, globalization has reached the stage where national boundaries might disappear very quickly; at the same time many nations are still resisting pressure to conform to the western style of globalization. The current conflicts involving the Islamic nations, at least partially, stem from the Islamic world's rejection of the western globalization process.

Japan's modernization process can be viewed as a globalization process as well. Japan's adoption of European imperialism resulted in total devastation of both the country and many traditional values. Following World War II, Japan adopted some North American values. There have been quite a few alarmists who warned Japanese that Japanese culture has been jeopardized very seriously by the Western culture; but the globalization force seems unmatched by internal protest.

As mentioned earlier, globalization has been an on-going process in the modern world. Various attempts have been made to halt the process by invoking traditional religious values, and keeping people uninformed and uneducated. The explosion of mass-communication, world trade and tourism

led the way to globalization; now the IT revolution アイティー革命 has made almost every kind of information accessible from anywhere in the world. Languages were the major obstacles against globalization, but as English has become an international language both in the real world and the world of virtual reality, the last hurdle has been almost cleared. Now the stage is set.

When one views various changes and new phenomena observed in Japan in this context, it becomes clear how fast and how deeply the globalization process has permeated Japanese society. The following are some recent cases which may have serious impact on culture and society.

1. Judicial system reform

Prime Minister Koizumi's cabinet is planning to embark on reform of the judicial system 司法改革. Recent recommendation for drastic reform of the judicial system may change the culture of harmony, (which is non-confrontational and consensus-seeking, relying on out-of-court settlements) into a culture of 'sue-for-all', a similar judicial system observed in North America. A Japanese style jury system 裁判員制度 is proposed to introduce peoples' participation in the judicial process, although how much power should be given to jurors is still under debate. Another recommendation is to pass a huge number of law school students through the bar exam every year to accommodate the needs anticipated by these changes. One seriously wonders if the general public has been informed of the pros and cons of the North American judicial system.

2. Empowerment, accountability, informed consent

Empowerment of various groups, including women, the physically and mentally challenged, homosexuals, and racial groups, can be viewed as one of the globalization phenomena. The concept of accountability アカウンタビリティー has helped to introduce syllabi シラバス and students evaluations 授業評価 at many universities. As a corollary, the concept of informed consent インフォームド・コンセント was introduced to hold medical doctors accountable for disclosing medical information to discuss with patients.

3. Psychological analysis

Healing *iyashi* 癒し was probably introduced from North America and Europe. The so-called 'healing' boom 癒しブーム appears to be spreading quietly and widely in Japan. In order to alleviate work-related stresses ストレス解消, 'healing music' 癒し系音楽 and CD's are very popular. 'Aroma-therapy' アロマ・セラピー clinics can be found even at least expected locations. The slogan 'Let's take a day off on weekdays' 平日に休もう has been winning popularity among workers. This is counter to the traditional work ethic of Japanese workers.

A Japanese psycho-therapist on TV was giving advice to a wife whose husband was alcoholic, using the term 'co-dependency' 共依存. A traditional Japanese wife who has been devoting her life to helping her alcoholic husband at all cost, is deemed to be codependent, which further contributes to a negative outcome in dealing with her husband's alcoholism – 'codependency syndrome' 共依存症候群. It is well known in North America that women who stay home and do everything for their husband are in fact 'enablers' and codependent because their devotion makes the husband feel more guilty, he drinks more, she tries harder. The woman also needs the husband to do that to feel fulfilled and absolve herself of guilt. Here, a traditionally ideal model wife, self-sacrificing and ever giving and devoting, is criticized and told to let go of the husband. This is a major challenge to many wives and mothers who have been taught that unlimited selfless love would eventually help troubled husbands and youths.

4. Aging, fixed contribution pension, portability of pension and tax reform

It is not too difficult to figure out why portability of pension 年金のポータビリティ is at issue in the age of globalization. Aging 高齢化 is one of the main concerns for Japan. A new pension scheme, fixed contribution pension system 確定拠出年金制度 has been introduced to increase members' control over investment in the pension scheme. Tax reform 税制改革, which involves a major shift from an automatic tax deduction system 源泉徴収制度 to one of filing a tax return 確定申告制度, will have a major impact not only on the taxation system, but also on people's concept of taxation.

5. Japan as a multi-cultural and multi-racial nation

Anticipating a situation where more non-Japanese residents decide to stay in Japan on a permanent basis 外国人定住化の時代, some scholars are proposing a new vision for the future of Japan 'multicultural and multi-racial Japan' 多文化・多民族国家日本. One wonders which model Japan would pursue between 'melting pot' and 'mosaic'.

6. Impact on education

One of the interesting projects the Japanese government has been supporting is the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program for internationalization. Junior and senior high school students all over Japan are exposed to non-Japanese cultures at earlier stages of their life, and are encouraged to emulate their new role models. It has been reported that students have become less shy and more communicative in general. The presence of so many non-Japanese people forces Japanese people to re-examine traditional values and relationships.

7. Later marriage age 晩婚化, fewer children 少子化 and divorce rate 離婚率、シングルファーザー

8. Political correctness 政治的正しさ

9. Restructuring 構造改革, salary reduction 減給, unemployment 失業率 and homeless ホームレス

10. Asian Free Trade Zone – China, Korea and ASEAN

11. Power sharing

Recently, the governors of three prefectures have formed an alliance to increase self-governing power for local governments. They seem to aim for a federal-provincial governments model. 'Governance' is another buzzword used by certain politicians. This can be considered as a means for sustainability.

II. Impact on language

1. Sociolinguistic and pragmatic changes

In Ota (2000), several sociolinguistic and pragmatic changes were discussed in relation to language teaching. A shift toward English types of communication strategies can be detected easily.

1) Confrontational and aggressive approach

Confrontational approach in debate can be observed much more frequently in public. I personally witnessed a row between two ordinary looking men at a train station during the rush hour. If a station employee had not intervened, there would have been a scuffle for sure. The new term *kireru* 'lose it' きれる is so frequently used to describe sudden emotional rage, which is seen more frequently in North America. Politicians, particularly in the conservative camp, exhibit very aggressive attitudes and strategies. The values of being indirect, less confrontational, and modest are seriously challenged.

2) From agreement-seeking to agreement-demanding

~*ja nai desu ka* ~じゃないですか ‘I assume you agree’ has become one of the dominant structures in conversation, which reflects a deep-seated change in the socio- and psycho-linguistic domains. A parallel phenomenon between English and Japanese, observed particularly in women’s speech, is the use of rising intonation at the end of a mid-sentence phrase, is also a strategy to demand agreement from the listener.

3) Other changes in communication strategies

English style communication strategies seem to overshadow some of the traditional Japanese strategies. In Ota (1995), the following were given as salient characteristics of the English language, but the Japanese language appears to get closer to English on each spectrum.

Direct
Aggressive
Assertive
Provocative
Confrontational
Challenging
Competitive
Egalitarian [Gender equal, Rank equal]
Argumentative
Self-righteous
Non-apologetic

4) New usage in idiomaticity

Idiomaticity is one of the areas which decay fast under the influence of another language. The following examples exhibit how fast this process is taking place in Japanese.

a. mongon 文言 ‘statement’

An old expression has made a comeback to refer to ‘statement’.

b. hanzai ga okonawareta 犯罪が行われた
‘a crime was committed’

Due to the fact that *hanzai o okasu* 犯罪を犯す ‘commit a crime’ cannot be made passive, and *okasu* also means ‘to rape’, *okonau* 行う ‘carry out’ replaces it (politically correct?).

c. denchuu to shoototsu 電柱と衝突 ‘a crash into an electric pole’

When the object is stationary, the particle *ni* is traditionally used, but that distinction is neutralized. In English this distinction does not exist.

d. boosozoku ga tsudou chuushajoo 暴走族が集う駐車場
‘a parking lot where motorcycle gangs gather’

Tsudou ‘gather’ is traditionally used for a happy gathering.

e. Shashin o totta mikka-mae ni Osore-san ni itta 写真をとった三日前に恐れ山に行った
‘He went to Mt. Osore, three days before the photo was taken.’

A case of tense over aspect. *Mae* 前 ‘before’ requires imperfective *-ru* in Japanese, but the English type of tense agreement is applied here..

f. saikin toku ni ninki ni natte 最近特に人気になって ‘recently (it) got particularly popular’
Influence of the English word ‘popular’ has changed a noun *ninki* into an adjectival noun.

Not all the examples may not be the results of any specific language influence, but there seems some universal force working behind them including political correctness, equity, egalitarianism, and relativism. This area needs further investigation.

2. Loan words

Use of foreign loan words in Japanese has been criticized for a long time, but it has been inevitable since Kanji has lost its creativity in transcribing loan words in Japanese. Japan has become a country in which one can no longer lead a normal life without a certain amount of knowledge of the English language, not to mention those ‘Japan-glish’ words. Being exposed to a barrage of loan words, the older generation of people must be having an extremely hard time in understanding Japanese these days. Several examples will be sufficient to show this point.

A. Loan words combined with Sino-Japanese words

fuurigan-taisaku	フーリガン対策	‘(anti-)hooligan measures’
puremia-shishakai	プレミア試写会	‘exclusive preview’
hiroo-paatii	披露パーティー	‘wedding reception (party)’
satsueejo-kengaku-tsuaa	撮影所見学ツアー	‘studio (sightseeing) tour’
seegi no hiirou	正義のヒーロー	‘champion (hero) of justice’
shinsee Sogoo sutaato	新生そごうスタート	‘newly born Sogo’s opening (start)’
joogai de batoru kaishi	場外でバトル開始	‘a battle began outside the ground’
suteeji-puran-kettee	ステージプラン決定	‘a stage plan is decided’
sekai-issuu e teiku-ofu	世界一周へテイクオフ	‘taking off to a world tour’
koosokudooro-dai-kurasshu	高速道路大クラッシュ	‘a big crash on a freeway’
resukyuu-tai	レスキュー隊	‘rescue team’
honne-tooku	本音トーク	‘heart-to-heart talk’
uetto-men	ウエット面	‘wet surface’
sanso-pawaa	酸素パワー	‘oxygen power’
konfed-hai de toraburu	コンフェデ杯でトラブル	‘a trouble at the confederation cup competition’
doriimu-janbo-takara-kuji	ドリームジャンボ宝くじ	‘dream-jumbo lottery’
taikai-kooshiki-teema-songu	大会公式テーマソング	‘official theme song of the convention’
choodai-taoru	超大タオル	‘super-large towel’
sennnin-sutaffu	専任スタッフ	‘full-time staff’
shijoo-kyanpeen	試乗キャンペーン	‘test ride campaign’
hai-gasu	排ガス	‘exhaust gas’

B. superfluous use

riiku-suru	リークする	‘to leak’
ibento	イベント	‘event’
myuujiikka-suteeshon	ミュージックステーション	‘music station’
noo-roon	ノーローン	‘no loan’
happii-raifu	ハッピーライフ	‘happy life’
terebi-shoppingu	テレビショッピング	‘TV shopping’
puremiamu-kaado	プレミアムカード	‘premium card’
imeeji-karaa	イメージカラー	‘image color’
taagetto	ターゲット	‘target’

akushidento	アクシデント	'accident'
sensitibu	センシティブ	'sensitive'
insaido-wotchi	インサイド・ウォッチ	'inside watch'
seorii	セオリー	'theory'
doggu-fuudo	ドッグ・フード	'dog food'
bureeku-suru	ブレークする	'get a break'

C. Reanalysis of loan words

rajio	ラジオ	'radio'	—>	reidio	レイディオ
enerugii	エネルギー	'energy'	—>	enajii	エナジー
guroobu	グローブ	'glove'	—>	gurabu	グラブ
fainansharu	ファイナンシャル	'financial'	—>	finansharu	フィナンシャル

The psychology involved here may be that using loan words in the typical Japanese pronunciation is uncool ダサイ. Also, extensive ESL education may be another contributing factor.

D. Politically correct uses

hoomuresu	ホームレス	(浮浪者)
reipu	レイプ	(強姦)
sutoriito-chirudoren	ストリート・チルドレン	(浮浪児)

III. Japan as an agent of globalization

Japan has dominated East and Southeast Asia economically over the past thirty years. Recently, the old pattern of cultural invasion following economic invasion, has emerged again. The sweeping acceptance of Japanese pop culture in the region indicates that Japan has been promoting its own globalization process. Here too, we can observe a familiar pattern: pecking order. Japan has emerged as an agent of globalization for the West, but with its own agenda. It is not far-fetched to see a parallel between the west and Japan and Japan and other Asian countries from the Meiji restoration up to the end of World War II. Some scholars quickly accuse transnational corporations of pushing globalization for world economic dominance.

Japanese pop culture has swept through countries in East Asia and Southeast Asia. Not to mention *Doraemon* ドラエモン, 'Hello Kitty' ハローキティ, *Tare-Panda* タレパンダ, *Pokemon* ポケモン, Japanese *anime* アニメ, fashion, idols have reached young minds in these regions. The younger generation of people who do not share negative war-time experiences inflicted by Japan with the older generation, seem to have accepted pop culture and imitate idols imported from Japan. No matter how the older generation frowns upon the invasion of Japanese pop culture, the young generation finds it cool to adopt Japanese values. They do not care whether or not transnational forces promote this. One of the reasons is that they have found something that might be liberating and empowering in rejecting the influence of traditional societies. Since the Meiji Restoration, Japan's role has been as an agent of globalization; this is analogous to the role of an agent of modernization since the Meiji restoration. One also should not forget that Japan has penetrated the U.S. movie industry, both financially and culturally. SONY bought a major US studio. 'Sailor Moon' セーラームーン and *Pokemon* are good examples that indicate the potential of the Japanese pop culture in North America. *Nomo* ノモ and *Ichiro* イチロー in baseball are agents for this reinvasion.

Japan, again, has adopted and mastered some of the Western, or rather, North American 'technologies' in marketing, and has become an agent of globalization, in competition with North

America. Whether or not Japan becomes successful in this, as it did in industries and finances in the later part of the last century is yet to be seen, but the Japanese version of globalization is backed by good design, excellent technologies, attractive products, and seems to be catching the imagination of many Asian youth.

Conclusion

The term globalization is used in this paper to refer to phenomena involving some sweeping changes that are taking place world-wide based on commonly accepted values, beliefs, political movement, trends and views. It is used without being clearly defined, mainly because it is still in the making with further attestation and further research. Globalization phenomena will continue to stride into the future; it is our urgent task to examine the checks and balances of the globalization process, and find a way to promote both regional cultures and global values. Greater efforts have to be made to find a sustainable 持続可能 environment for regional cultures. It is also important to keep a closer eye on Japan's role as agent of its own globalization agenda.

This presentation was prepared as a prologue to the Language and Culture Session. It is my sincere wish that the Checks and Balances are still functioning to bring harmony and balance between localization and globalization. The cliché 'think globally and act locally' may be still relevant.

Japan and Japanese people are forced to re-examine their identity by globalization. Things have changed rapidly in a short period of time. People do not have enough time to comprehend and digest all these changes. Japan's attention is still paid to the West, but the current economic trends bring Korea and Japan closer as equal partners. It is not possible to maintain dichotomy between the developed and under-developed countries.

Japanese-Canadians do have fossilized prejudices and biases.

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