

JAPLISH - ENGLISH MADE IN JAPAN

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Foreign residents of Japan frequently chuckle over their discoveries of new forms of Japlish or Janglish, i. e., awkward or ludicrous use of English by Japanese. Other than the ludicrous, there is much of interest to readers of *Word Ways*; I offer a selection below. A more extensive discussion of the subject can be found in Don C. Bailey's glossary of Japanese neologisms (see References). Although it is a decade out of date and probably out of print, it should be available at universities offering instruction in the Japanese language.

Many new words are translated (and others are created) by effect-

computer was translated as denshi kaisanki (literally, electronic computation machine). Often, however, the new words are also used in phonetic transcriptions, so conpyuta coexists in usage with the longer version (this translation sounds better than it looks, for n is pronounced m when followed by p and certain other consonants).

Generally, an attempt is made to reproduce faithfully the original pronunciation when a loan word is written in either of the two kana syllabaries -- hiragana, a cursive style, and katakana, a squarish style now used mostly for loanwords, foreign words and sometimes for emphasis. There are many limitations, however, because there are no sounds for v and l in Japanese, there are few vowels, and the syllables are open except for the solitary final n. However, in speech final vowels not present in the original (especially u, in Japanese a neutral vowel as in circus) are often elided or slurred over, particularly by those who are somewhat aware of the original pronunciation. In many cases, it is impossible to reproduce the original spelling, especially of French words, from the phonetic transcription alone, unless one knows the original word or can make a good guess. The word lovable, transcribed in katakana and then reconverted to Roman letters, is likely to emerge as rubbable, which could be disastrous to the Japanese brassiere maker which uses the former as its brand name.

coquille	becomes	<u>koki-ru</u>
table d'hote	becomes	<u>ta-beru do-to</u>
piano	becomes	<u>piano</u>
milk	becomes	<u>miruku</u>
Olympic	becomes	<u>orinpikku</u>

Hyphens (as in the first two words) denote elongated sounds. Olympic

is spelled with lower-case letters; there is no such thing as capital letters in Japanese.

Many words are shortened when they are adopted, as a matter of convenience, carelessness, ignorance of the original, or lack of interest in accuracy (sometimes a combination of these factors).

department store	becomes <u>depa-to</u>
apartment	becomes <u>apa-to</u>
frying pan	becomes <u>furai pan</u>
flannel	becomes <u>neru</u> (<u>furaneru</u> is also used)
pineapple	becomes <u>painu</u> (<u>painuappuru</u> is also used)
training pants	becomes <u>tre-pan</u>

Some terms are partly translated into Japanese.

plain concrete	becomes <u>mukin</u> (not-reinforced) <u>konkuri-to</u>
dumb piano	becomes <u>muon</u> (soundless) <u>piano</u>

The Japanese also create new words, using foreign words as the raw material.

- breen (buri-nu), a combination of brown and green -- a new color name!
- sherbet tone (sha-betto tonu), a tone of color having the appearance of sherbet
- name broker (ne-mu buroka-), student slang for a student who answers for another
- percha rubber (perucha gomu), a combination of gutta-percha (Eng.) and the Japanese word for rubber, gomu (a borrowing from the Dutch gom)

More conventional means are also used.

- miharus (miharusu) is a new type of castanets, invented by Miharu Chiba about 1954
- Takadiastase (takajiasutazu), a starch enzyme isolated from bran by the famous scientist, Dr. Jokichi Takamine, in 1894

Among the more interesting concoctions are the combinations of Japanese ideas and words with imported ones.

nōpori is a contraction and combination in one, of nō, the agricultural component of agriculture (nogyō) and the common abbreviated form of polyethylene (pori), to signify agricultural-use polyethylene (film).

peragoro is an inventive combination of the Latin pera of the loanword from Italian, opera, with goro, the first half of the Japanese word for ruffian (gorotsuki) and a near-synonym for the word guy. This word was coined about 50 years ago to describe young gatecrashers at the popular (as opposed to grand) opera houses in Tokyo.

takarajiennu combines the main part of Takarazuka, which is

the name of an all-girl song-and-dance troupe (Takarazuka garu or zuka garu) with the terminal part of Parisienne. Takarazuka shows have been popular for 50 years; early hits included shows like "Mon Papa" which explains the French borrowing.

tabi sokkusu, or tabi socks, are bifurcated socks, i. e., socks made like mittens. The traditional Japanese equivalent of socks, tabi, are constructed this way due to the nature of Japanese footwear. In recent years, socks have been made in this way, hence the new name. Thus, the Japanese equivalent of socks are composed of a left-and-right pair, but the footwear (sandals or wooden clogs called gata) have no right or left!

damuraizu hito, or "damn-your-eyes people" is an epithet for British or American sailors coined by the people of Yokohama, a port that has always had a strong international air. The Japanese word hito can be translated as person or persons.

In the limited space available, I have mentioned only a few of the Japanese loanwords and contributions to the English language, and in particular have had to omit a study of product names, the use (and misuse) of English in advertising, and scientific and technical terms. In conclusion, I would like to add a word of caution: to complicate matters (at least for foreign observers), loanwords are often used in a different sense than their originals. Apa-to, mentioned earlier, appears to be an apartment house, but it is actually a rooming house. What Americans call an apartment house is termed a manshiyon (mansion) by the Japanese, and a cooperative, or condominium, is called kopo, always with the final o clearly enunciated. Nyū (new) is one of the most overused loanwords around; for example, there is a Hotel New Otani, but no Hotel Otani preceded it. The commonest meaning of nyū seems to be as a synonym for synthetic or substitute, as in nyu leza (new leather, i. e., plastic).

REFERENCES

- Don C. Bailey, A Glossary of Japanese Neologisms (Tucson, University of Arizona Press, 1962)
 Sobei Arakawa, Loanword Dictionary (Tokyo, Tokyodo, 1967)
 Genkuro Yazaki, Japan's Loanwords (Tokyo, Iwanami, 1964)