

Knowledge of English Loanwords – an Advantage to L1 Speakers of Telugu in JFL Learning

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Abstract

Recently, learning Japanese as a foreign language has been gaining high importance in countries like India. Until recently, the Japanese language education was offered at only few foreign language departments across India. However, learners of Japanese along with Japanese teachers have increased many folds and currently learning Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) and its culture is becoming a new trend in this country. Among the challenges posed by these learners in their foreign language learning journey, mastering the pronunciation is a primary and important goal. Familiarizing with the written system is also an important aspect to be able to reach higher fluency levels. This paper argues that L1 speakers of Telugu language have an advantage in rapidly gaining the pronunciation of Japanese language because of the linguistic similarities in syllabification of both these languages. This this paper took few English loanwords into account, in both the languages to compare the similarities in syllabification. The similarities are analyzed, and implications are discussed. L1 speakers of Telugu with exposure to English can strategically bridge their existing knowledge to quickly familiarize with Japanese vocabulary due to a large number of English loanwords used in Japanese. In this respect, English loanwords in Japanese serve as a bridge towards fostering JFL language proficiency for L1 speakers of Telugu.

Keywords: English loanwords, phonology, syllabification, loanwords, *katakana* English, pedagogical application.

Introduction

India and Japan have been continuously strengthening the bilateral relationship on various fronts. Historically, both these countries share many common philosophical and religious values. In the modern times, both these countries became strategic partners. As a part of this expanding relationship, Indian students have been finding great interest in Japanese language. One of the notable reasons is also employment as Japan has a very low rate of

unemployment and by speaking Japanese language, chances of finding employment in Japan and also in Japanese based companies in India are very high. Various industrial parks dedicated to Japanese manufacturing companies have been established with the support of both the nations' higher leadership and a continuing positive business and trade relationship due to the initiatives by the previous Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Shinzo Abe. As a result, learners of the Japanese language in India have been increasing by many folds since the past decade, partly also due to easing of immigration norms for foreigners to live and work in Japan. Jobs in various fields like automobile, IT, communications, media, finance, medical, manufacturing, distribution, services, etc., have opened for foreigners and we can safely predict that this type of immigration will continue in near future. This is further supported by the fact that Japan's population has been declining and the burden of paying taxes is heavy on young working population while the government's capacity of taking care of a high number of aged population is being barely managed.

Japanese language is the 9th most popularly spoken language in the world with over 127 million people who speak the language. On the other hand, Telugu, one of the most popularly spoken South-Indian languages is 15th most popularly spoken language in the world with over 75 million speakers (Gordon, 2005). Japanese language being the only language that is in official use in Japan requires foreigners to be proficient with it, to be able to work in Japan. The same is the case for Japanese people alike, who are required to have a business level English proficiency to be eligible for employment with foreign multinational companies operating in Japan and also companies abroad which require English language proficiency (Gakkula & Tengse, 2021). Although it is relatively new to see Japanese people applying for jobs with foreign multinational companies, it is not rare. There are many opportunities for Japanese people to work in the fields of research and advanced research. Fields like science, engineering and information technology also employ Japanese people across the world.

Various English loanwords entered Indian languages during the British rule in India and have now become a natural part of most of the Indian languages. To begin with, these loanwords are commonly used for day-to-day life purposes. Also, in various fields as listed above, the English loanwords are indispensable. For native speakers of Telugu, English loanwords are also important, partly in standardizing Telugu in its official dialect as various other dialects exist within Telugu speaking population. Same is the case with Japanese, as English loanwords have been playing a role in standardizing the official dialect called '*hyoujungo*'. Loanword assimilation involves phonological modifications that make it easier for a native Japanese or a native Telugu speaker to pronounce these borrowed words without any difficulty, by adapting the loanwords into the phonetic system of Japanese or Telugu. Whether the words function exactly as they do in English is a different question. This paper argues that understanding the similarities and differences of English loanwords has a

significant pedagogical implication that could primarily help learners identify the target language syllables helping them to directly apply their previous knowledge of pronunciation. Further, similar types of studies in this area contribute to areas like development of effective learning materials and methods of teaching Japanese as a second language. Finally, an understanding of syllabification and vocabulary exercises aimed to develop the morphological awareness of English loanwords could also aid better learning of English language among native Japanese speakers. The value of research in this area is high, also due to the fact that L1 speakers of Telugu have been finding Japan as one of their dream destinations of employment especially given the fact that Telugu speaking states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana produce a huge number of engineering graduates every year and not so many jobs are available domestically in India.

Previous Research

The Japanese language has a long history of borrowing words from other languages, especially English. Due to the economic, political, and cultural influence of the US and the UK on Japan, many loanwords have been absorbed and adapted from English into Japanese (Backhaus, 2007). Similarly, in Telugu, a Dravidian language from the southern part of India, we see many words that are borrowed from English. Telugu has many similarities with Japanese pronunciation in the way that both the languages follow a mora timed pronunciation therefore the syllabic assimilation when the English words are borrowed becomes important (Murty et al., 2007).

Research in the area of English loanwords is relatively new. Although, analysing the linguistic processes of nativization has been earlier undertaken by individual researchers, a significant amount of research in this area seems to be missing so far. Also, considering the globalization and massive amount of people immigrating, areas like these can be viewed from both a linguistic and a sociological point of view. Considering both a research and a pedagogical point of view, researching on loanwords has been an important area to explore not only for language teachers, but also for policy makers and instructional designers (Sergeant, 2009).

For both an educational practitioner and a language researcher, it will always remain interesting to see the changes due to nativization process and generalize these processes of adaptation to make it much more accessible both for learners and for the research community. It would greatly help the research community to have a captured and a concise picture of the phenomena involved in nativization so that it can be further tested with other languages and can be verified, if the same holds true for other languages as well. There has been a significant amount of work that has been undertaken through research in loanwords at a various levels which focus on the areas of linguistics, sociolinguistics, and pedagogical issues related to

loanwords (Kay, 1995; Miyaoka&Tamaoka, 2003; Olah, 2007; Daulton, 2008, 2011; Irwin 2011; Barrs, 2014; Inagawa, 2015). However, a comparative study like this has not received enough attention. Comparing Japanese and Telugu using English loanwords has not been explicitly done before. Further, having a clear purpose makes this study a significant one as it aims to directly apply its findings to pedagogy and instructional design. For a language teacher, we believe that applying these findings in their classes have immediate benefits. We acknowledge that a long term study is a better determiner to establish more standard conclusions. However, to begin with, these can be a part of either an experimental study or action research by teachers to measure the effectiveness of the understanding from this study. As a bigger goal, this study aims to equip both teachers and learners with finding value in adapting effective teaching methodologies which can reward and maximize the learning of target language vocabulary at a much faster pace by making the best use of existing word syllable knowledge in the learners' L1.

On the other hand, it is not always the case that loanwords are semantically similar in both the languages. There are several words that either narrow the semantic functions or several others that are used in a completely new way. Previous research has also thrown light upon this issue of loanwords where semantic cognates are identified to have no idiosyncratic behavior in their target language but 'false cognates' exist which are difficult to deal with. In our context, we are focusing only on the part of pronunciation and in reality, pedagogy sometimes considers only pronunciation in isolation. Semantic knowledge of words can be incremental once the knowledge of pronunciation is in place. It should also be acknowledged from previous studies that lexical representations of English equivalents in Japanese language were not easily processed by Japanese learners when tested their knowledge with English loanwords (Miyaoka &Tamaoka, 2003). Further, studies that were undertaken to assess learner attitudes towards loanwords, researchers like Olah noted the reality that "If Japanese learners have a negative attitude toward loanwords, then using them as an aid for teaching spoken English would be difficult" (Olah 2007, pp. 182).

English Loanwords in Japanese and Telugu

Japanese language uses three different orthographical forms viz., *kanji* (logographic representation borrowed from Chinese), *hiragana*, and *katakana* (syllabic representations). In syllabic representations, each syllabary or a letter carries no meaning. On the other hand, each kanji unit carries a meaning making it a morpheme (the smallest unit in a language that carries meaning). Almost all native Japanese words are represented in *kanji* and *hiragana*. The logographic writing system in Japanese does prove to be a challenge to JFL learners of Japanese Language. Although it is interesting that every kanji can be represented in a simplified reading form called *hiragana*, most occasions prefer *kanji* as these are pictograms carrying an aesthetic and symbolic value of a word and its meaning, while the exception

always remains with loanwords. Loanwords in some sense are referring to objects and ideas of the outside world which comes to prove that borrowing preserves native ideas and vocabulary from undergoing changes and can be traced back through etymology in a relatively simpler manner.

Loanwords in Japanese are referred to as *gairaigo*. A classification of *gairaigo* has been done in previous research by Irwin (2011), where *gairaigo* is broadly classified into three distinct areas: *eigo-gairaigo*, *eigo-gaikokugo* and *wasei-eigo*. The first one, *eigo-gairaigo*, encompasses words that have come from English, and they have been fully integrated into Japanese language. Also, they carry a similar semantic function in Japanese language but can generally be narrow in the amount of semantic scope. Here ‘*eigo*’ means English. The second type of loanwords, *eigo-gaikokugo* are English loanwords that have been in use in Japanese language and are not so common for everyday language functions. Words like these usually are confined to specific fields like science, manufacturing, technology, medicine, etc. The third type, *wasei-eigo* refers to English loanwords which are coined by Japanese but have some English origins in terms of either whole or a part of the word. *Wasei-eigo* has been extensively researched recently as this process of borrowing usually involves blending the English loanwords with Japanese words. Although they contribute to the formation of a Japanese style English, ‘Japanglish’, Sociolinguists identify this process to be one of the main processes which has been contributing a heavy inflow of English loanwords in recent times. Hatanaka & Pannell (2016) refer to *wasei-eigo* as English Derived Words (EDWs) in Japanese which Japan’s own style of English based coinages. Various reasons of English loanword inflow into Japanese have been reported earlier (Tengse & Gakkula, 2021). We can notice that such reasons can be applied to various native languages in the context of globalization where English loanword borrowing has become indispensable.

As loanwords use *katakana* for writing, for a JFL learner, loanword knowledge is easier to retain compared to *kanji* as there are no derivations to combine and form new meaning as in the case of *kanji*. Loanwords are firm words with a firm syllabic structure and are represented in the phonetic alphabet that can be straightly read, which is seldom the case with *kanji*. These facts lead us to assume that if there were no *hiragana* and *katakana*, like in the case of Chinese, then Japanese language learning will perhaps be a more difficult journey with greater dependence on the *kanji* system. For most Japanese language learners except for the learners with pre-existing *kanji* knowledge like in the Chinese language, loanwords prove to be the springboard of the vocabulary knowledge base as *kanji* based knowledge retention is poor and needs repetitive exposure and use, for better retention.

English loanword borrowing in Telugu can be largely linked to the colonization by the British. During the span of 150 years of British rule in India, many Indian languages have

borrowed English words which mainly began from the trade and government related terms and later spread into various fields and aspects of daily life. This continued even after the Indian independence as the fields of science, engineering, medicine etc., have continued to emerge. We observed that apart from various established fields, currently Telugu language continues to borrow a large number of English loanwords in the field of IT. The orthographic distinction in Japanese between native words and loanwords, as above, doesn't exist in Telugu in which only one script exists which originated from the 'Brahmi' script. While reading, it would make a clear distinction in Japanese as to which words are loanwords and which are not. In case of Telugu, as loanwords are written in the native script, no clear distinction can therefore be easily identified. For emphasis, there are few instances where English script is used as it is, especially in scientific or legal articles etc.

Syllabification of English Loanwords in Japanese and Telugu: Similarities

In Japanese and Telugu, loanwords that are adapted will first undergo basic linguistic changes in terms of phonology. Both Japanese and Telugu syllables are consonant-vowel (CV) structured. English in Japan is sometimes referred to as 'Engurishshu'. This has a strong *katakana* English connotation with the emphasis on nativised pronunciation. In Telugu, the same is pronounced as 'Englishu'. Such modifications and similarities of English loanword syllabification in both Japanese and Telugu are being discussed in this section.

A Basic Comparison

	ENGLISH	JAPANESE	TELUGU
1.	bus	<i>basu</i>	<i>bassu</i>
2.	comment	<i>komento</i>	<i>kacamentu</i>
3.	performance	<i>pafo mansu</i>	<i>perpormansu</i>
4.	special guest	<i>supesharu gesto</i>	<i>speshalu gestu</i>
5.	video clip	<i>bideo kurippu</i>	<i>veedio klippu</i>

Table 1: Taking few examples to compare English loan words in Japanese and Telugu

Table 1 enlists few random loanwords in both Japanese and Telugu with varying levels of syllable sizes. It can be seen that there are many similarities than differences. We will see them in a slightly larger detail as below.

	ENGLISH	JAPANESE	TELUGU
1.	cat	<i>kyatto</i>	<i>kyaatu</i>
2.	campus	<i>kyanpasu</i>	<i>kyaampasu</i>
3.	gap	<i>gyappu</i>	<i>gyaapu</i>
4.	choice	<i>chyoisu</i>	<i>chyaaisu</i>
5.	catch	<i>kyacchi</i>	<i>kyaacchu</i>
6.	cash	<i>kyasshu</i>	<i>kyaashu</i>
7.	character	<i>kyarakutaa</i>	<i>kyaarectaru</i>
8.	vocabulary	<i>bokyaburarii</i>	<i>vokyabularii</i>
9.	calendar	<i>kyarendaa</i>	<i>kyaakendaru</i>
10.	cute	<i>kyuuto</i>	<i>kyuutu</i>

Table 2: Comparing English loan words in Japanese and Telugu on Glide Insertion

Table 2 enlists few examples of English loanwords in both Japanese and Telugu which allow a glide insertion. This feature of phonological adaptation seems to be similarly applicable for a large amount of loanwords which makes this an important commonality. For example, there are various instances of glide-insertion in words like ‘cute’, ‘cash’ etc. As both Japanese and Telugu use a glide in place of the sound /æ/, the glide, /y/ gets inserted in the first syllable or in word mid or word end position, as in the case of the word ‘vocabulary’, where the glide is inserted in the second syllable.

	ENGLISH	JAPANESE	TELUGU
1.	mind	<i>maindo</i>	<i>maindu</i>
2.	ticket	<i>chiketto</i>	<i>tikkettu</i>
3.	robot	<i>robotto</i>	<i>roboutu</i>
4.	sauce	<i>soosu</i>	<i>scausu</i>
5.	office	<i>ofisu</i>	<i>acafisu</i>
6.	point	<i>pointo</i>	<i>pointu</i>
7.	cheese	<i>cheezu</i>	<i>cheeju</i>
8.	milk	<i>miruku</i>	<i>milku</i>
9.	towel	<i>taoru</i>	<i>towehu</i>
10.	mask	<i>masuku</i>	<i>masku</i>

Table 3: Comparing English loan words in Japanese and Telugu on Vowel Insertion

Another important feature is epenthesis, where both these languages insert a vowel in consonant clusters and at consonant endings. Unlike English where the pronunciation nucleus is on the stressed syllable, Japanese and Telugu are both mora timed in pronunciation which largely allow for no-coda excepting for a nasal.

Table 3 highlights the similarities in vowel insertion of both the languages in the word ending position. As one of the most common assimilations, there is no coda in the word final position. Examples from Table 3 demonstrate vowel insertion in word final position of English loanwords in Japanese and Telugu. While English language allows CVC, and therefore has words end with a consonant sound, the adapted versions of these words end with a vowel sound. For instance, "milk" in English ends with the consonant / k/ while in Japanese and Telugu it ends with the vowel /u/ to satisfy the no-coda condition.

	ENGLISH	JAPANESE	TELUGU
1.	cup	<i>koppu</i>	<i>kappu</i>
2.	trip	<i>torippu</i>	<i>trippu</i>
3.	tip	<i>chippu</i>	<i>tippu</i>
4.	check	<i>chekku</i>	<i>chekku</i>
5.	logic	<i>rojikku</i>	<i>logikku</i>
6.	plastic	<i>purastikku</i>	<i>plastikku</i>
7.	kit	<i>kitto</i>	<i>kittu</i>
8.	head	<i>heddo</i>	<i>heddu</i>
9.	red	<i>reddo</i>	<i>reddu</i>
10.	bed	<i>beddo</i>	<i>beddu</i>

Table 4: Comparing English loan words in Japanese and Telugu on Gemination of consonants

Consonant gemination is commonly observed in both the languages for plosives and fricatives. It does also apply to nasals but are not considered in this study. Examples from Table 4 demonstrate this phenomenon of assimilation. For instance, the plosive sound /p/ ending as in ‘cup’ in English has a single sound but both in Japanese and Telugu, there is gemination of an additional /p/.

Discussion

Some of the commonly occurring fundamental processes in loanword assimilation into Japanese and Telugu were analyzed. The focus of this study is to highlight the similarities in the syllabic system of both the languages, for which loanwords are chosen. The largely occurring fundamental commonalities in syllabification observed through this study are glide insertion, insertion of vowel and gemination.

Japanese language follows a simple syllabic system. They can be divided into two types - one with short vowels and the other with long vowels. For short vowels, the syllabic structures are V, CV, CCV and for long vowels, syllabic structures are VV, CVV, CCVV. Words can also end in a nasal which we refer to as ‘consonantal coda’ but only applies to a nasal (VN, CVN, CCVN). Further, the phonology follows either a one mora (for short vowels) or bimoraic (for long vowels) (Otake, 2015).

In Telugu, the commonly occurring syllables are CV. It is also well observed in

Japanese language as well. Similarly, long vowels (CVV), are observed in both the languages. When nativized, the borrowed English words adapt the principles as per the phonological system of the Japanese and Telugu. This is mainly due to the phonological constraints in both of these languages. In the case of Japanese and Telugu, for gemination of plosives, fricatives and nasals, if the borrowed word has a short vowel in the final syllable, the last consonant will be geminated, and an epenthetic vowel is added to avoid impermissible consonants in word final coda position (Sailaja, 1999).

One of the additional findings of this study is that Japanese has a unique way of adaptation. The adaptations are beyond phonology and orthography. In case of Japanese, it can also be observed that the changes occur at the morphological level as well. However, this is not a huge challenge as the process of nativization in Japanese frequently administers clipping of vowels by which the English words get shortened. Further, the shortened words can also be blended to be able to pronounce it in the shortest possible manner. The examples of such processes can be found below:

Clipping navigation → *nabi*
 collaboration → *korabo*

Clipping and Blending professional wrestling → *puro-resu*
 smart phone → *suma-ho*
 prepaid card → *puri-ka*
 credit card → *kure-ka*
 remote control → *rimo-kon*

This process in Japanese allows for borrowing of vocabulary chunks. Taking the learning of vocabulary chunks into consideration (Nation, 2008), the above phenomenon supports learning of English language for Japanese learners in a faster way. This is because the loanwords in Japanese are not always single words, but we frequently come across word compounds and collocations. Also, for a second language learner of English language having prior knowledge of consonant-vowel syllabary is helpful in assimilating to English pronunciation as L1 plays a role in second language vocabulary learning (Nation, 2003).

As the process of borrowing continues, learners of both Japanese and English must consider the prior knowledge of loanwords which can prove to be a first set of active vocabulary in retention and use (Gakkula & Tengse, 2021). In the case of JFL learners who are L1 speakers of Telugu, exposure to loanwords helps develop a latent Japanese vocabulary base as learners are at an advantage given the prior knowledge of syllabary. This can be applied to most of the official Indian languages, Telugu being one among them. Given the fact that Indian

students' exposure to the English language from early educational years, use of English in either a similar or a modified way (as loanwords in their native Indian language), partly have the phonological knowledge of other similar languages because India is a multilingual country. Also, depending on the way the loanwords semantically behave in Japanese, it can be contributing to the vocabulary learning experience which helps in learning phonological and semantic knowledge of a large set of Japanese vocabulary with a relatively less effort. Both the knowledge aspects of phonology and meaning are not necessarily the firstly required knowledge of vocabulary as some words can be learned in the context and learners can sometimes recognize and make sense of new words without a pre-established phonological or semantic knowledge. We can believe that these strategies employed by learners will help them enhance their accuracy of pronunciation as it would call upon the pre-existing phonological systemic knowledge in the learner's active use of their L1 (Nation, 2011; Meyer, 2008). While it can be believed that there may be similarities between Japanese and most of the official Indian languages other than Telugu, there is still an interesting area of lexicon that makes learning Japanese easier irrespective of the L1 due to largely used English vocabulary in Japanese in the form of loanwords or *gairaigo*.

Conclusion

This study explored and capitalized on few key linguistic processes in syllabification and their pedagogical application concerning English Loanwords in Japanese and Telugu and the advantages they offer mainly to JFL learners of L1 Telugu speakers, and also to native Japanese learners of English.

Learning Japanese for Indian learners could become a necessity in future higher educational contexts in India. Also, knowing Japanese or any other foreign language opens up many opportunities and new possibilities in a globalized context of the world today. An understanding of loanwords in Indian languages such as Telugu for instance and the processes of syllabification or word formation may be similar among many Indian languages which could help the Japanese language learners in improving their experience of learning Japanese. This paper presented a view that prior knowledge of the structure of loanwords could help in better learning of Japanese as against no exposure to loanwords.

In this context, an understanding of linguistic processes in syllabification in loanwords or '*katakana* English', as commonly referred to in Japanese, could help language learners familiarize themselves with these processes, and their pedagogical application could help them learn their target language better. Further, for JFL learners of L1 Telugu speakers, English loanwords can serve as a medium of gaining first set of vocabulary and initial level of language proficiency by fundamentally extending their L1 knowledge of English loanwords and applying to use them in Japanese.

Not many studies have been undertaken to evaluate the challenges of learning Japanese as a foreign language in India. Given the popularity among students across India to learning Japanese, as discussed before, these types of studies we believe have a significant value. Further inquiry into this area of research, by taking up thoroughly can greatly help JFL learners not only for L1 speakers of Telugu but for many other L1 speakers of Indian languages that share linguistic similarities with Telugu language. Also towards teacher development, pronunciation exercises which undertake English loanwords from both the languages can be an easily attainable goal.

For a better understanding of these phenomena, further studies can be undertaken to compare and analyze the vocabulary knowledge of Japanese language learners having prior exposure to Japanese language aspect such as, syllabary, with learners having no such exposure. A limitation of this study is that the analysis considered only the similarities of English loanwords syllabification in Japanese and Telugu. The differences should also be considered for a better awareness before planning teaching approaches.

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