

**Some Returned Loans:
Japanese Loanwords in Taiwan Mandarin**

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The process itself is called 'borrowing', but this term requires some caution. Thus, that which is 'borrowed' does not have to be paid back; the donor makes no sacrifice and does not have to be asked for permission. Indeed, nothing changes hands; the donor goes on speaking as before, and only the borrower's speech is altered. (Hockett 1958: 402)

This is of course not always true. Some of China's loans to Japan were in fact paid back – after a fashion.

1. Background

Anyone familiar with the languages of East Asia is aware of the huge scale of linguistic borrowing from Chinese into Japanese that started in the Tang dynasty, and has resulted in a modern Japanese vocabulary that is around 50 percent Chinese in origin.

But the direction of borrowing between China and Japan has not been one-way. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese borrowed extensively from Japanese as part of its effort to modernize and Westernize. What were borrowed, however, starting from the late 1860s, were mainly Japanese coinages of Chinese character compounds used to translate Western academic and abstract concepts. Japan, in a continuation of the Edo intellectual tradition, placed heavy emphasis on things Chinese during this period, so it is natural that Chinese played such an important role in new word coinages (Seeley 1991: 136). Common examples of this are 歷史 *lìshǐ/rekishi* 'history', 哲學 *zhéxué/tetsugaku* 'philosophy', 手段 *shǒuduàn/shudan* 'manipulation, means', 積極 *jījī/sekkyoku* 'positive, active', and 目的 *mùdì/mokuteki* 'goal'. Some, such as 革命 *gémìng/kakumei* 'revolution' and 文化 *wénhuà/bunka* 'culture' already existed in ancient Chinese texts or Chinese translations of Buddhist sutras; Wang (1988: 685) comments that a Chinese translator *might* have come up with the same ones if the Japanese had not chosen them first. And some of the compounds adopted by the Japanese came from contemporary English-Chinese dictionaries, like W. Lobscheid's *English and Chinese Dictionary, with Punti and Mandarin Pronunciation* (Hong Kong, 1866-9); including perhaps the compounds 數學 *shùxué/sūgaku* 'mathematics', 電氣 *diàncì/denki* 'electricity', 立法 *lìfǎ/rippō* 'legislation', and 合眾國 *hézhòngguó/gasshūkoku* 'United States of America' (Seeley 1991: 136). Others, like 科學 *kēxué/kagaku* 'science' and 系統 *xìtǒng/keitō* 'system' were new creations based on Chinese morphemes previously borrowed into Japanese (Norman 1988:21). This method of using Chinese characters as modular "building blocks" had in fact been used during the Edo period in translation exercises encountered in Dutch scientific texts (Seeley 1991: 137). Wang (1988: 685) says that a Chinese might well not have chosen the particular combinations of characters used to form the compounds in this category; but since the Japanese had already created them, and since in most cases they did not "offend Chinese sensibilities", they were conveniently adopted.

Because the form of the loans was completely Chinese – the "Japanese" contribution was the choice of character combinations, not the morphemes themselves – these "loans" are

seldom even recognized as being “assembled in Japan from Chinese components”. They are for the most part deeply assimilated in the modern Chinese language. A similar process takes place in modern Greek when it “reborrows” words coined in other languages such as English from ancient Greek roots, like cosmonaut κοσμοναυτηζ (*kosmonautis*) and telegram τηλεγραφημα (*tilegrafima*) (Browning 1969: 116) – except that two distinct writing systems are involved, whereas Chinese and Japanese share written Chinese *kanji*, at least for most borrowed/loaned vocabulary.

Chinese reform leader Kang Youwei 康有為 once said: “I regard the West as a cow, and the Japanese as a farmhand, while I myself sit back and enjoy the food!” Early Japanese translations made large numbers of important scholarly works and concepts from the West widely available to Chinese audiences; the Chinese felt that Japanese was an “easier” language than Western ones for a Chinese to learn. The Qing court sent increasing numbers of students to Japan – 13,000 in 1906. Between 1902-1904, translations from Japanese accounted for 62.2 per cent of all translations into Chinese. The great majority of these works were themselves translations from English and other Western languages (Hsu 1975: 522).

The choice to borrow ready-made Japanese renderings of foreign concepts was not an automatic one, and others did try to come up with and promote original Chinese translations. Scholar and translator Yan Fu 嚴復 (1853-1912), for example, made a such an effort, and suggested such translations as 名學 *míngxué* for ‘logic’ (‘name study’; now 邏輯 *luójí*, a phonetic loan from English, though it was also previously called 論理學 *lùnlǐxué*, a Japanese coinage, and 理則學 *lǐzéxué*), 計學 *jìxué* (‘calculation study’) for ‘economics’ (intellectual Liang Qichao 梁啟超 suggested 資產學 *zīchǎnxué* ‘assets study’) and 界說 *jièshuō* for ‘definition’ (now 定義 *dìngyì*, from the Japanese) (Wang 1988: 691, Wang 1955: 94). But the Japanese off-the-rack translations were greatly preferred over such expressions as 量天尺 *liángtiānchǐ* (measure + sky + ruler) ‘sextant’, now 六分儀 *liùfēnyí* (six-part-instrument); and 銀館 *yínguǎn* (silver + building) ‘bank’, now 銀行 *yínháng* (silver + business firm) (Wang 1988: 684). Today, on the other hand, Chinese tends to come up with its own translations of foreign concepts, rather than relying on Japan for this “service” (Norman 1988: 21).

There was another period of evanescent Japanese loans into Chinese during the “Manchukuo” puppet regime, described in Wang (1955: 94), which was imposed on northeastern China (Manchuria) starting in 1932. These Japanese loans were called 協和語 *xiéhéyǔ* (after the name of an organization established by the Japanese in “Manchukuo”, the 協和會 *xiéhéhuì/kyōwakai*), and were adopted and propagated by Chinese sycophants serving under the Japanese aggressors. Examples include: 町 *dīng/machi* ‘town’ (this word survives in Taiwan from its own period of Japanese occupation (see next paragraph), e.g. in 西門町 *xīméndīng* ‘Ximending’, an area of downtown Taipei), 案内 *ànnèi/annai* ‘information’, and 放送局 *fāngsòngjú/hōsōkyoku* ‘broadcasting station’. These words, the use of which was limited to Manchuria, were soon jettisoned by the populace after the surrender of the Japanese in 1945.²

A large number of Japanese loans entered the Southern Min or Taiwanese dialect during Taiwan’s period of Japanese occupation (1895-1945). Some Japanese lexical items dating to this period also entered Mandarin, though there does not seem to be an overly large number of such examples. Some representative borrowings from this period are: 便當 *biàndāng* from *bentō* ‘lunchbox’ (written 弁当 in Japanese), equivalent to the “native” Chinese term 飯盒 *fànhé* ‘rice box’; 觀光 *guānguāng* from *kankō* ‘tourism’, native Chinese 旅遊 *lǚyóu* ‘travel for pleasure’; 中古 *zhōnggǔ/chūko* ‘second hand’; and 坪 *píng/subo*, a unit of measure equivalent to 36 square feet of area, used in calculating living space (Hansell 1989: 161). Two

other common loans based on phonetic rather than written forms are *obāsan* ‘older woman’, usually transliterated 歐巴桑 and pronounced *ōubāsàng*; and *ojīsan*, ‘older man’, written 歐吉桑 (*ōujísàng*); this is much less common than *ōubāsàng*. After 1945, the newly installed Nationalist Chinese government strictly regulated the import of Japanese language materials of all kinds – books, magazines, newspapers, television programs, films – in order to ensure a decisive changeover to Chinese language and culture in Taiwan, so this certainly limited the influx of new loans.

The various layers of linguistic borrowing discussed above are relatively well documented and studied elsewhere, and will not be further discussed here.

2. Recent Japanese loans in Taiwan Mandarin

The focus of this paper will be on Japanese loans that have entered the Taiwan Mandarin vocabulary in more recent times, i.e. after 1945. Because the ultimate source language of many Japanese “loans” is Chinese, the path followed by these loanwords is often full of twists and turns, and not a few surprises.

Japanese loans into Taiwan Mandarin are classified in this study into two main types: phonetic loans and graphic loans. Under these two categories fall many different subtypes which reflect some of the permutations made possible by the shared and disparate elements of Chinese and Japanese, in addition to some external factors.

What the Chinese have had to do to deal with Japanese loanwords is in many ways similar to, and in some ways a mirror image of, what the Japanese have had to do with Chinese loanwords over history. Both have had grab bags – in of course very different proportions and at different times – of native Japanese/*kun’yomi* words, native Chinese/*on’yomi* words in both original and phonetically adapted form, written Chinese characters/*kanji*, and written Japanese syllabary symbols/*kana* to somehow make sense of and fit together as seamlessly as possible. The two languages adopted some unique, some similar strategies in coming up with workable solutions.

2.1 Japanese words entering Chinese as phonetic loans

There are a number of possible forms for phonetic loans. One possibility is to assign to an expression Chinese characters that imitate the Japanese pronunciation. The characters chosen will normally introduce new semantic associations into the concept not present in the Japanese version. As Hansell (1989: 219) puts it: “Writing is also a means of injecting meaning into arbitrary loanwords, not only through folk etymology, but through use of semanticized transliterations, a process that has no analogue in alphabetically written languages.” An example of this is one version of *tempura*, which is called 甜不辣 *tiánbùlà* in Taiwan. This means literally ‘sweet-not-spicy hot’. This dish is actually more like *oden* (the street-vendor stew おでん *oden* is called 黑輪 *hēilún* ‘black wheel’ in Taiwan; this phonetic loan came through the Southern Min dialect, in which it is pronounced *o.¹ lian²*), and is topped with a sweet red sauce which may be piquant. It is occasionally also called 天婦羅 *tiānfūluó* ‘sky-woman-net’, the characters used in Japanese. These *ateji* characters have no direct semantic link to their referent, and so tend to be viewed more as a purely phonetic rendering of the original with few semantic associations at all. These are the usual ways of representing a phonetic loan – with or without relevant semantic associations – from any foreign language, e.g. English, not just Japanese.

2.1.1 Phonetic loans: *Kun'yomi*

These phonetic loans are from native or *kun'yomi* words, which either have no commonly used Chinese character(s) attached to them, or for which the character(s) would be misleading if used in Chinese. An example of this is *moa⁵chi⁵* (a Taiwanese word used in Mandarin), from the Japanese もち *mochi*, which can be written in Japanese with the character 餅 *bǐng* ‘cake’. Two nonstandard characters³ have been invented for this word in Chinese: 麻薯 plus a rice radical 米 added to the left of each character. Occasionally the soft sweets made of glutinous rice flour are called *máshǔ* in Mandarin, but they almost always go by their Taiwanese name (with the tones usually altered to the Mandarin third and second tones, respectively), even in the middle of Mandarin discourse. Certainly not everybody knows this is a Japanese loan; it is probably thought by many to be a purely Taiwanese “loan” into Mandarin, just like 蚵仔 *o⁵a²*, ‘small oysters’, which are generally referred to in their Taiwanese dialect form only, including when Mandarin is being spoken.

2.1.2 Phonetic loans: *On'yomi*

Phonetic loans may also be *on'yomi* words. Although these have characters with a Chinese-based pronunciation, the characters may be as unsuitable for use in modern Mandarin as is the case with the *kun'yomi* loans, and new characters are chosen that imitate the Japanese version of an old Chinese pronunciation. In these cases a Chinese would often be surprised to see which characters originally corresponded with the item, since the current meaning might be quite different. A simple and fairly widespread example is *ichiban*, which turns up in Chinese as 一級棒 *yījībàng* (Hansell 1989: 98). This is a fortuitous and extremely colloquial rendering of the Japanese expression for ‘first’, which also suggests a superlative; the Chinese means “first and very best” (棒 *bàng*: ‘great, super, neat’). The characters used in Japanese, 一番 *yīfān/ichiban*, are the number ‘one’ plus a measure word in Chinese, meaning ‘one time’, ‘a while’ or ‘one exertion of effort’, and thus could not be used in written Chinese to convey the Japanese meaning.

Another example is *senbei* ‘(rice) crackers’, marketed in Taiwan as 仙貝 *xiānbèi* ‘immortal shells’. Though the original Chinese is 煎餅 *jiānbǐng* ‘fried cake’, this compound now refers in Chinese to a very different, less expensive, less well-packaged and much less fashionable kind of cracker, made from wheat rather than rice flour. Certainly few Chinese are aware that 仙貝 *xiānbèi* is in fact just a Japanese version of the Chinese word 煎餅 *jiānbǐng* – it is as though the pretty girl that a young man became enamored of at a dance turned out to be his neighbor’s daughter, who he always thought was very plain-looking!

One also sometimes hears the expression *xiānbèi bǐnggān* 仙貝餅乾, which means literally ‘fried cake cake dry’. This is reminiscent of other redundant multilingual expressions like *The Los Angeles Angels* (Spanish + English: ‘the the angels angels’). Multilingual redundancies like this easily occur once the average speaker is unaware of the original meaning of a foreign loan, and semantic components get added onto phonetic components with unknown semantic origins. And since there has been a meaning shift, the repetition is in fact justified, since each of the two occurrences of the word for ‘cracker’ now stands for something different.

A further example is 烏龍麵 *wūlóngmiàn* (called in Hong Kong 烏冬麵 *wūdōngmiàn*) for Japanese *udon*. The Chinese introduces the new semantic association of ‘black dragon’ (the same as the *Oolong* in *Oolong tea*), and adds ‘noodles’, to make the compound

transparent.⁴ Chinese might be shocked to see the characters for the original Japanese: 餛飩 *húntún*, known in English as *wonton*, a meat dumpling wrapped in a flour skin! Using the original characters for this referent would result in a misidentification of *udon* for a completely different dish. As with *senbei*, both the product and its name went through substantial changes going from China to Japan; there were fewer changes in the product when it was imported back into a Chinese-speaking environment; but because of the change on the way from China to Japan, a new name was really required when it was re-imported into China, whether the individuals initiating the borrowing were aware of the original Chinese characters matched to the loanword or not.

Although company or brand names tend to be written in Roman script supplemented with the *kanji* used in the original Japanese, some companies choose a phonetic translation mediated by totally unrelated characters instead. *Mitsubishi* is the *kun'yomi* reading of what in Japanese is written as 三芝 (Chinese *sānzhi*), but their umbrellas are marketed under the name 麥芝西柏 *màizhixībó* in Taiwan. It is notable that the 芝 character, used in the original name, turns up in the transliterated version, but for an entirely different syllable, *tsu*.

2.1.3 Phonetic loans: *Rōmaji*

As alluded to in the preceding, sometimes the Romanized or *Rōmaji* form of the loan – usually a brand name – is used, widely recognized, and pronounced much like the original Japanese; *Honda*, *Toyota* and *Yamaha* are examples of this; you hear the Chinese readings 本田 *běntián*, 豐田 *fēngtián* and 山葉 *shānyè* much less often. Since using *kanji* would inevitably produce a Chinese reading, and *kana* are not widely known in Taiwan while the Latin alphabet is, *Rōmaji* is a convenient, effective and internationalized way for Japanese trade names to protect their original pronunciations almost intact in a Chinese language environment. In writing a more or less formal document, the *kanji* might probably be used; but the high visibility of the *Rōmaji* form (e.g. on shop signs and in advertisements) certainly helps to reinforce the continued use of the *kun'yomi* reading in spoken Chinese.

2.1.4 Roman letters in Japanese loans

Roman letters may be called on to represent individual syllables that are rare or nonexistent in Chinese. The main example of this is *karaoke*. The *kara* is written in the characters for *kǎ* ‘card’ 卡 and *lā* 拉 ‘to pull’; *oke*, abbreviated from English *orchestra*, is simply written with the Latin letters *OK*: 卡拉 *OK kǎlāōukēi*. In Japanese this expression is usually written in *katakana*, though *kana* in other contexts can be matched with the Chinese character 空 *kōng* ‘empty’, as in *karate* 空手(道) *kōngshǒu(dào)*. This is another connection one is unlikely to make based on the Chinese form of the word *karaoke*. The use of Latin letters for this purpose illustrates just how entrenched they are in modern Taiwan Chinese usage; and also how a language will draw on any resources it has available to satisfy a new need.

2.1.5 Loans current in spoken form only

Some words become current in a purely spoken form, and have no commonly agreed-upon written form in Chinese. These tend to enter the spoken language through the media, especially television and radio, but now also through the Internet. Examples like *oishii*

‘delicious’, often with a long final *ne*, are rapidly popularized through food commercials. Other widely-known Japanese expressions without a set written form in Chinese include: *arigatō gozaimasu* ‘thank you very much’ (though you may occasionally see something like 啊利啊多 *āliāduō* (Kubler 1985: 180; few Chinese know that the *kanji* for this expression are 有難 *yōunán*, literally, ‘has difficulty’); *kawaii!* ‘how cute’ (because of the proximity in pronunciation, there may be some awareness that this comes from the Chinese 可愛 *kěài* ‘cute’); *moshi moshi* ‘hello’; *chotto matte* ‘wait a minute’; *daijobu* ‘good, OK’.

Japanese comic books translated into Chinese or Japanese-influenced comics are another major source of these expressions, and certain ones, like *Young Guns*, contain copious marginal notes on the Japanese expressions used. It is hard, however, for a Chinese to resist assigning phonetic characters to a commonly-used expression, and the characters chosen will often have some kind of semantic connection to the original meaning. One Japanized Taiwan comic book represents *daijobu*, ‘all right, OK’, as 逮就捕 *dǎijiùbǔ* ‘capture-just-apprehend’. It is interesting that the original Japanese characters 大丈夫 *dàzhàngfū* were not used. Though some people know the Japanese meaning, probably not enough of them do to make the characters easily understood in this case; also the characters, when read with Mandarin pronunciation, *dàzhàngfū*, do not sound much like the Japanese expression, and they suggest a totally different meaning: ‘a gentleman, non-petty person’. A phonetic representation perhaps communicates more of the “flavor” of the original Japanese, somewhat in the way that the American loan *OK* does in its own context. These written phonetic forms do not necessarily gain much general acceptance; they are often nonce, one-shot affairs, good for one comic book, or maybe only one page in one comic book. But only time can tell – some of them do eventually gain currency.

Probably the most successful spoken Japanese expression to enter Taiwan Mandarin is *hài* ‘yes’. One is extremely likely to hear this as a response when one calls out to another person by name, also when wishing to express understanding of something another person has said. It is so common and such a natural reflex action that one may or may not think about its foreign origin. There seems to be no generally agreed-upon written character for this word. It would seem to be considerably more widely used and assimilated than the American *OK*. There are other possibilities from the Mandarin native vocabulary, like 是! *shì* ‘yes, to be’, to serve the same purpose, though 是 *shì* sounds a bit too stiff and formal, or sometimes sarcastic, for many situations. Another “native” Taiwan interjection, also common, may be *e*ⁿ³ or *he*ⁿ³. The Japanese *hài* seems to have slipped into the same niche as these other somewhat improvised and unstable interjections, and become accepted with little resistance.

2.2 Japanese words entering Chinese as graphic loans

For graphic loans entering Chinese, the written *kanji* may be simply incorporated as is, with a Mandarin pronunciation. The expression may blend in almost invisibly in its new environment, for example, 味噌 *wèizēng* ‘miso’, 壽司 *shòusī* ‘sushi’ (both are often referred to with their Japanese pronunciation), 抹茶 *mǒchá/matcha* ‘Japanese powdered green tea’, and 料理 *liàoli/ryōri* ‘food’. All “fit” into Chinese well, though all have a definite Japanese “flavor”.

Another food word has come into Taiwan Chinese perhaps first as a graphic loan; but it has also made its way as a phonetic loan. The character is 丼, popularly pronounced *dòng*, from Japanese *ton/tan/donburi* ‘bowl’. This character was not previously used in modern Chinese at all (it is the original character for 井 *jǐng* ‘well’ and is used only in ancient texts as such; and some restaurants use the undotted version instead of 丼), and the borrowed

pronunciation *dòng* is in “violation” of the Chinese dictionary pronunciation of *jǐng*. Although *ton/tan* are supposedly *on'yomi* readings, it is difficult to link them with any established Chinese pronunciation. 井 *dòng* is best known in the dish *gyūdon*, called in Mandarin 牛井 *niúdòng*, but also on a smaller scale in 天井 *tiāndòng/tendon* ‘batter-fried shrimp over rice’ and 親子丼 *qīnzǐdòng/oyakodonburi* ‘chicken and egg over rice’ and such.⁵ Note that the character uses both *on'yomi* and *kun'yomi* readings in similar morphosyntactic positions in the original Japanese; the Chinese sticks with the one *dòng* reading. Pronouncing this character *jǐng* in this context would sound very gauche and uninformed.

寫真 *xiězhēn/shashin* ‘photograph’ has been borrowed to refer to ‘art’ or often sexy photographs of pop stars or others, usually collected in an album, i.e. 寫真集 *xiězhēnji*; in this case the more general meaning of the Japanese term has become specialized in Taiwan usage. Also common is 玄關 *xuánguān* [dark + closure] ‘entryway’. 專門店 *zhuānméndiàn/senmonten* (and its variant 專賣店 *zhuānmàidiàn*) ‘specialty store’ (apparently a calque from English), though it does not follow the usual pattern of two-character units, is another popular and well-assimilated example.

The use of 物語 *monogatari* ‘story’, pronounced *wùyǔ* in Mandarin, is increasingly fashionable and commonly used, for example, in shop signs. One example is an upscale cat and cat supply shop in northern Taipei called 子貓物語 *zǐmāowùyǔ* ‘Kitten Tales’. It calls up images of storytelling and fantasy, apparently viable concepts commercially. It is also used in the simple meaning of ‘story’, for example, in short stories in the literary section of newspapers.

A borrowed expression may stand out for some reason, sometimes simply because it is too different from the expected Chinese usage. An example of this is 入 *rù/iri* ‘per package’ instead of the expected 裝 *zhuāng* ‘package’; e.g. 六入 *liùrù* on a package of pantyhose means ‘six-pair package’. (This expression has started to go from a purely written graphic loan to a pronounced one, e.g. it is sometimes heard over the P.A. system in a Watson’s drug store.) Or the problem may be mainly due to morphology. A Japanese usage may stand out if it is a single character as opposed to a preferred two-syllable compound, e.g. 切 *qiē/kiru* ‘cut’ instead of 關機 *guānjī* ‘off’ (on an electrical appliance).

The graph 族 *zú/zoku* ‘clan, group’, along with its variant 一族 *yīzú*, has become a wildly productive “suffix” in Taiwan as well as on the mainland, attaching itself to anything at all that could comprise some ‘group’ of people in society: 火腿族 *huǒtuǐzú* are ‘ham radio operators’, 眼鏡族 *yǎnjìngzú* are ‘glasses wearers’, 電腦族 *diànnǎozú* ‘computer users/addicts’, 租屋族 *zūwūzú* are ‘people who rent (rather than own) their home’, 追星一族 *zhuīxīngyīzú* are ‘movie/singing star chasers’. New formations with 族 *zú*, borrowed into Taiwan Mandarin from the Japanese adoption and adaptation of the original Chinese morph, seem to be formed almost daily and broadcast over the news media. Other such Japanese “suffixes” have also found their way into everyday Taiwan Mandarin usage: Hansell (1989: 162-163) mentions 風 *fēng/fū* ‘style’, as in 北歐風 *běiōufēng* ‘Northern European/Scandinavian style’, and 屋 *wū/ya* ‘shop’, as in 牛仔屋 *niúzáiwū* ‘cowboy/jeans shop’. But 族 *zú*, 風 *fēng*, and 屋 *wū* are only some of the latest additions in a long line of “affixes” that have come into modern Chinese from Japanese and ended up as extremely productive building blocks of modern Chinese vocabulary items, including nonce ones created on the spot for a specific purpose. Wang’s (Wang 1955: 92-93) list includes 化 *huà/ka* ‘-ify, -ize’; 炎 *yán/en* ‘-itiis’; 力 *lì/ryoku* ‘-ivity’/‘-ability’; 性 *xìng/sei* ‘-ivity’/‘-ability’; 的 *de/teki* ‘-al’, ‘-ic’, ‘style’; 界 *jiè/kai* ‘circles’ (e.g. ‘in financial circles’); 型 *xíng/kei* ‘-type’; 點 *diǎn/ten* ‘point’ (e.g. ‘viewpoint’); and several others. These Japanese innovations in Chinese character

use have instituted several morphological formations in Chinese that did not exist before, and have made translation into Chinese of many Western concepts with this type of affix a fairly convenient and straightforward process. The relatively recent import of 族 *zú/zoku* seems to suggest that Japanese may continue to be a source of “morphological process” elements for Chinese, Taiwan Chinese in particular.

One further step in the “foreign loan” assimilation process merits mention here: Chinese morphemes, having been formed into modern lexical items like 建設 *jiànshè* by the Japanese, then reimported into Chinese, are sometimes incorporated into new, longer compounds in Chinese, like 基本建設 *jīběnjiànshè* ‘capital construction, infrastructure.’ Wang notes that these are further Chinese creations from Japanese-coined compounds formed from Chinese character elements (Wang 1955: 94).

2.3 *Kun'yomi and a borrowed hiragana in Taiwan Chinese*

“We live in a degenerate age,” said Genji. “Almost nothing but kana seems really good.”
(from *Genji Monogatari*, quoted in Seeley 1991: 76)

The concept of *kun'yomi*, in which a semantically but not phonetically related word is assigned to a written character, is foreign to Chinese. Chinese are used to seeing a character and being fairly sure of how to pronounce it. Chinese has homographs, i.e. alternate pronunciations and meanings for the same written character, but the pronunciations are almost always related; you do not often find pronunciations that are totally different than the “basic” historical one(s), that represent semantically but not phonetically related words.

There is the case of written forms like 機車 *jīchē* ‘motorcycle’ (short for 機器腳踏車 *jīqìjiǎotàchē* machine + bicycle [machine + foot + pedal + vehicle], though this is hardly ever seen outside of driver license applications) and 煤氣 *méiqì* ‘gas’, which are usually called respectively 摩托車 *mótuōchē* ‘motorcycle’ and 瓦斯⁶ *wǎsī* ‘gas’ in the spoken language, so this is perhaps a marginal case of *kun'yomi* in Chinese. But no one thinks that these written expressions are actually *pronounced* like the spoken forms; it is more a matter of choosing one or the other form according which is more appropriate for the medium being used, writing or speaking.

There is a much more convincing instance of *kun'yomi* in modern Taiwan Chinese. It is not an “official” usage you will find in a dictionary, but it is becoming extremely widespread. It is the use of the Japanese possessive particle の *no*, written in *kana*, to replace the Chinese possessive particle 之 *zhī* or the colloquial 的 *de*.

If one knows only one *hiragana* character, there’s a good chance it might be の *no* – it has a unique and easy-to-remember form. Grammatically, the Japanese の *no* serves almost the exact same function as the Chinese 之 *zhī* and 的 *de*, so it can be inserted in the same place in a phrase with no meaning difference; and the size and shape of の *no* make it fit right into the same spatial niche as a Chinese character. This probably would not have happened with the English equivalent ‘s, ‘apostrophe s’, although many English words, like *case*, are frequently inserted directly into written Chinese sentences. The apostrophe alone makes ‘s awkward to borrow, and grammatical particles and clitics are not in any case usually good candidates for linguistic borrowing. Yet の *no* is enormously successful in Taiwan. It is certainly in part because of its simple and “attractive” written form; the spoken form can be considered not to have been borrowed at all – indeed many people do not know how to pronounce it. It is rather like the case of a Chinese character being called on to represent a native Japanese word, like 足 for *ashi*, in addition to the Chinese-derived *zoku*. No example

beyond の *no* of this kind of *kun'yomi* in Taiwan Chinese comes to mind. As in the case of 仙貝 *xiānbèi* for *senbei*, it can also be viewed as an instance of a reborrowing of a native Chinese linguistic form, though probably few Chinese realize that the Japanese *hiragana* for の *no* developed from the Chinese character 乃 *nǎi* (a classical word for ‘to be’)!

You see の *no* especially often in posters; for example, one advertised “An Evening of Folk Song” as 民謠之夜, but would be read as *mínyáo zhī yè*; here the 之 *zhī* is required by the formal register of a title (of an event in this case), and also the final monosyllabic word. It is pronounced as *de*, however, in more colloquial contexts. Another poster seen outside a church read 最好的朋友 ‘(our) best friend’; here の *no* would be read 的 *de*: *zuihǎo de péngyǒu*, because of the disyllabic noun it precedes. High school teachers report that their students often use の *no* for 的 *de* in their journals. One teacher adds that she does not “correct” the *no*’s to Chinese 的 *de* because she does not want to discourage free expression of feelings in her students’ journals. Perhaps “official” acceptance on the school level is helping reinforce the usage a bit!

One betel nut stand near Taipei uses the *katakana* form: 飄ノ郷 *piāo zhī xiāng* ‘floating (*no*) country’; otherwise only the *hiragana* form for の *no* seems to have been adopted.

Another commercial name *à la japonaise* spotted in Taipei is 車の湯 *kuruma no yu*, ‘car bath’, which Chinese might read as *chē zhī tāng*, if they were to venture a reading of it at all. Again the name bears an exotic cachet, much as French is used to add prestige in English language advertising – which an English speaker might take in visually but is not likely to read out loud. One has to know something about Japanese to realize that 湯 *tāng* here means ‘hot water/bath’ and not ‘soup’ as it does in Chinese – so the reader gets a feeling of self-congratulation when he or she figures it out – it is much like the satisfaction of “getting” a good joke. The situation is really quite similar to the use of French in English language advertising; French is similar enough to English that an English speaker can usually guess what it means even without much background in French. And since Japanese and Chinese share many of the same *kanji*, a character with an altered meaning is not too difficult for an educated Chinese to handle.

A popular baked (as opposed to the usual steamed) commercial custard dessert is labeled 烤の蛋 *kǎo zhī dàn* ‘baked (possessive particle) egg’. But what is un-Chinese in this case is not only the written particle の *no*, but the structure of single syllable morphemes separated by a possessive particle where no particle at all would be used in such an environment in Chinese; the content words would be concatenated without any linking words: e.g. 烤蛋 *kǎodàn*. There is really not much that is very Japanese about this product name at all, other than the の *no* and the single syllable structure. The verb/adjective 烤 *kǎo* ‘to bake’ does not exist in Japanese: *yaki* ‘to grill’ would probably be used instead. And the の *no* wouldn’t be required in an expression like this, either in Japanese or in Chinese: e.g. ‘grilled chicken’ is *yakitori*, no の *no*; and ‘egg’ *tamago* is written either 卵 or 玉子. So it is clear that it is a fashion that is being imported, an imperfect understanding of a pattern and an overgeneralized application of it in a different language, rather than a “correct” grammar pattern which follows the rules it does in the source language. With another product, ‘apple bread’, which is called 蘋果の麵包 *píngguǒ (no) miànbāo*, the の *no* at least links two nouns, but as with the ‘baked custard’, the possessive particle is superfluous and used only for effect, not based on grammatical requirements.

The lack of “necessity” of the popular の *no* particle can be illustrated by the extreme to which it sometimes is taken: a brand of bottled water is marketed in Taiwan under the name 紹の興天然飲用水 *Shào (no) xīng tiānrán yǐnyòngshuǐ* ‘*Shào (no) xīng* natural drinking

water'. *Shàoxīng* is the name of a Chinese city in Zhejiang province. Breaking up a city name like this results in a nonsensical phrase in which the *no* is apparently intended to be ignored when read aloud; the *no* is little more than a marker that seems to be trying to communicate that the product is young and fashionable. The English on the label reads *Shao Hsing Pro-Water*.

At present, the use of the written *no* in Chinese is a casual, fashionable usage. It would not be employed in formal writing; it communicates a kind of playfulness. For this reason it may never be “officially” considered part of the Chinese writing system. Yet because it is so widespread, it may eventually have to be added to computer fonts, and in this way it may eventually stick its foot in the door of more “official” recognition and acceptance. Perhaps one day even dictionary makers will acknowledge its existence and popularity, though *no* is not the only such popular usage awaiting recognition; Latin letters are another.

no is in fact an interesting and significant case of linguistic borrowing. Though unconventional, it does reveal something about the motivations for any kind of borrowing. Some people will try to explain its acceptance by saying it is much easier and faster to write than 的 *de*, which has eight strokes, as opposed to the one quick convenient stroke of *no*. But a loan must first become known before it is in a position to be recognized for its simplicity or lack of it and for this perception to be acted on; so the “easier to write” reason must be considered secondary, at least in terms of the original motivation for using an import.

The adoption of *no* in Taiwan Mandarin should be attributed first and foremost to *fashion*. It makes minds think in a new way – i.e. that of accepting a foreign symbol in Chinese as something functional and “normal”. It also reflects the sources of cultural influence. Latin letters have appeared in written Chinese for decades and more (a very early usage is X 光 *x guāng* for ‘x-ray’). Greek letters have also long been used in math and the sciences in Chinese (e.g. π *pi*). Syllables in Mandarin Phonetic Symbols (“bo, po, mo, fo” ㄅ、ㄆ、ㄇ、ㄈ) are sometimes sprinkled in Chinese character texts, especially in student-designed posters on campuses. Students asked about this say the symbols are used to avoid writing a character with a large number of strokes that would be difficult to fit into its small niche on a poster. Yet sometimes the symbols are used to replace a relatively simple character, for example, 農服社 *nóngfúshè* ‘Agricultural Service Club’ has been spotted written as 農ㄈㄨㄝˊ社 on a campus poster, with 服 *fú* ‘service’ in Mandarin Phonetic Symbols, while 農 *nóng* ‘agriculture’ was written out in full. A newly-opened snack shop in Taipei calls itself ㄉㄨㄛˊ來香 *chǐláixiāng* (a near-homophone of 楚留香 *Chǔ Liúxiāng*, a *kungfu* novel hero). When asked about their use of the Mandarin Phonetic Symbol ㄉㄨㄛˊ, the owners said it stood in for 齒 *chǐ* ‘teeth’ [teeth + come + fragrance]. They were at a loss to give a reason for why they used a phonetic symbol instead of a regular Chinese character, other than to say, “Well, that’s the way everybody does it now.” These symbols are normally used as an auxiliary phonetic system in elementary school textbooks or for little-used characters people are not expected to know how to pronounce. Yet their cameo appearances in certain genres of regular character texts seems to be similar to the use of *no* – they add variety, panache, a bit of the unexpected but at the same time a kind of *belonging*, i.e. to a popular fashion.

Japanese forms of Chinese characters have also seeped into the Taiwan print media since Chinese character fonts for newspapers have often come from Japan. One example: in Chinese usage, the center vertical stroke of the character 告 *gào/koku* ‘to tell’ is not supposed to extend below the main horizontal stroke, while in the Japanese print style it does; and the Japanese style is often seen in Taiwan newspapers and magazines. The Japanese forms slipped into printed Taiwan Chinese like rats on an immigrant vessel, and gained some currency simply due to the exposure they received in this way. But in the process of setting standards

for Chinese computer fonts, something the Chinese have to a great extent done for themselves rather than simply accepting existing software from the Japanese, there was a new opportunity to weed out some of the invasive foreign species. These “aberrant” character forms are losing currency, but ㄉ *no* is definitely going strong.

2.4 Calques

Then there is the case of calques and translated cultural conventions. One very conspicuous example is the newly introduced custom in various shops, such as convenience stores, of greeting customers as they enter with 歡迎光臨 *huānyíngguānglín* ‘we welcome your illustrious arrival’, a Chinese rendering of the Japanese *irasshaimase*, and 謝謝光臨 *xièxièguānglín*, a formal commercial ‘thank you’, when they leave. In the past it was common for such expressions to be written, e.g. near the doorway or on a doormat of a restaurant, or on the check. The more intrusive spoken form is relatively new, and creates a bit of awkwardness for those not used to simply ignoring it as a formality rather than something to be reacted to in some way. Even after having shopped at stores like this many times, it can be a bit startling, disarming, or simply something you brace yourself for as you enter and leave. So far the custom seems mainly restricted to establishments with some kind of Japanese connection (and of course not all of these practice this custom); yet the habit is clearly in some way making its mark on Taiwan society.

2.5 Language learning

Japanese is a widely learned foreign language in Taiwan, after of course English. But in addition to “serious” language learning, it is now popular for young people at some schools to spout off Japanese words, phrases and complete sentences with classmates. Some is rude language, like *baka* ‘stupid’, similar to the kind of English expressions that tend to get picked up most easily. But other phrases are also tossed about, like *Dōshite?* ‘Why?’, *Sō desu* ‘Oh, I see’, *Nanda yo?* ‘What?’ and so on. The salient characteristic of this kind of “language learning” is fashionability. It’s “cool” to be able to say a few select phrases in Japanese. This is not so different from the motivation behind the use of many modern Japanese loanwords and use of the written symbol ㄉ *no* in Taiwan Chinese.

3. Dictionaries and Japanese loans

The tendency is for dictionary compilers and language policy makers to wait until many, many years after a usage becomes widely accepted before recognizing it as part of the language – if indeed it is ever recognized. Chan & Kwok (1990: 3) distinguish four stages in the integration of loan words: (1) the “pre-loan” stage in which the loan is still recognizably “foreign” and may not have a written form; (2) the first intermediate stage in which the loan enjoys restricted currency in the spoken language; (3) the second stage of more widespread currency and appearance in written form in the media; and (4) the “final” stage in which a loan is “so fully integrated into the Chinese language that it is sanctioned by inclusion in an accepted dictionary.” Normalized additions like loanwords assimilated in the form of Chinese characters seem to have a better chance of official recognition, since they fit into the current orthodox format. New Chinese characters invented from existing elements, like 爿 *shāng* for

‘entropy’⁷ (from 火 *huǒ* ‘fire’ + 商 *shāng* ‘quotient’), are also relatively digestible, especially now that even casual users, if motivated, can create new characters with widely available Chinese character input software. Those which invoke new written symbols that are not recognized as Chinese characters, on the other hand, are likely to have a much harder time.

Although Latin letters are easily inputted with any standard computer, dictionaries do not seem to be ready to include expressions like 卡拉 OK *kālāōukēi* ‘karaoke’, even when they are high frequency items in the spoken and written language. The Japanese の *no* is not easily produced with an average Chinese input system, and is likely to receive even less of a welcome by conservative lexicographers and institutions like the Ministry of Education, which has been responsible for determining accepted Chinese character forms. Yet its presence is ubiquitous and undeniable. Thus there may always be a gap between what we do and what we say we do, or what certain of us are willing to admit we do. It is the author’s opinion that dictionaries should make an active effort to be less stuffy and more open to admitting and describing actual usage. But dictionaries in all cultures have a tradition of orthodoxy and prescriptivism, perhaps out of a fear that straight, “unselective” description is likely to encourage letting “undesirable” elements in, and “polluting” linguistic “purity”, though “linguistic purity” is “pure” fiction in the case of almost any modern language. This trend seems unlikely to change in the near future.

4. Conclusion

Why does Taiwan Mandarin borrow from Japanese?

The obvious underlying determinant of who borrows what from whom is cultural dominance – a culture perceived as being more advanced, sophisticated, fashionable, desirable, or powerful, will tend to be a culture from which words are borrowed. It is important to note that cultural dominance is not static, but can experience complete reversals of fortune over history. The patterns of Japanese-coined Chinese character compounds being borrowed into modern Chinese, and Greek terms being borrowed from English back into modern Greek, reflect the rise and fall of the cultural dominance of the source languages and cultures in both cases. Then there are words like *taro*, which came from subsistence-level Polynesian culture, and *wigwam*, from Native American culture. Neither of these cultures could be considered “dominant” on a macro level. Examples like this are relatively few in number, and tend to be in marginal use. But these cultures had, just the same, something other cultures did not, and which the borrowing cultures felt the need to name. In the words of Jespersen: “Loan-words always show a superiority of the nation from whose language they are borrowed, though this superiority may be of many different kinds.” (1923: 209)

Japanese was once the “official” language of Taiwan, and the language of education and culture, much like French was in England beginning in 1066, so one might expect a larger range of loans to enter Chinese from Japanese under these circumstances. For a long period (1945 to about 1986), the circulation of Japanese language materials was strictly regulated by law, so one would expect fewer loans. However, Japanese things still came into Taiwan: huge quantities of consumer imports, tipping the balance of trade strongly in favor of Japan; so, for example, electronics-related words would have an easy route in. And Chinese translations of Japanese comic books and Mandarin-dubbed Japanese cartoons have quite a long history in Taiwan. Through these came familiarity, for example, with four-character personal names. Because Chinese is a language that strongly favors calques and original coinages over phonetic loans, clever translators were perhaps to some extent responsible for keeping the number of overt Japanese loans into Chinese down, by coming up with suitable Chinese equivalents for as much of the original script as possible. It is notable that a lot of the

“Japanese” terms which currently appear in Chinese versions of Japanese comics are in fact English loans into Japanese (like アウト *auto* ‘out’, used in baseball), and this also has attenuated the invasion of “native” Japanese expressions into Chinese.

The strong interest of Taiwan youth in Japanese fashions and fads, often picked up through imported fashion magazines, might be expected to bring in a number of loans. But young people tend to be after a “look”, and to buy glossy magazines mainly to page through and study the photographs; often they don’t read much Japanese at all. Some are limited to what they can guess at based on the characters they know from Chinese. The reader usually has no idea how these would be pronounced in Japanese, so this is a kind of “natural barrier” to the spread of loans through a medium which theoretically could exercise significant cultural and linguistic influence.

Television and radio commercials, since they include an audio signal, seem to be far more effective at spreading Japanese loan words. They overcome the problem of seeing a printed form but not knowing how to say it. Thus the great currency of expressions like *Oishii ne!* and *Chotto matte!*, heard quite frequently somewhat tongue-in-cheek in casual conversations. These are indicative of the strong commercial and cultural influence of Japanese on Chinese; but they are also a manifestation of the overall trend toward flaunting multilingualism – even partial multilingualism – in Taiwan today. For decades the government suppressed non-Mandarin dialects of Chinese in Taiwan; but with no more such restrictions, Taiwan’s linguistic diversity is really showing its colors in the media and elsewhere; and Japanese rides on the crest of this trend.

It is a basic human need to continually renew ourselves, and cultural and linguistic borrowings are one of the important ways we do this as individuals and as societies. A new concept, product or word offers us the chance to look at the world in a new way, even if it is just one small way, or see – and embrace – a new little piece of the world we hadn’t seen before. The element of curiosity and renewal, which are the basis of changing fashions, explains why linguistic borrowing and fashion often go hand in hand. Like new businesses, many linguistic loans fail before they gain currency. They may disappear along with the fashion. Yet some end up being relatively permanent fixtures in their host language.

Modern linguistic borrowing from Japanese into Taiwan Mandarin seems to come less from an urgent need to express new ideas than from a desire to open a window and let in some fresh cultural and linguistic air. It falls more under what Hockett calls the “prestige motive” rather than the “need-filling motive” (Hockett 1958: 404ff). It is largely playful, coming from a desire to do and see things in a slightly skewed, slightly different, slightly more interesting and fashionable way, to break through humdrum habits and routines a bit. Chan & Kwok (1990: 27ff) describe novelty as “intrinsic” to word borrowing, and that suggests that foreign loan words, like slang, are “the ordinary man’s poetry.” So whereas during the period of Japanese occupation, Japanese loans into Taiwanese and Mandarin may have been more a result of cultural and political domination – though a prestige factor was certainly also involved – current linguistic borrowing from Japanese seems more to be a conscious choice, one option among many possible ones from the palette of fresh linguistic input the world offers for potential cultural invigoration. Yet once the novelty has had a chance to wear off it is possible that it may itself transcend one of its key original *raison d’être* in the language, then survive to become part of the more humdrum linguistic establishment.

Foreign loans, in particular those using non-standard written symbols, tend to be at the cutting edge of the linguistic development of a cultural group. They reflect some of the new directions a culture is reaching out towards, new ideas they are playing with and developing. In the case of recent Japanese loans into Taiwan Chinese, these ideas do not necessarily strive toward any particular material or other kind of progress, but are in many cases like toys for all of society to play with and smile over in their day-to-day life.

Notes

- ¹ Heartfelt thanks to Ms Kurose Emi 黑瀨惠美 and Ms Hattori Miki 服部美貴, instructors in the Japanese Department of National Taiwan University, for serving as Japanese language informants in the writing of this paper.
- ² Another linguistic outcome of this instance of Sino-Japanese contact: Japanese efforts to reform their complex writing system by reducing the number of *kanji* in use suffered a setback during this period. Reports in Japan of military activities in China brought in a flood of difficult Chinese characters needed to refer to Chinese personal and place names (Seely 1991: 147).
- ³ These characters are not included in most Chinese input systems and are used mainly for their phonetic value, but they also contain meaningful elements offering semantic associations with *mochi*: ‘rice’, ‘sesame’ (which is often added to *mochi*), and ‘potato’, a food similar in texture and color to *mochi*.
- ⁴ This loan has the same morphological structure as the English loan 沙發椅 *shāfāyǐ* ‘sofa’, which has an added morpheme for ‘chair’ after the phonetic components to make it easier to understand and classify; though in this case this morpheme is optional and in the *wūlóngmiàn* case it is not.
- ⁵ These are considerably less popular than 牛丼 *niúdòng*, probably thanks to the successful Japanese fast food chain *Yoshinoya*, called 吉野家 *jíyějiā* in Taiwan.
- ⁶ This is an *ateji* type loan, i.e. a phonetic loan from English into Japanese transliterated with *kanji* rather than *katakana*, then subsequently borrowed into Chinese. Wang (1958: 90) lists other such *ateji* loans, some of which are common in Taiwan Chinese, including 俱樂部 *kurabu/jùlèbù* ‘club’, 淋巴 *rinpa/linbā* ‘lymph’, 混凝土 *konkurīto/hǔnníngtǔ* ‘concrete’, 浪漫 *rōman/làngmàn* ‘romantic’, and 馬鈴薯 *bareisho/mǎlǐngshǔ* ‘potato’. The Taiwanese dialect uses more or less straight Japanese pronunciation; in Mandarin the characters are read with Mandarin phonetic values.
- ⁷ This character is not in Chinese Word, but it *is* in TwinBridge.

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