

# A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND JAPANESE LANGUAGES

—With an Eye to Teaching English to Japanese Students—

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## INTRODUCTION

The English language is the most-widely spoken international language in the world, and for the Japanese people, their second language. Nevertheless the majority of the college and university graduates cannot read English newspapers, much less speak or write simple English.<sup>1</sup> They have at least studied the tongue for eight years, yet their knowledge of the language is such that there has always been hot controversies over whether or not English should be eliminated from among the required subjects in the undergraduate courses, over if the present school curriculums are proper, and even over the effectiveness of the teaching methods or the aptitude of the teachers themselves. The fact is that only those students who have swallowed up or been forced to cram themselves with, some system of the language have partly mastered the tongue. And the rest who have not been able to make such efforts or had such a chance can not really understand English; most of them only hate it.

As a teacher of English who has taught more than 30 years English which was the most difficult for him to learn of all his subjects, the writer cannot just look on the deplorable reality of teaching and learning English—their misery, hardship, waste of time, energy and money, and so on. And this is his attempt to solve even part of the difficulties through a comparative-study method worked out of his long experiences. This is an approach for those

who have not succeeded in acquiring a certain amount of workable knowledge of the language because they have not made enough efforts or been blessed with the chance mentioned above and never think of trying to go through the hard, short-cut course in their high teens again.

The writer has chosen a comparative-study method because he sees that the Japanese students' chief fault or cause of their failure lies in the Japanization of a foreign language as a whole and neglecting, forgetting or even distorting its proper pronunciation, grammar, style, rhetoric, etc. which do not come within the corresponding categories of the Japanese language. Therefore this study aims, first of all, to pick out such Japanized English as is fit for clarifying how genuine English pronunciation has been modified for Japanese use. Thus through the handy "Janglish,"<sup>2</sup> we make clear to that extent how different the two languages are. Then as a second step we search out those words and expressions which have similar sounds and meanings or connotations letting the students know to what extent both languages are alike and how interesting languages are. The third step is to study the similar ways of expressing thoughts by both English-speaking peoples and the Japanese. Then finally we proceed to the different modes of expressions between the two languages, in order to bring to light how different they are from each other, thus making sure that the realization of the differences leads to understanding of the different peoples.

In short, this is a research for an English-teaching method which enables Japanese students to realize, first, how phonetically-different Japanese is from English, shows them to what extent they can rely on or make use of, the Japanese modes of expression in learning English, and then finally, teaches them what are the significant, essential differences between the two, which must be clarified and realized so well that they may be put even to a

positive use, i. e., English composition.

In applying this method to practical instruction in English, however, it must be remembered that even though this seems to be an easy-going course because it makes use of a comparative method, it never is in reality—teaching a language is after all a hard, rigorous business whatever method one may choose, and the students should not be allowed to neglect or forget the least requirement in learning a language in general: that is, to repeat their study every day for at least 30 minutes. This is a must in learning languages.

### Chapter One: PRONUNCIATION

Indeed there is no wonder why Japanese students have great difficulty in speaking English when we compare the pronunciation of English with that of Japanese. The English pronunciation is much more difficult than that of Japanese since it has more varieties of sound than Japanese does. According to the list of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), the English language has at least 50 phonemic symbols except for those found in borrowed words,<sup>3</sup> while the Japanese language has about 37.<sup>4</sup> So lazy students (and most Japanese people also) are apt to turn each English vowel or consonant or their group into a like sound (group) of Japanese, turning out what they call Japanese English, Japanized English or “Janglish” thus making it impossible to distinguish between the following pairs of words:

<i>Romanized Japanese:</i>	<i>English (IPA):</i>	<i>English (IPA):</i>
raito	right (raɪt)	light (laɪt)
hamu	ham (hæm)	hum (hʌm)
sōsu	sauce (sɔ:s)	source (sɔ:s)
ōru	all (ɔ:l)	oar (ɔ:r, ɔ:)

Therefore if students are really to understand English, they should

acquire the ability of pronouncing real English sounds. And if it is difficult for them to acquire the ability or if they are to make efforts not to fall into the habit of speaking Japanized English, they, first of all, should realize how incorrectly Japanese English is pronounced and have them corrected. For this purpose students should begin with learning to pronounce correctly the basic elements of both languages, that is, the English alphabet and certain cardinal numbers which are frequently used by Japanese people.

Here they are represented by Japanese (Roman) and Webster's symbols<sup>5</sup> and IPA so that students can compare them and know how different real English and Japanized English are from each other:

#### I. The Alphabet

<i>Aruhabetto:</i>	<i>The Alphabet:</i>	<i>(Webster's Symbols):</i>	<i>(IPA):</i>
ē	A	(ā)	(ei)
bī	B	(bē)	(bi:)
shī	C	(sē)	(si:)
dē	D	(dē)	(di:)
ī	E	(ē)	(i:)
ehu	F	(ef)	(ef)
jī	G	(jē)	(dʒi:)
ecchi	H	(āch)	(eitʃ)
ai	I	(i)	(ai)
jē	J	(jā)	(dʒei)
kē	K	(kā)	(kei)
eru	L	(el)	(el)
emu	M	(em)	(em)
enu	N	(en)	(en)
ō	O	(ō)	(ou)
pī	P	(pē)	(pi:)



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kyū	Q	(kyoo)	(kjuː)
ā	R	(är)	(aɪr)
esu	S	(es)	(es)
tē	T	(tē)	(tiː)
yū	U	(yoo)	(juː)
bui	V	(vē)	(viː)
daburyū	W	(dublyoo)	(dʌbljuː)
ekkiisu	X	(eks)	(eks)
wai	Y	(wi)	(wai)
zeddo	Z	(zē, zed)	(zed, ziː)

II. Number

<i>Nambā:</i>	<i>Number:</i>	<i>(Webster's Symbols):</i>	<i>(IPA):</i>
wan	one	(wun)	(wʌn)
tsū	two	(too)	(tuː)
surī	three	(thre)	(θriː)
hō	four	(fō)	(fɔː, fɔə)
haibu	five	(fiv)	(faɪv)
shikkusu	six	(siks)	(siks)
seibun	seven	(sevn)	(sevn)
eito	eight	(āt)	(eit)
nain	nine	(nīn)	(nain)
ten	ten	(ten)	(ten)
ireibun	eleven	(ilevən)	(ilevn)
sebuntin	seventeen	(sevn̄tēn)	(sevn̄tiːn)

III. Before we enter the next section, we'd better add here some Japanized English sentences which are very effective in teaching certain English sentence patterns to Japanese students because they all know them well, and also because they are part of these modes of English expressions which are different from those of the cor-

responding Japanese ones. They will appear again later on in this study.

<i>Romanized Japanese:</i>	<i>English:</i>	<i>(Webster's Symbols):</i>	<i>(IPA):</i>
Kisu mī.	Kiss me.	(kis mē)	(kis miː)
Shī yū.	See you.	(sē yōō)	(siː juː)
Ai rabu yū.	I love you.	(i luv yōō)	(ai lʌv juː)
Rettsu gō.	Let's go.	(lets gō)	(lets gou)

#### IV. The Substitution, Modification or Distortion of English Sounds in Japanized English.

As Leonard Bloomfield says somewhere that every language limits itself to certain sounds and to certain ways of combining them, so does the "Janglish." Indeed it is interesting to see how Japanese people change those proper English sounds which they do not have in the phonic range of their own language (if we are allowed to limit the range of the sounds to those represented in the International Phonetic Alphabet):<sup>6</sup>

##### i. Vowels

*IPA → Japanese Sounds: Examples: Romanized Janglish (English):*

æ	a	akusento (accent), antena (antenna), rampu (lamp)
ʌ	a	basu (bus), batā (butter), katto (cut)
	o	monē (money), suponji (sponge), ton (ton)
	u	urutora (ultra)
ə	a	puropera (propeller), surippa (slipper), boraza (brother)
	ā	battā (batter), kabā (cover), rabā (lover)
əː	ā	hādorū (hurdle), kābu (curve), gāru

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		(girl)
i	ī	bogī (bogie), gyararī (gallery), sararī (salary)
	ē	burandē (brandy), karē (curry), kyandē (candy)
ei	ē	kēsu (case), gēmu (game), rēsu (lace)
	e	enjeru (angel), epuron (apron), bihuteki (beef-steak)
ou	ō	bōto (boat), gōru (goal), hōsu (hose)
	o	bogī (bogie), posuto (post), tomato (tomato)
iə	iya	giya (gear), riya (rear), hiyaringu (hearing)
ɛə	eya	eya (air), beyaringu (bearing), heyapin (hair-pin)
aiə	aiya	daiyamondo (diamond), haiya (hire), taiya (tire)
auə	auwa	huruwa (flower), pauwa (power), shauwa (shower)
ouə	ouwa	burouwa (blower)

ii. Consonants

IPA: → Japanese Sounds: Examples: Romanized Janglish (English):

b	bu	rabu (rub), kurabu (club), tabbu (tub)
d	t	metaru (medal), petaru (pedal)
	do	piramiddo (pyramid), ōrudo (old), kōrudo (cold)
	j	jiremma (dilemma), rajio (radio), jigitarisu (digitalis)
f	hu	shahuto (shaft), naihu (knife),

		bīhu (beef)
g	gu	eggu (egg), gurahu (gragh), guramu (gram)
k	ku	kurīku (creek), uīku (week), chōku (chalk)
	ki	inki (ink), tekisuto (text), bureki (brake)
l	r	raito (light), raisensu (license), raihu (life)
	ru	shimboru (symbol), pūru (pool), pāru (pearl)
m	mu	hōmu (form), stōmu (storm), suramu (slum)
	mm	hammā (hammer), mammosu (mammoth), komma (comma)
n	nn	ranningu (running), tonneru (tunnel), bonnetto (bonnet)
ŋ	gu	songu (song), kingu (king), ringu (ring)
r	ru	koruku (cork), ōru (oar), kurorohorumu (chloroform)
s	su	suketo (skate), sukī (ski), sutando (stand)
	zu	kurōzu-appu (close-up), rūzu (loose)
	sh	shisutemu (system), shigunaru (signal) shimboru (symbol)
t	to	torakku (truck), torōru (trawl), toranku (trunk)
	ch	chikketo (ticket), chīmu (team), chippu (tip)
	tsu	baketsu (bucket),

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		katsuretsu (cutlet), tsurī (tree)
tu	tsu	tsundra (tundra), tsū (two), tsuwā (tour)
tʃ	chi	kyacchi (catch), inchi (inch), rinchi (lynch)
ʃ	shi shu	burashi (brush), porisshi (polish) dasshu (dash), hurasshu (flash), rasshu-auwa (rush-hour)
ʒ	j ju	rejā (leisure) kamuhurāju (camouflage), rāju (rouge)
θ	ji s	potāji (potage), sabotāji (sabotage) sankyū (thank you), marason (marathon)
	su	surī (three), suriru (thrill), basu (bath)
ð	z zu	reza (leather), boraza (brother), hāza (father) rizumu (rhythm)
	su	sumūsu (smooth)
v	b bu	baioretto (violet), viorin (violin), beniya (veneer) kābu (curve), rabu (love), uēbu (wave)
w	u	uindō (window), uinku (wink), uddo (wood)
wu	ū	ūru (wool), ūsuteddo (worsted), ūman (woman)
ks	kusu	wakkusu (wax), zerokkusu (Xerox), kuraimakkusu (climax)
z	su	nyūsu (news), hōsu (hose),



		shingurusu (singles)
	zu	purizumu (prism), pazuru (puzzle), chīzu (cheese)
zi	ji	jiguzagu (zigzag), jippā (zipper), jinku (zinc)
dʒ	j	jazu (jazz), jesuchā (jesture), jerashī (jealousy)
	ji	cheinji (change), kareji (college), sāji (serge)
	z	zerachin (gelatine), zeri (jelly), zentoruman (gentleman)
	g	gipusu (gymps), ideorogi (ideology), enerugī (energy)
j	(omitted)	ēsu (yes), īsuto (yeast), erō (yellow)

## V. Spelling-Pronunciation

In Japan we have a system of Romanizing Japanese or Latinization, which seems to be the cause of the phenomena called "spelling-pronunciation" found in most Japanized English that may have been imported here in the form of written words.

The following are the rest of the features not included in the preceding sections:

- 1) (ə) and (i) sounds at the beginnings of, or within, words:

Ex.:	<i>Janglish:</i>	aruminyūmu	anemone	erochikku
	<i>English:</i>	aluminium	anemone	erotic
	<i>IPA:</i>	əluːminiəm	əneməni	irətik

- 2) Vowel-Lengthening:<sup>7</sup>

Ex.:	<i>Janglish:</i>	gurōbu	hankachīhu	messēji
	<i>English:</i>	glove	handkerchief	message
	<i>IPA:</i>	glʌv	hæŋkətʃif	mesidʒ

3) Vowel-Shortening:

Ex.: <i>Janglish</i> :	raberu	akashia	azeria
<i>English</i> :	label	acacia	azalea
<i>IPA</i> :	leibl	əkeiʃə	əzeiliə

VI. Accent

As the Japanese language has no such stress or accent as seen in English, Japanese people seem to have been indifferent to them when they borrowed and used English words. And once the borrowed words have been transcribed into Japanese *kana* letters<sup>8</sup> they are accentuated in unique Japanese ways.<sup>9</sup> And it is hardly possible to find out any rules for the transition of stress or accent between Japanized English and their originals. The only conspicuous tendency seen in certain words is that they have their accents on the first syllables. This is not without good reason because it is said that at the NHK (the National Broadcasting Station of Japan), the announcers are advised to place accents on the first syllables of any loan words whose accents they are not sure where to place.

For examples:

<i>Romanized Janglish</i> :	<i>English</i> :	<i>IPA</i> :
ádobaisu	advice	(ədváis)
áidia	idea	(aidiə)
pórisu	police	(pəlís)
hóteru	hotel	(houtél)
tómato	tomato	(təméitou)

In short, what form any borrowed word has taken depends on when, how, by whom it was imported. That is, the earlier it was imported the further is the Japanized English from its original in form.<sup>10</sup> The degree or manner of the transformation of a word differs according to the situation in which it was imported: whether its introducer heard the word directly from its native speaker or from

another foreigner who was not its native speaker; whether he first knew the word in its written form or not; how well he was informed with the pronunciation of the word; how well he could speak English, and so on. The transformation of a loan word also depends on the character, knowledge or ability of the mass who have adopted it into their vocabulary.

Thus many phenomena are seen to have occurred to Japanized English as Sōbei Arakawa and Minoru Umegaki mentions in their books:<sup>11</sup>

Substitution of vowels and consonants.

Transformation of vowels and consonants.

Sound-addition of (a), (i), (u), (e), (o), (n).

Omission of sounds.

Contraction of borrowed words and word groups.

Formation of Japanese English.<sup>12</sup>

Then some of them further developed into compound words of themselves or those of themselves and Japanese which are only understood in Japan.

As they say it in psychology, any efforts to acquire correct knowledge must be begun with telling the correct from the incorrect or the fake. So is the case with learning English. Students must start with correcting their own Japanized English in order to acquire genuine English, and then repeat it until it grows into part of their own speech habit, which will not be overcome in a day or two. Then real knowledge of English is acquired. It will take them some time to recognize the real English as it is actually spoken in English-speaking countries.

(To be continued)

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#### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup>According to Minoru Umegaki's book: *Nichi-Ei Hikaku Gogaku Nyūmon* (Introduction to a Comparative Study of Japanese and English) (Tokyo:

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Taishu-kan, 1977), two-thirds of the junior high school students who have taken English are failures as learners of English.

<sup>2</sup>The word "Janglish" is a coinage by James Kirkup who has lived in Japan for a long time.

<sup>3</sup>The "Table of Phonetic Symbols" in *Kenkyusha's New English-Japanese Dictionary* (Tokyo, 1953) is referred to.

<sup>4</sup>The "Table of Romanized Japanese Alphabet" in *Kenkyusha's New Japanese-English Dictionary* (Tokyo, 1974) is referred to.

According to Umegaki, again (see the book of Note 1), the Japanese language has 25 phonemes or at most 110 varieties of syllables, while the English language has 44 phonemes or more than 3,000 varieties of syllables. For further differences between the two languages which are thought to constitute the causes of the difficulty, see the same book.

<sup>5</sup>Here the writer introduces Webster's symbols too, for in Japan most English-Japanese dictionaries are adopting the IPA to denote the pronunciation of words. However lazy students do not learn to read them. So the writer recommends to use the Webster's symbols instead of them because they are not only easier to read but also enable the students who have learned to read them to have practical knowledge for reading most English words correctly.

<sup>6</sup>Considering the nature of this study, the writer has taken up here only those symbols which are seen in English-Japanese dictionaries of years ago only for convenience' sake. Today's dictionaries have more symbols which denote finer shades of sound.

Besides, the range of the sound-distortion the writer covers here is also limited to the extent where misunderstanding occurs, and outside the extent, where finer modification is seen, there is no problem of this kind, though the actual speech with thus modified sounds may sound a little strange. That is, the writer does not deal with "nondistinctive features" but with "distinctive-features" only here.

<sup>7</sup>This phenomenon seems to have been caused rather by wrong application of some commonly-known rules of English pronunciation than by Romanization.

<sup>8</sup>Here "kana" means "kata-kana" which is one of the Japanese alphabets, which was made out of the parts of Chinese characters hundreds of years ago. "Kata-kana" is usually used to write foreign words in Japan.

<sup>9</sup>As to how unique Japanese accents are placed on loan words, see Tadao Yokoi's *Gairai-go to Gaikoku-go* (Loan-words and Foreign Languages) (Tokyo: Gendai Jānarizumu Shuppan Kai, 1975), pp. 71-78.

<sup>10</sup>For instance, "ryōmochisu" meant "rheumatism" (rumətizəm); and "sutensho" stood for "station" (steifən) in English, many years ago. For more examples, see the Chapter of "Pronunciation" in Sōbei Arakawa's *Gairai-go-Gaku Josetsu* (Introduction to the Study of Loan-words) (Nagoya, 1932).

<sup>11</sup>They are the book above mentioned and Minoru Umegaki's *Nihon Gairai-go no Kenkyū* (Study on Loan-words in Japan) (Osaka, 1943).

<sup>12</sup>By "Japanese English" the writer here means "English-like-words-made-in-Japan" which are only understood by Japanese people living in Japan. Here are some examples:

<i>Japanese English:</i>	The <i>English Words</i> from which the coinages are supposed to have derived:	<i>Their Meanings:</i>
hāhukōto	(half-coat)	a short overcoat like a topper.
romansu kā	(romance car)	a superexpress electric train of first class.
shatsu	(shirt)	underwear.
sakku	(sack)	a fingerstall or a condom.