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Semantic and Structural Shift Patterns of Gairaigo in Japan*

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the phenomenon of loan words in Japan (gairaigo) and to attempt a new analytical framework to describe gairaigo. This research derives from a sociolinguistic view of gairaigo as part of normal language diffusion. I employ a study of Japanese print media in order to clarify the social context of gairaigo and gairaigo usage in Japan.

A particular newspaper, The Asahi Shimbun is selectively studied over a 50-year period to ascertain whether there exist changing patterns of loan word usage over time or whether usage has remained stable.

Many issues have arisen regarding the usage of gairaigo in recent years, most related to the alleged ‘abuse’ of loan words in Japan. In order to grasp the contemporary gairaigo situation and its historical journey to the present, gairaigo is studied along the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Due to greater contact with English over the last half decade, the volume of loan words and gairaigo in Japanese has increased. This is nowhere more evident than in the media.

Hypothesis 2: Previous analytical frameworks may be now insufficient to account for the semantic and structural changes which might be seen in gairaigo usage over time. A new framework, (possibly drawing upon pidgin theory), may be productive.

From the viewpoint of language change, gairaigo is an example of normal language diffusion. At the same time, gairaigo usage in the popular media does impact upon English education. Many of the issues concerning gairaigo in Japanese society and in English education arise because gairaigo is commonly viewed as ‘English’. This thesis will discuss the issue of gairaigo from various points of view.

As I shall show, in Japan there is a body of social concern that “borrowing has gone too far”. The criticism of gairaigo is typically based on the standpoint of ‘language purity’: fear of its volume, its incursion upon the territory of Japanese, and the problem of confusion between English and gairaigo usage (due to semantic change and abbreviation).

Meanwhile, a common view expressed in western literature, the media in particular, is that gairaigo is voracious. Consider this example from the article, “Japan’s Favorite Import From America: English” says:

“All languages borrow foreign words, of course, but Japanese has gone further than most.” (The New York Times: Feb. 21, 1995).

Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, there is no comparative, objective

evidence cited here as to how indeed Japanese has “gone further than most”. Articles in the Asahi Shimbun specifically express ‘cultural fear’:

“There is no point making up gairaigo to confuse ourselves when we learn English” (Asahi: Mar. 2, 1995)

and

“The abuse of gairaigo will kill the intelligence of Japanese and Japanese culture” (Asahi: Mar. 7, 2000).

Gairaigo, it is argued, seems to distract people from learning English because people still recognize gairaigo as a part of English. What may be needed is to understand gairaigo as a part of the Japanese language with its origin in English (or foreign languages). As soon as a word is borrowed and adapted, it becomes Japanese in ways of pronunciation, written characters, and meaning. Reischauer says:

...a number of English words as borrowed in Japanese to illustrate how greatly their pronunciations are distorted in order to fit them into the simple Japanese phonetic system. (Reischauer, 1977: 396)

Without this recognition, English learners make errors according to the meaning of gairaigo instead of meaning of English. However, could English instructors encourage the use of gairaigo as positive advantage in English vocabulary? Could gairaigo be a help rather than hindrance to English learning? This idea suggests utilizing the great amount of available English gairaigo in order to maximize the English vocabulary with less effort of memorization for the learners.

Gairaigo has been kept out of the classroom and not discussed in school textbooks. Is there need to somehow clarify whether gairaigo is part of English or not? The fact is that gairaigo are already an issue in the present educational situation. English learners are already confused by gairaigo when they try to speak or write English. For example, the majority of college students in my English class recognize ‘dump’ as meaning large or heavy. It came from gairaigo ‘*danpu kaa*’ which is large heavy truck. The usage of gairaigo and its relation to English should be discussed in English education, rather than ignored them.

Another major issue with gairaigo is its alleged increasing volume. The volume of gairaigo has increased along with the new technology and new products imported from the west, significantly after WW II. As the materials are imported, the names and foreign words are imported and adapted. It is only natural to see more western names of persons and places written in gairaigo form (*katakana*) are seen in media or public when Japanese have more contact and relations with other languages.

According to a standard Japanese dictionary the *Koujien*, 16.6% of the total number of words contained are gairaigo in 1991 (see Table 1 on the next page). Whereas the same dictionary edited in 1955 contained gairaigo 12.7% of total number of words (see Table 2). From these numbers, it seems as though Japanese words are disappearing and gairaigo has replaced them.

This is only a natural language phenomenon. Some words always disappear and new words appear. From this standpoint, gairaigo is in the same situation. There are sixty-two gairaigo words present in 1955 edition which have disappeared in the 1991 edition of *Koujien*. The volume of gairaigo increases just as Japanese words increase and in, both cases, words disappear.

Table 1 Volume of gairaigo in Japanese dictionary of 1991

1991 publication (fourth edition, pp.1-104):

Words start with “a” / ゃ / ぁ /	5914 words	100%	
Gairaigo	979 words	16.6%	
Gairaigo proper nouns	266 words	4.5%	(27.2% of gairaigo)
Gairaigo nouns	671 words	11.3 %	(68.5 % of gairaigo)
Gairaigo verbs	17 words	0.3 %	(1.7 % of gairaigo)
Other gairaigo	25 words	0.4 %	(2.6 % of gairaigo)

Table 2 Volume of gairaigo in Japanese dictionary of 1955

1955 publication (first edition, pp.1-82):

Words start with “a” / ゃ / ぁ /	5824 words	100%	
Gairaigo	737 words	12.7%	
Gairaigo proper nouns	213 words	3.7%	(28.9% of gairaigo)
Gairaigo nouns	475 words	8.2%	(64.5% of gairaigo)
Gairaigo verbs	21 words	0.4%	(2.8% of gairaigo)
Other gairaigo	28 words	0.5%	(3.8% of gairaigo)

Replacing Japanese with gairaigo can be examined by looking at the same word over the time. For example, *kaisha-in* (company employee) has been replaced by *saraiiman* (salary-man) and then later replaced by ‘businessman’. However, this does not mean that the Japanese word *kaisha-in* has disappeared. It is still used as a neutral term. The word *saraiiman* is often used to designate a hard working, work oriented, stereotypical Japanese man. It sometimes denotes a negative image. The word businessman was adapted after *saraiiman* had come to carry a stronger negative image.

All three words have different definitions and used at different situations. The replacing situation with gairaigo does not necessarily destroy Japanese, but it suggests co-existence for different purposes.

Gairaigo brings many other issues to the world of the Japanese language. For example, there is a view that gairaigo is a symbol of the new rather than language which delivers content. In other words, gairaigo is said to lose its function as a language and become signs and marks symbolizing something.

Another issue apart from English education for Japanese learners, the alleged abuse of gairaigo in Japanese leads to difficulties for foreigners who study Japanese. Then there is the language purity issue. Gairaigo is considered as a

disregard of traditional Japanese and spoiler of its beauty. Is one possible solution a change in attitude? If gairaigo is considered as a part of Japanese, can some of the issues above be addressed?

Languages are always in contact situation, and Pidgin languages are the result of pidginisation process. In one perspective, gairaigo is the result of the Japanization process in a situation where Japanese contacts with foreign languages. In order to see gairaigo as part of natural language change, some similarities between the changing patterns of gairaigo through Japanization and pidginisation can be fruitfully discussed.

Even though there is popular criticism of gairaigo, in fact very few analytical studies are done in the previous gairaigo studies. For example, Honna (1995) categorized gairaigo into seven borrowing patterns. The categories of gairaigo according to Honna are: semantic narrowing and shift, Japanese phrasings of English, tail abbreviation, acronyms, abbreviations of compounds, Japanese words combined with English loans, and word play.

Ishiwata (1985) categorized seven circumstances or purposes of gairaigo establishment. They are; to express new concepts and ideas, to express new image, to replace old gairaigo, technical terms of professionalization period, influence of internationalization period, to express euphemism, and originates in language structure.

Previous studies explain the gairaigo situation from some standpoints, but not sufficient to convince us why gairaigo is not harmful to Japanese. The criticism toward gairaigo and issues involved with gairaigo still remain unless gairaigo is analyzed from another viewpoint and a new framework provided.

In order to analyze gairaigo in Japan, I examine gairaigo in a particular newspaper, the Asahi shimbun. The changing patterns and attitudes towards gairaigo are revealed most conservatively in newspapers, which are the rulebook, as it were, for common gairaigo usage in the society.

The Asahi Shimbun is one of the four major national newspapers¹ in Japan and it claims itself, is the most conservative in selecting new words and concepts. Gairaigo appears on Asahi Shimbun are considered as common to most of the readers instead of temporary words that are only used with trend.

The change of structure and semantics of gairaigo over the last fifty years in selective fields of economics, culture, society, and sports are analyzed. Finally, this paper proposes a new analytical framework for gairaigo.

In order to collect data as randomly and equally as possible, gairaigo data was gathered from the morning papers on April 1st in each selected years. Newspapers immediately after the WWII did not have a good number of pages because of the shortage of paper. This situation lasted until 1952. In this research, the Asahi morning newspaper on April 1st at every five year interval starting from 1952 was scrutinized.

The amount of gairaigo may depend on the topic being reported. Certain topics have many loan words. From the contents of edited Asahi Shimbun back numbers, the sections on economics, society, culture, and sports are selected. And all articles in each field on April 1st are examined. The contents of 1957 were not available, so that years of 1952, 1962, 1967, 1972, 1977, 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1997 were the final years to be analyzed.

Figures 1 and 2 (see next page) focus on the volume of gairaigo in each field.

Figure 2 shows the trend lines of percentages of gairaigo in economics, culture, society, and sports sections. From graphs of Figure 1 and 2, the volume of

gairaigo in sports section has always been the largest. This can be explained that most of current sports were introduced from the west and their related words were loans. And gairaigo in culture section are slowly increasing. After the WWII, Japan has been positive about adapting western, especially American culture. The sections of culture and sports are the fields where the west has large influence and impact, so that the amount of gairaigo tends to be large and increasing.

In the field of economics, the amount of gairaigo is keeping its line vertical through 1952 to 1997. However, it is slightly decreasing in society section. The society section deals with Japanese local society and has less contact with international scenes. Therefore, gairaigo is not used as frequently as other sections. If gairaigo in society section is the one people use in their daily communication and the volume is so small, why people feel that there is flood of gairaigo in Japanese society? It is because the gap between the 'gairaigo used in daily life' and 'gairaigo used in professional fields' has become larger. Especially, if only 'gairaigo used in professional fields', in other words, 'uncommon gairaigo to ordinary people' increases, people would feel that there is flood of gairaigo.

Gairaigo appeared in Asahi Shimbun seem to have some kinds of patterns in its semantic and structural shifting process. The observation brings up the certain patterns and categories of gairaigo. Some of the gairaigo patterns had been discussed in the previous gairaigo studies, however they do not quite cover all the recent trend of changing. I had discovered a set of gairaigo patterns from closer analysis and larger number of data from newspapers.

Figure 3 (Lexico-Gramatical patterns of gairaigo: Three patterns and sub-categories) shows gairaigo patterns which all gairaigo should fall into at least one of the categories. The patterns consist of mainly three shift patterns: semantic shift patterns, structural shift patterns, and semantic-structural shift patterns. Each Semantic shift patterns and structural shift patterns have several types of sub-categories, and semantic-structural shift patterns are basically the combinations of semantic shift and structural shift patterns.

The gairaigo patterns in Figure 3 [See page 57] are listed as below. The figure also provides examples of each pattern and category.

- 1) Semantic Focusing - [SF]
- 2) Semantic Expanding - [SE]
- 3) Combination of [SF] and [SE] - [SF * SE]
- 4) Abbreviation [A]
 - 4)-1 with 2 syllables - [A2]
 - 4)-2 with 3 syllables - [A3]
 - 4)-3 with 4 syllables - [A4]
 - 4)-4 compounds of [A2] - [A2+A2]
- 5) Gairaigo + Other Language [G+OL]
- 6) Other Language + Abbreviation with 2 syllables - [OL+G{A2}]
- 7) Gairaigo Coinage
- 8) [SF * A]
- 9) [SF * {A2+A2}]
- 10) [SF * {G+OL}]
- 11) [SE * A]
- 12) [SE * {A2+A2}]

13) [SE * {G+OL}]

These are general patterns of gairaigo, and there are some exceptions and more complex combinations. The following sections will explain the process of shifting from English words to gairaigo in each pattern and category in details with examples given in Figure 3.

Looking at the data as I have done many times, one aspect has begun to strike me with such force. Repeatedly, I have found myself exclaiming, “It looks like a pidgin!” What follows is a tentative discussion of the issue – which desires a wider ranging and vigorous discussion in its own right – of the nature of pidgin, its composition and function. The remarks that I make here are tentative and speculative, but I hope sufficiently probing so as to stimulate further research in this field.

Many of the previous studies on gairaigo viewed it as ‘a special case of language change’ or as ‘wrong’ to be used in Japanese. However, if gairaigo has certain language constraints and regulations, gairaigo can be called a part of the language. In this section, I suggest that gairaigo is an example of normal language diffusion by making comparisons with pidgin languages and their grammars.

The Japanization process from English to gairaigo has certain patterns of change. In this section, the grammatical change patterns will be discussed in relation to the process of pidginization and interlanguage theories.

Pidgin is the result of the pidginization process in a language contact situation. And gairaigo can be considered as one of the results of Japanization process in a situation where Japanese makes contact with foreign languages. Therefore, gairaigo, or even Japanese language itself, can be considered one type of pidgin. From a number of past studies, there is a hypothesis that the various pidgins which have different origins and histories of language contact situations have certain common characteristics or similarities. It has been explained that pidgins are similar not because there is a proto-pidgin, but because universal constraints function on any language in contact to simplify the language.

According to the universal grammar, humans have natural ability to acquire languages. In a situation where more than two languages meet, such a simplification mechanism creates pidgin for each other to understand. Pidgin is actually similar to a kind of language that someone would talk to a baby, a foreigner, or person who has hard of hearing.

Through the previous studies of European pidgin languages, several common characteristics were found. These languages seem to share similar simplification processes such as reduction of irregularity and surplus of language. Some of such grammatical characteristics apply to gairaigo in Japanese.

One of gairaigo’s features is the possibility of over-generalization. Ellis writes:

Language learners in both first and second language acquisition have been observed to produce errors like “comed” which can be explained as extensions of some general rule to items not covered by this rule in the target language. This process is referred to as ‘over-generalization’.
(Ellis, 1985: 301)

In second language acquisition, over-generalization of target language rules is widely commented on in the error analysis literature. Avoiding exceptions is one of the main ways in which the learner tries to simplify the learning task.

This simplification can apply to the gairaigo process as well. Gairaigo includes words like *paneraa* “paneler” (panelist), or *anbaransu* “unbalance” (imbalance) which are over-generated expressions of using -er and un- for irregular expressions. Selinker (1972) suggests over-generalization of target language, as one of the main principal processes operated in interlanguage. Interlanguage is the term coined by Selinker to refer to the systematic knowledge of a second language which is independent of both the learner’s first language and the target language (Ellis, 1985: 171-172).

Gairaigo can also be observed as a kind of interlanguage which is fossilized during the learner process and failed to reach target language competence. If such a universal process, over-generalization, applies to the Japanization process of gairaigo, they must be on the route of language development.

Japanization process of loan words to create gairaigo can be explained as a type of general pidginization of languages in contact. It follows the rule of simplification mechanism which also relates to errors in second language acquisition. However, the purpose of pidginization of language is to understand each other in a situation where people speak different mother tongues. In case of gairaigo, the purpose of Japanization is to adapt foreign words in acceptable form for Japanese. Generally, pidgin has a target language and a native language. Then an interlanguage-like pidgin is created, whereas gairaigo was not targeted to acquire any language.

Gairaigo is only one of various elements that constitute the Japanese language. The Japanese language itself is the result of long history of pidginization process between various languages.

So, is Japanese a Creole? Creole language is stabilized pidgin language which is used as a mother tongue of a person or a community. In this sense, Japanese language can be called as a type of Creole for the amount of gairaigo from many European languages since 1543, and Chinese and other Asian languages even long before that. Maher (1996) proposed that:

In recasting Japanese as the product of heterogeneous sociolinguistic pressures, I suggest that the most suitable characterization of Japanese is that of a pidgin-creole. (Maher, 1996: 31)

The pidginization of Japanese is still in its process which produce existence of a pidgin and a Creole synchronically in Japanese society.

Todd (1974) points out several characteristics of pidgin and Creole grammars. They are: 1) Absence of number distinction, 2) Disagreement of the subject and the predicate, 3) Absence of verb conjugation, 4) Serial verb, and 5) Reduplication.

Studying these features of pidgin, some of them are equivalent to the features of gairaigo.

1) Absence of number distinction

When English-based pidgins and Creoles are compared with English it becomes clear that there has been a reduction in the number of grammatical devices employed, ... There are no synthetic plurals of the ‘man/men’ or ‘table/tables’ type. Instead, in pidgins and Creoles, nouns

are invariable, like ‘sheep’” (Todd, 1974:14).

The nouns of pidgins lack in plural marking. The plural is formed by the addition of the pronouns and adjectives (e.g. ‘many’) to the singular form. For example, ‘men’ would be indicated as ‘man them’, ‘many man’ or add the number of the men as, ‘two man’. This is an example from Hawaiian pidgin English (Simonson, 1981); “We wen meet Jane dem at the movie.” (We met Jane and other friends at the movie).

In case of gairaigo, the nouns usually lack in plural marking, gairaigo abbreviations. However, Japanese language do not use plural declension for nouns, so that it is difficult to say that absence of number distinction with gairaigo is part of the universal simplification of pidgin features. The plural in Japanese is formed by the addition of the pronouns, adjectives, or noun + “-tachi” or “-ra”. In other words, Japanese language itself follows the rule of pidgin plural marking.

There are few gairaigo with plural marking such as *topikkusu* (topics) or *shuuzu* (shoes). However, these are taken in as plural forms at the adaption without the recognition. In fact, many people still have not recognized that *pantsu* (pants) is the plural form of pant. Therefore, these words are not treated as plural. One might say “I only have one *shuuzu*. Where is the other *shuuzu*?”, and it is grammatically correct as Japanese.

2) Disagreement of the subject and the predicate

As Todd explains, “There is no concordial agreement between subject and predicate in pidgins and creoles. Both noun and verb are invariable” (Todd, 1974: 16). In pidgin languages, the subject and the predicate do not agree. And the noun and the verb do not have inflection and conjugation. Generally, the loan words are used unmarked or the base form of the word, and the nouns are singular.

Gairaigo also has such feature, of absence of verb conjugation which will be closely discussed next, and nouns are usually singular. The singular nouns are possibly the influence from Japanese language because Japanese usually do not employ plural form for nouns.

However, as it has been mentioned in the section above (Absence of number distinction), there are some cases that plural nouns or marked verbs are employed as gairaigo. In these cases, the words did not make the change after the words are borrowed, but they were loaned as the marked form. For example, shoes, boots, socks are *shuuzu*, *buutsu*, *sokkusu* in gairaigo. The singular form of shoe, boot, and sock were never employed.

In pidgin language, there are some similar examples as well. The word *tit* originates in teeth which is the plural form of tooth, and *brok* comes from broke which is the past tense of break. Therefore, including the fact of there are some exceptions, both gairaigo and pidgin have a feature of disagreement of the subject and the predicate.

3) Absence of verb conjugation

In pidgins and creoles, verbs lack in past and future tense conjugation.

Since the verb form is invariable, distinctions relating to time and continuity of action are either understood from the context or are indicated by adverbials or a set of free morphemes which usually precede the verb. (Todd, 1974: 16)

The past and future tense are formed by adding ‘wen’ (equivalent to past) and ‘go’ or ‘goeen’ (go or going, equivalent to future) in Hawaiian pidgin English:

“You wen spahk da guy?” (Did you speak to the guy?)
 “Bimeby I goeen mek saimin.” (I think I’ll make some soup.)
 (Simonson, 1981: 98, 32)

Also, there is a tendency for pidgin grammar that verbs are expressed in the single form. Therefore, it eliminates agreement markers such as third person singular present tense. For example;

“My Moddah say I cannah go out wit’ choo tonight.”
 (My mother says I cannot go out with you tonight.)
 (Simonson, 1981:14)

Another example from Tok pisin, follows such tendency as well as Hawaiian pidgin English. The equivalent utterances in Tok pisin show no variation in the verb form or the noun.

“Sikspela man i kam” (Six man come) / Six men come.
 “Wanpela man i kam” (One man come) / One man comes.
 (Romaine, 1988: 27-28)

The pidgin verbs are kept in simple singular present tense by eliminating redundant expressions. This grammatical tendency applies to Japanese gairaigo in Japanese. The gairaigo verbs are usually formed in gairaigo + *suru* (to do). And gairaigo verbs do not have conjugations at any situations of sentences. This form of gairaigo is explained as, gairaigo + other language, in section 5.1.3.

Examples of gairaigo verbs are; “*apuroochi-suru*” (to approach), “*ataku-suru*” (to attack), “*arenji-suru*” (to arrange), and so on. The past tense are formed by adding “*shita*” instead of “*suru*”. Therefore, “*apuroochi-shita*”, “*ataku-shita*”, and “*arenji-shita*” would be the past tense for the words above and the verbs themselves are kept in simple singular form.

Bickerton (1981) had given an interesting example of Hawaiian Pidgin English (HPE).

Typical of very early HPE as produced by speakers born in Japan are the following:

/1/ *mista karsan-no tokoro tu eika sel shite*

Mr. Carson-POSS place two acre sell do

‘I sold two acres to Mr. Carson’s place’ (Bickerton, 1981:9)

In this example, Japanese *shite* (conjunction form of *suru* and *shita*) is in use. These complement verbs are used with gairaigo in Japanese and Hawaiian Pidgin English.

In addition, auxiliary verb like ‘can’ (*dekiru*) is also used with Japanese and gairaigo verbs. The above examples would be, “*apuroochi-dekiru*” (can approach), “*ataku-dekiru*” (can attack), and “*arenji-dekiru*” (can arrange). Bickerton also had given the *-dekiru* example from HPE.

/13/ *rai... rai... ano buk eniting boro dekiru tokoro*

li... li... that book anything borrow can place

‘ Li... Li... That place where you can borrow any of the books’

(Bickerton, 1981: 14)

There are no variation of verb changing by plurality or third person singular form in Japanese language, gairaigo verbs, or many of pidgin languages.

4) Serial verb

The use of serial verb is an indication of a pidgin language or pidginization. As Todd says, “serial verb structures occur more widely in pidginized languages

than in their non-pidginized relation” (Todd, 1974: 17). However, gairaigo itself does not necessarily have serial verb in its grammar. Except, if gairaigo + *-suru* verb or gairaigo + *-ru* verb forms are considered as serial verb, it can meet the indication of pidgin.

Interestingly, Japanese have serial verb. For example, *tori nozoku* (take, remove), or *mochi hakobi* (hold, carry) are commonly used in Japanese language.

5) Reduplication

Todd explains that reduplication is used in not all, but in most of the languages in order to make an impact or to emphasize. The reduplication is acceptable in standard English as well. It is acceptable to say, “It’s a tiny little cat.” However, it is not common to use such reduplication in gairaigo.

The reduplication is used not only to emphasize in pidgin language. It is used “when pidgin speakers had a limited vocabulary, reduplication was a very simple method of extending it” (Todd, 1974: 18) to indicate plural nouns and to make different definitions from a word. In Japanese, it is commonly seen to use reduplication in this usage, especially with *kango*. For example, *toki-doki* (sometimes) is reduplication of *toki* (time) and *shou-shou* (a little) is reduplication of *shou* (a little).

6) Other feature - Change in parts of speech

English verbs become nouns in gairaigo without affixation of “*suru*” (to do). Therefore *anaansu* (announce) and *sain* (sign) are used as nouns. Also, affixation of “*-na*” creates gairaigo adjectives. Examples are, “*shokku-na*” (shocking), “*biggu-na*” (big), “*abauto-na*” (about), and so on.

Gairaigo can still be nouns without *-ment* or *-ness* which are usually affixed to make nouns in English. For example, *jajji* (Judgment), *apaato* (apartment), or *hoomusikku* (home sickness) are all used as nouns. Also, in order to make adverbs from adjectives, gairaigo uses affixation of “*-ni*” instead of *-ly* in English. Examples are, “*sumuuzu-ni*” (smoothly), “*pawafuru-ni*” (powerfully), and “*komikaru-ni*” (comically).

Similarly, affixation of “*-ru*” to abbreviated verbs make gairaigo verb. For example, “*dabu-ru*” (double + “*suru*”), “*torabu-ru*” (trouble + “*suru*”), and “*demo-ru*” (*demonstrate* + “*suru*”). These are much more modified form to incorporate with Japanese grammar and sometimes they even appear in *hiragana* writing in text.

There are some common features that Bickerton mentioned about Creole languages that suit Japanese language. For example, the lack of articles and syntactic structure of question.

There seems, in contrast, to be hardly any variation at all in the way that

Creoles handle articles. (Bickerton, 1981: 56)

Japanese, as well as most of Creole languages, do not have articles. As Bickerton’s examples;

/13/ Jan bai di buk

‘John bought the book’

/14/ Jan bai wan buk

‘John bought a book’

/15/ Jan bai buk

‘John bought a book or books’

(Bickerton, 1981: 56)

In Japanese, *di* (the) in /13/ would be replaced by *ano* (that), *wan* (a) in /14/ would be replaced by *ichi* (one), and usually the sentence do not include particular articles. Also, Bickerton states;

No Creole shows any difference in syntactic structure between questions and statements. Question-particles, where they occur, are sentence-final and optional:

/75/ GC: *i bai di eg-dem*

'He bought the eggs'

/76/ GC: *i bai di eg-dem?*

'Did he buy the eggs?' (GC=Guyanese Creole)

(Bickerton, 1981: 70)

In general, Japanese language express question sentences by raising the end of the sentence, but the syntactic structure do not change. Usually, words that are equivalent to "isn't it?" or "right?" should be used.

It seems like the features of pidgin (Todd) apply to many gairaigo, and some features of Creole (Bickerton) apply to Japanese language. I would simply compare the characteristics of pidgins, creoles, gairaigo, and Japanese according to the pidgin characteristics of The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics (Figure 4 on pages 64-65).

The fact that gairaigo tends to have similar features with pidgins brings up an assumption - is gairaigo pidgin? Pidgin is not necessarily a language, it is more of a language condition. Pidgin is a process in a situation where more than two languages meet. In this sense, gairaigo can be pidgin where Japanese meets English and other foreign languages.

Another question is -, is Japanese a creole? If gairaigo should be considered as a type of pidgin, the native speakers of Japanese which include gairaigo and even more *kango* (Chinese loans) has already established Japanese creole quite some time ago. There are some signs of creole in Japanese language, and it would make more sense for gairaigo situations if Japanese itself is creole.

However, this discussion needs much more detailed research on pidgin and creole in general, and the history of Japanese language. It would be another great theme for languages in contact situation contributively.

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Note

1. The average circulation in 2000 was: Yomiuri (10,230,000) Asahi (8,280,000),

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