# Literary Texts by H. Murakami in Terms of Intercultural Communication

Lyubov A. Kuryleva & Svetlana A. Boeva
Far Eastern National Technical University

The present study deals with the cultural influences on the works of Haruki Murakami. The analysis of intercultural interactions as well as of the intertextual references occurring in the texts under study revealed a cross-cultural geographical range presented by 24 countries of the world. Linguistic and cultural analysis of Murakami's works revealed a great number of *gairaigo*, numerous pretexts of non-Japanese origin belonging to various thematic groups, and words written in European languages. All these are peculiar to Murakami's creative work in the age of globalization and intercultural communication. The investigation also showed that the mechanism of intercultural communication is an artistic device used by Murakami to compose his literary texts. This device provides understanding of Japanese literature by readers of different cultural backgrounds that may explain the phenomenon of Murakami in the world culture.

Literary Texts by Murakami in Terms of Intercultural Communication

Due to constant cross-cultural encounters between different peoples and countries, the world is more internationalized and globalized than ever. This process is going at an accelerated rate now, thus the topicality of intercultural communication is beyond dispute. The paper presents the results of a study of the Western influence on Japanese culture using a linguistic and cultural approach.

Japan is commonly known as a society where tradition coexists and blends with modernity. The modernization of Japan that started in the Meiji period was a planned policy motivated by the recognition that the acquisition of Western methods and achievements in technology, science, and culture was necessary in a competitive world.

Japanese culture plays its role in the process of intercultural communication. Contemporary Japanese literature provides a dialogue between different cultures. Modern Japanese literature arouses a great interest; the literary works of such authors as Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Kawabata Yasunari, Abe Kobo, and Oe Kenzaburo are widely known.

The most popular writer of the end of the twentieth century is Haruki Murakami, whose literary works are of a great significance in the process of intercultural communication as they promote cultural interaction in today's globalized society. Thanks to the tremendous success of his books all over the world, Murakami has become known as a "phenomenon." His literary works received an immediate and controversial response from both readers and scholars. Most scholars in Japan and other countries investigated Murakami's fiction in the light of postmodern theory. Fuminobu Murakami argues, for example, that Haruki Murakami's works:

Allow the reader a glimpse of a postmodern world: a comfortable and cozy, yet mindless and anti-revolutionary world. At the same time, they also make us realize the features of modernity, its progress and beautiful love and its discrimination and suppression of others. We can see the two polarized forces of individualization and differentiation, underlying these features of modernity. (Murakami, 2005, p. 57)

Many researchers point out Murakami's frequent references to images originated in Euro-American culture (e.g., Aoki, 1996). These references are definitely of a great interest from the intercultural communication perspective. All cultural references in Murakami's texts deserve a special attention, so a deeper penetration into the nature and effect of these references is needed.

Critics claim that Murakami's individual style is much influenced by Western culture, particularly by Western music and literature which is reflected in his literary works (Seats, 2006; Strecher, 2002). For example, Tamotsu Aoki analyzed the historical period in which Murakami writes by examining the musical references found in his texts (Aoki, 1996). For his references to images of foreign cultures Murakami is often distinguished from other Japanese writers. No one would doubt a strong Western influence on Murakami's fiction. However scholars tend to overestimate the effect produced by American culture: "It is easy to see America through Murakami. And if he has been influenced by America, I should say this is one of the more endearing things about him. It is only one more proof that contemporary Japanese society has matured" (Aoki, 1996, p. 274). The present research shows that besides the United States of America there are 23 other countries of which the cultural and historic heritage is clearly reflected in Murakami's texts. This is what partially explains Murakami's phenomenon and leads one to conclude that Haruki Murakami is an intermediary in the intercultural communication process, introducing the whole world in his books.

The language of Murakami's literary works deserves a special mention. Previous research has proved that Murakami's emphatic use of Western references, crisp and curt sentences, far fetched metaphors, and witty dialogue has made him one of the most easily accessible Japanese authors to achieve international notoriety (Hedgepeth, 2001; Karatani, 1998). His texts are considered to be "the most translatable ones ever to appear on the international scene" (Strecher, 2002, p. 4).

It is common knowledge that language is a reflection of changes taking place in the culture of any society. Globalization and internationalization of Japanese culture find their immediate expressions in new, borrowed words. In this respect, the case of *gairaigo*, frequently found in Murakami's texts, is of much importance and interest. According to the Russian linguist V. M. Alpatov (2003), the Japanese language bears the traces of Japan's centuries-long isolation, but at the same time the features of Americanization and Europeanization of Japanese culture become more distinct. The Japanese language consists of three layers of vocabulary: (1) *yamato* or *wago*—lexis of Japanese origin; (2) *kango*—borrowings of Chinese origin written in Chinese hieroglyphs; and (3) *gairaigo*—lexical borrowings from European languages into Japanese, written with the help of syllabary *katakana*. The following scholars, who studied the problems of lexical borrowings from European languages into Japanese, can be mentioned here: Gottlieb (2005), Oshima (2005), Proshina (2001), and Sakagami (2000).

Thus, while studying culture, it is important to consider the language not just as a mechanism of communication and cognition but also as a cultural code of a nation because language and the way of thinking are interrelated. Verbal expression reflects those features of extralinguistic reality which are relevant for its culture. One sees the world from the angle which is imposed by one's mother-tongue, thus getting accustomed to the world conceptualization specific for a given culture. With acceleration of world's globalization and internalization, some of the issues mentioned above arouse the interest of many scholars (Nakano, 1995; Okada, 2003; Proshina, 2001).

## Method

In analyzing literary texts by Haruki Murakami, the first thing taken into consideration was direct and indirect forms of communication. The second step in this study was to define the role of *gairaigo* as markers of Western influence on Japan. Based on different pretexts, a few types of intertextuality were revealed in the texts.

The material of the research is Murakami's novels in Japanese: *Hear the Wind Sing*, *Pinball 1973*, *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, *Dance Dance Dance*, and *South of the Border*, *West of the Sun*. The English versions of the novels under study were used for citation purposes only.

The theoretical approach to the research was based on the dialogical principle developed by the Russian linguist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) and the theory of intertextuality introduced by the French scholar Julia Kristeva (1969). According to Bakhtin (1981), every utterance, every sentence is orientated dynamically, towards an anticipated implied response, is in dialogue with utterances that have already been made, and also in interaction with the social situation around it. In the novel, a special kind of dialogization is its main characteristic. For Bakhtin (1981), the discourse of the novel is heterogeneous and interactive: styles and voices of social groups, characters, and the narrator are interwoven. An interesting discovery that was made by Bakhtin was his finding of the possibility to connect the philosophical dialogical principle to the stylistic study of the speech of the other person.

Kristeva (1980) referred to texts in terms of two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of a text, and a vertical axis, which connects the text to other texts. The present research focuses on Kristeva's notion of a vertical axis. Kristeva (1969) argues that no text is free of other texts or is truly original; every text and every reading depends on prior codes, so even within a single text there can be a continual dialogue between the given text and other texts or utterances that exist outside it, literary and non-literary: either within that same period of composition, or in previous centuries. Kristeva defines intertextuality as utterances or texts in relation to other utterances or texts. She introduces a psychoanalytic element into the notion of intertextuality by suggesting that the intertextuality of the creator and the reader make them "subject-in-process" whose psychic identity is put into question.

## Results

Linguistic and cultural analysis of Murakami's novels revealed cross-cultural contacts in many different spheres of contemporary Japanese culture which started in the period of Meiji Restoration and is continuing now under the influence of globalization.

*Direct and Indirect Forms of Intercultural Communication*

Direct intercultural communication is found in direct dialogues between Murakami's characters belonging to different cultures. In the writer's texts there are heroes of Japanese origin and non-Japanese origin; the latter perform an important function in the narration which is peculiar to the literary style of Murakami. These heroes are the representatives of the following countries: China, the United States, Russia, Korea, France, England, Germany, India, Mongolia, Greece, Switzerland, and Spain.

Murakami often places his characters in a foreign country, that is, into an alien culture which forms a communicative environment and to a large extent determines an external context of communication. The writer's novels are characterized by a wide geographical coverage of the plots. With the exception of Japan, the events take place in 15 countries which form geographical context of communication: Korea, China, the United States, Vietnam, Canada, England, Malta, Mongolia, Russia, France, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Germany, and Finland. The overwhelming majority of the writer's literary heroes, placed into alien cultural environments, become the participants of intercultural communication.

The indirect form of intercultural communication in Murakami's novels is determined by his personages' reference to works and items of non-Japanese origin. The works of literature and philosophy, fine arts and architecture, music compositions, cinema and cartoons, and objects of household culture play the role of informative sources here. It should be noted that the heroes refer to a great variety of genres and styles of different time periods and cultures.

The majority of communication acts revealed in Murakami's works belong to the sphere of music. A piece of music may be either a source of information for a communicant or may play an important role in creating a situational atmosphere and be the background of a situation.

Referring to the works of world culture, Murakami's characters consciously or unconsciously join in the communication with the famous writers, poets and philosophers, artists and architects, composers and musicians, directors and actors of cinema and theatre, and designers. The purpose of these creative people is to convey their message to the public and to be recognized and appreciated by a society. While dealing with a piece of work, a communicant forms a certain opinion about the given work and its creator. When a communicative process flows smoothly, the work evokes a communicant's positive emotions and, to a larger or lesser extent, influences his personality and outlook.

*Language-and-Culture Contacts*

The language of Murakami's works also reflects the process of intercultural communication. The author brings lexical units and word combinations written in English, German, French, Italian, and Latin, and sentences and texts in English and German into his works. Such inclusions are naturally inserted into the Japanese text and bear the coloring of foreign cultures.

The heroes of his books use English in their speech when they quote foreign songs. The lexical units from English, German, and Latin languages are used in characters' speeches as a means of giving a more exact definition of a concept, of expressing thoughts when lexical means of the Japanese language prove insufficient. The usage of English, German, and

French may also indicate the heroes' nationality and may provide certain information concerning their hobbies, occupation, or a level of mastery of foreign languages.

The other cases of usage of the European languages' lexical units are determined by a speaker's desire to express ideas by means of one of the European languages (English, German, and Italian). The reasons for that may be the following: the concept is new for Japanese culture and does not exist in the Japanese language; in a speaker's opinion a foreign word expresses a concept more exactly; a speaker is not of Japanese origin and usage of lexical units of his native language seems more natural to him.

As a result of the linguistic and cultural analysis of the novel *A Wild Sheep Chase*, 900 *gairaigo* words have been singled out and further classified into 10 thematic groups according to their semantics. These groups are: "buildings and constructions" (e.g., hotel, apartment, bar), "food and kitchen ware" (e.g., bread, soup, coffee), "furniture and home appliances" (e.g., bed, door, cord), "people and professions" (e.g., girlfriend, waiter), "clothes and accessories" (e.g., lighter, shirt), "abstract notions" (e.g., metre, type, picnic), "transport facilities" (e.g., jeep), "music" (e.g., record), "building materials" (e.g., glass), and "parts of the body" (e.g., penis). The most frequently used *gairaigo* belong to the thematic group "furniture and home appliances." The linguistic analysis proved the fact that most of *gairaigo* came from English. It also showed that these loan words denote mainly the things of material culture which were alien to Japanese culture and which in the process of westernization were brought from Europe. The most frequent *gairaigo* used by Murakami denote the following concepts: hotel, beer, table, pocket, girlfriend, jeep, record, and glass. These loan words, having entered into Japanese as a result of cross-cultural interaction between Japan and Western countries, became symbols of Western culture. Thus, we may conclude that under the influence of the globalization process of cultures, foreign languages found their expressions in *gairaigo* and made a way into Japanese language and culture.

*Intertextuality as a Reflection of Cross-Cultural Dialogue*

The texts of Murakami's works perform a great communicative ability and dialogization as they contain a large number of references to cultures of other countries. For a reader, intertextuality functions as an important frame of reference which helps in the interpretation of a text. The text is a transformation of another, a common way that intertextuality works.

The following types of intertextuality have been revealed in Murakami's books: quotations, allusions, reminiscences, and paratextuality (the relation of the text to its title and epigraph). Using these references the writer introduces world culture into his works. Due to this, intertextuality in Murakami's novels reflects cross-cultural dialogue and provides intercultural communication.

Intertextuality is represented by different types of references to source texts of non-Japanese origin which are called pretexts. The examples of intertextuality were grouped according to seven types of pretexts: music, literature and philosophy, history and politics, traditions, fine arts and architecture, science, and drama and cinema. Most frequently used pretexts in Murakami's books belong to spheres of music, literature, and philosophy; the country referred to most often is the USA. The authors most frequently referred to are the American writer Kerouac and the Russian writer Dostoevsky. The philosophers, writers, and their works play an important role in the life and outlook formation of Murakami's characters.

The titles of some novels contain the intertext based on the music pretexts. The novels *Dance Dance Dance* and *Norwegian Wood* received their titles from the well-known songs of the musical groups Beach Boys and The Beatles. The reference to the American song "South of the Border" is used in the title of the novel *South of the Border, West of the Sun*. In Murakami's texts the names of musical groups Beach Boys" and The Beatles are most widely spread. In his novels intertextuality is very often embodied in quotations from Western songs which are introduced by the heroes who sing them.

The results of sampling of proper names belonging to the sphere of music show that Murakami refers both to modern and classical music. The Austrian composer Mozart seems to be a symbol of classical music in Murakami's texts because the author refers to this composer in every novel. Very often, intertextuality in the sphere of music characterizes the atmosphere of a particular situation, gives certain information concerning the heroes, and performs the function of characterization.

The three examples given below contain cinema and drama pretexts:

(a) The Dolphin Hotel, such that I was seeking, no longer existed. It didn't matter what it was I was looking for, the place was no more. And not merely gone, it'd been replaced by this idiotic **Star Wars** high-tech hotel-a-thon.
(b) One whole wall of the lounge was window, providing a sweeping panorama of Sapporo at night. **A Star Wars alien city set**.
(c) Two middle-aged men talking in a hush at a back table. Some very important matter by the look of things. A plot it assassinate **Darth Vader**? (Murakami, *Dance Dance Dance*, 2003, pp. 30-32)

These three examples indicate intertexts embodied in allusions to the American film *Star Wars* and to the negative personage of Darth Vader, who is a leader of the powers of darkness and symbolizes evil. The text about a new hotel, "Dolphin," is in dialogical relations with the plot of the film. The given pretexts add some images of fantasy and unreality to the description of the hotel. The pretexts, for a moment, place a reader in the world of *Star Wars*. The epithet used by the main hero and his ironical comment about the talk of two men at the bar show us his displeasure with what he has seen, and his regret that the old hotel "Dolphin" does not exist anymore. This evokes a reader's feeling that the new high-tech hotel with its luxury and perfection brings evil.

The example from the novel *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (Murakami, 2003, pp. 148-149) given below illustrates intercultural contacts in the sphere of literature and philosophy:

"It is a beautiful song."

I nodded. "It took me a long time to work out how complex it is, how there's so much more to it than just a pretty melody. It takes a special kind of musician to play it right," I said. "**Duke Ellington** and **Billy Strayhorn** wrote it a long time ago. Fifty-seven, I believe."

"When they say 'star-crossed', what do they mean?"

"You know—lovers born under an unlucky star. **"Unlucky lovers."** Here it's referring to **Romeo and Juliet**. **Ellington** and **Strayhorn** wrote it for a performance

at the Ontario Shakespeare Festival. In the original recording, Johnny Hodges' also sax was Juliet, and Paul Gonsalves played the Romeo part on tenor sax."

"Lovers born under an unlucky star," she said. "Sounds like it was written for the two of us."

The extract is a successive intertext: the author refers to two pretexts where the first allusion became a source of the second one. The music pretext is followed by the literature pretext. The characters then project the sense of music onto their relations, thus the music and Shakespeare's play symbolize love between them.

A high degree of dialogization of Murakami's literary texts represented in references to more than 370 various pretexts reflects a dynamic communication between Japan and 24 countries in different cultural spheres. Through intertextuality he makes a Japanese reader familiar with the cultural achievements of other countries, thus the role of Murakami as an intermediary between different cultures is of great significance. His creative writing promotes people's coming together and helps readers understand the peculiarities of different cultures in a way the author himself understands them.

## Discussion

Murakami's novels perfectly illustrate contemporary Japan. A reader can see clearly that Western countries have played a significant role in the formation of present-day Japanese culture. The novels abound in Western references, giving a reader a bright and vivid picture of a modern, westernized Japanese culture. They are characterized by a broad cross-cultural geographical range and a high level of dialogization of the texts belonging to different epochs and cultural spheres.

Intercultural encounters between Japan and Western cultures, and the English language itself exert much influence on the Japanese language. *Gairaigo* gain popularity and become characteristic of not only contemporary Japanese language but also of modern Japanese society and culture. Thus, we consider all the examples of intercultural communication found in the novels to be the markers of cross-cultural interactions between Japan and Western countries.

The present research focuses on the intercultural communication process, considering acts of direct and indirect communication as well as intertextual references, proving a high level of dialogization of Murakami's texts. A future study of Murakami's intertextuality may be conducted from a cultural identity perspective. Another direction for further research is a comparative analysis of Murakami's novels and the literary works of the writers whose names are most frequently found in Murakami's texts as literary references. From this perspective, writers' individual styles, characters, and plots of novels are to become the objects of comparison. A frequent mention of famous names in Murakami's texts is likely to mean more than just the author's random choice. Famous writers Haruki Murakami refers to may have influenced his style of writing, his way of thinking, or even his own cultural identity.

## References

Alpatov, V. M. (2003). *Japan: Language and society.* Moscow: Muravei.

Aoki, T. (1996). *Murakami Haruki and contemporary Japan.* Richmond, Surrey, England: Curzon Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogue imagination: Four essays.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Gottlieb, N. (2005). *Language and society in Japan.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hedgepeth, M. (2001). *Haruki Murakami and the new Japan.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Karatani, K. (1998). *Origins of modern Japanese literature.* London: Duke University Press.

Kristeva, J. (1969). *Simiotike: Recherches pour une semanalyse* [Semiotics: Researches on semic analysis]. Paris: Seuil.

Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Murakami, F. (2005). *Postmodern, feminist and postcolonial currents in contemporary Japanese culture.* Tokyo: Routledge.

Murakami, H. (1985). *Pinball 1973*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.

Murakami, H. (1987). *Hear the wind sing.* Tokyo: Kodansha English Library.

Murakami, H. (1991). *Hard-boiled wonderland and the end of the world.* New York: Vintage International.

Murakami, H. (2003). *A wild sheep chase.* London: Vintage.

Murakami, H. (2003). *Dance dance dance*. London: Vintage.

Murakami, H. (2003). *South of the border, west of the sun*. London: Vintage.

Nakano, H. (1995). *The Japanese society: Sociological essays in Japanese studies*. Tokyo: Kamawanu Publishing House.

Okada, S. (2003). *Japanese writers and the West*. Tokyo: Palgrave Macmillan.

Oshima, K. (2005). *Gairaigo usage in Japan: From cultural controversy to a new analytical framework*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Proshina, Z. G. (2001). *The English language and East-Asian culture*. Vladivostok, Russia: Far Eastern National University.

Sakagami, S. (2000). *Gairaigo: The semantics of western loanwords in Japanese*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Seats, M. (2006). *Murakami Haruki: The simulacrum in contemporary Japanese culture*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Strecher, M. C. (2002). *Dances with sheep. The quest for identity in the fiction of Murakami Haruki.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.