

Enjoy Writing Japanese

“The Language of the Devil”

Those who have tried to master the Japanese language may have been puzzled at the following three characteristics; (1) there are two or more different personal pronouns for “I” and “you,” (2) the system of the honorific expression is complicated, and (3) three different types of characters are used in combination for writing.

The first characteristic particularly puzzles foreign people. There are several Japanese words meaning “I,” and many meaning “you.” Which “I” or which “you” is used depends on whether the speaker is a man or a woman, an adult or a child, and on the situation the speaker is in. What is even more troublesome is that, irrespective of a variety of the subjects, the Japanese sentences often omit those subjects altogether. It seems mysterious. This is why *TIME* magazine called Japanese “the language of the devil” in their feature article on Japan a few years ago.

In English, the subject is omitted in the imperative mode because naturally the subject is the second person, “you.” In diaries, we write: “Got up at 7,” and “Was very happy to see him.” The subject can be omitted because it is clear that it is “I” who got up and who was very happy. We just say “Welcome” in casual situations. It is “I” or “we” who welcome, and it is “you” who are welcomed. But, we write “I (We) welcome you” on the invitation card to our home party. In the Japanese language, however, it is usual not to mention “I” and “you,” and this is the case not only in spoken but also in written Japanese. Who (I or you) is the subject can be understood by the verb. This fact relates to the honorific expressions.

Most students learning Japanese try, struggle and give up mastering the honorific expressions. It is complicated and difficult even for Japanese. Japanese can’t necessarily use them properly.

Simply speaking, words are added in the English honorific expressions while words are changed or different in the Japanese ones. In English, adding “sir/madam” or “Mr./Ms.” expresses respect. The adverbs of “kindly” and “graciously” in “Will you kindly show me the way to the station?” and “Graciously accept this gift,” respectively, are directed to “you” (the second person), and therefore these adverbs act as words of respect. “Sincerely” in “I sincerely sympathize with you” and “humbly” in “I humbly propose that...” are used for the first personal pronouns. Those adverbs, therefore, mean modesty.

“Please” is a polite expression. “*Please* open the door” is more polite than “Open the door.” “*Would you please* open the door?” is even more polite, and “*Would you mind* opening the door?” is the most polite¹. The addition of the italicized word or phrase above increases politeness. Politeness is one of the modes to express respect.

In the Japanese honorific expressions, on the other hand, the verbs are changed. I don’t show the examples in Japanese here, but I know only one English example in which the verb is changed. In English one says, “I will come to you as soon as possible” when one imagines oneself in the other person’s position, instead of “I will go to you...” For these reasons, it is said that the Japanese honorific is verbal while the English one is adverbial.

Despite of the seemingly confusing characteristics about the subject and the honorific expression, one does not have to hesitate trying Japanese. Japanese is generally regarded as one of the easy languages to begin to speak. The pronunciation is phonetically simple - because of fewer sounds and a monotonous intonation - which enables the beginner to increase rapidly speaking and listening comprehensions. Restrictions on the sentence structures are not severe. This is why subjects can be omitted as mentioned above. Although I don’t intend to disappoint you, Japanese is not difficult to speak. By this token, many foreign visitors master well enough their daily needs after only a year’s stay in Japan. A Canadian woman who was working at a Japanese restaurant in Jasper was a surprisingly fluent Japanese speaker. I have seldom met foreigners who speak such beautiful Japanese. She, however, stayed only one year in Japan. She must have studied hard, though. I heard she can read novels in Japanese.

On the other hand, numerous sounds and intonation of Western languages are difficult for most Japanese to master. These factors make the listening comprehension of Japanese people progress very slowly. It also makes it hard to understand a Japanese person who speaks English. (But the most

¹ **P. J. Poole’s comment:** According to some people, I don’t think it (“Would you mind opening the door?”) is always more polite than ‘please open the door.’ Nan (his wife) first thought it more polite, but changed her mind. It is polite – but polite by being indirect, whereas the other is polite by the use of the request, *please*. Here, the verb changes – from a direct *open* to one asking about the other person’s attitude, *would you mind* -. But your point holds in general. **SN:** Practically, which expression is the most polite largely depends on the tone of voice.

guilty is the English education system, as pointed out by P. J. Poole, and I agree.)

In sharp contrast to spoken Japanese, written Japanese is difficult or difficult to approach for most of foreigners. The Japanese language has three types of characters: *kanji*, *hiragana* and *katakana*. They are used in combination. Of six letters in a phrase of 「カナダと日本」 (Canada and Japan, 「日本」 is pronounced as Nippon), the first three letters are *katakana*, the fourth is *hiragana*, and the last two are *kanji*.

One of other general characteristics of the Japanese language is that Japanese sentences, and Korean and Chinese ones as well, can be written both horizontally and vertically. Vertical and horizontal writing are not used in combination, like crossword puzzles, of course. When vertically written, lines progress from right to left. For reference, when horizontally, we write and read from left to right, and for further reference, when vertically from top to bottom. One side of my visiting card of JAERI is written in Japanese vertically, while the other side is written in English horizontally. Unfortunately the software installed in my Macintosh does not have the vertical-printing function, so I can't show you examples in this note.

Japanese is not the same as Korean and Chinese

To the eyes of non-East Asian people, Chinese, Korean and Japanese writing may seem the same or seem little different. It is partly true. There are similarities between Chinese and Japanese, and between Korean and Japanese.

Because Japanese people adopted Chinese characters a long time ago, some Japanese *kanji* characters are the same as or similar to Chinese characters. But, the readings and the meanings are considerably different. There are also many "made-in-Japan" *kanji* characters. The structure of a sentence of Chinese is thoroughly different from that of Japanese. Chinese is said to be similar to many Indo-European languages regarding the order of words. Chinese and Japanese people in fact can't communicate very well either orally or literally. Several years ago, a Chinese civil engineer in his 50s visited JAERI. He understood only Chinese and Russian. We had no common languages. We managed to communicate by writing Chinese characters. The elderly Chinese understand Russian because they were forced to learn it in schools when China was much more friendly with the late Soviet Union.

A similar point between Korean and Japanese is the structure of sentences; the order of words in affirmative sentences are in general (Subject) + (Object) + (Verb). In most of Indo-European languages and Chinese, the order is S+V+O. Despite the similarity, linguists do not consider Korean and Japanese as sibling languages. The two languages have no common pronunciation, and characters are totally different from each other. The Korean characters are quite different also from Chinese ones. It's Greek to me.

Korean's system of characters is Hangeul (Hangul, Hankul). The Hangeul, and Indian and Inuit languages as well, is unusual in the world in terms of the fact that who invented it and when are documented. It was invented in 1433 by King Sejong. (In fact it was probably made by scholars in his court.) Conventionally, Korean people have used Hangeul as their own language and sometimes use it with Chinese characters in combination. The reason for incorporating Chinese characters into Hangeul is attributable to the ideographical feature of Chinese; long Hangeul words are shortened and homonym is easy to distinguish and to understand.

In short, Japan and Korea have their own characters and share some Chinese characters, using Japanese-Chinese in combination and Korean-Chinese in combination. However, the readings and the meanings of the same characters are considerably different in China, Korea and Japan.

Please don't expect, therefore, that you can easily get to use Korean and Chinese even after you master Japanese, although you may feel more comfortable approaching Chinese characters. I had a Korean and a Chinese friend in Pinawa. Each of us can't understand the mother tongues of the other two at all. Our common language is English.

Kanji

Kanji characters were brought into Japan from China through the Korean peninsula in the fourth and fifth centuries, when social systems, religion (Buddhism), ideology (Confucianism), arts and crafts also were introduced. The introduction is as old as the Migration of the Germanic races (AD375).

The *ji* of *kanji* means, "letter." The *kan* comes from the name of an ancient Chinese dynasty of the Khan Dynasty. The basis of Chinese characters presently in use were formed in the Khan age. It's really ancient. The Dynasty arose in BC202, about 2 centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ and 7 centuries before the birth of Muhammad. Buddhism already existed in India, but it had not yet reached China.

Buddhism was introduced to China in AD67.

Kanji characters are ideograms, symbolizing the idea of a thing. One of the simplest and most often mentioned examples is a character meaning a tree. It was made to resemble the shape of a tree as 木. Two trees were combined into a single character, 林, to indicate a wood, and three were combined as 森 to represent a forest. It's easy, but don't cook up your own. Jungle is not expressed by four 木s. It's written in two letters as 森林. (Five 木s!) The 木 is pronounced as [ki], so 林, 森 and 森林 are as [kiki], [kikiki], and [kikikikiki], respectively—something no one need believe. The kanji of 馬 was created to resemble the shape of horse. So, 馬 is quite similar to a horse, isn't it? There are kanji expressing numbers. One is written as 一, two as 二, and three as 三. But, the inductive method is not valid for four or more.

There are said to be about fifty thousand kanji characters in China. Japanese people learn about one thousand during the 9-year period of compulsory education (7-15 years old). About three thousand are needed, however, for daily use such as reading newspapers and magazines and writing letters and so on.

Hiragana and katakana

The hiragana and katakana characters were created by Japanese before the tenth century by simplifying kanji characters. The two *kana* systems are peculiar to the Japanese language. Each of the hiragana and katakana system has forty-six characters. Hiragana and katakana constitute pairs; for example, one hiragana and one katakana character together are pronounced as [e]. The two kana characters are phonograms, indicating sounds. Before going on to show these characters, I should explain about sounds in the Japanese language.

In written English one letter can often be pronounced in different ways. For instance, the letter *a* is pronounced differently in *father*, *hat*, *came*, *water*, *dare*, and *ago*. Phonetic symbols must be used to distinguish the pronunciations from each other. One phonetic symbol represents one sound. One hiragana character or one katakana character is pronounced in only one way. Therefore, we can say that the relation between kanji and hiragana (or katakana) is like that between words and their phonetic symbols in western languages. Most Japanese names have kanji and are usually written in kanji. Hiragana (or katakana) names are sometimes added to show how to read the kanji.

The Japanese language has fewer sounds than English. There are only five vowels: *a* of Arkansas, *i* of Pinawa, *u* of Yukon, *e* of Red river, and *o* of Oregon². The *a* is pronounced only as [a] of *father*, not of *hat*, not of *came*, not of *water*, not of *dare*, and not of *ago*. Knowing only this, there is no difficulty to read my family name, *Nakayama*. The *i* is pronounced as [i], not [ai]. So, *Inoue*, a Japanese family name, is pronounced as [i-no-u-e], not [ai-no-u-e]³. The English vowels which are not included in Japanese are *a* of *hat*, *a* of *ago*, *u* of *cup*, and *u* of *fur* and so on. Japanese who pronounce English vowels by replacing with Japanese five vowels are called "five vowelers." For them, *a* of *hat*, *a* of *ago*, *u* of *cup*, and *u* of *fur* all come to *a* of *father*. They don't tell *bat* from *but*, *ankle* from *uncle*, *dump* from *damp*, and *hat* from *hut*. Radio is pronounced like [rajiu], not [reidiou]. I heard an American say he is embarrassed hearing Japanese saying *fax*. Like no difference between *hat* and *hut*, Japanese pronunciation for *fax* is very similar to that of f---s.

Lack of sounds for English consonants is a more serious problem for Japanese people in speaking English. The Japanese language doesn't have the sound of *th*. The *th* is pronounced by replacing with the sound of *s* or *z*. I must be careful to distinguish the following pairs: thank-sank, thaw-saw, thick-sick, thin-sin, thing-sing, think-sink, thumb-sum, path-pass, myth-miss, worse-worth. Japanese, lacking the distinction between the consonants *f* and *h*, or *b* and *v*, misunderstand many words. So, the following pairs sound indistinguishable to me: ballet-volley(ball), fault-halt, folly-holly, food-hood, noble-novel, vase-base, very-berry. The *fume hood* is a little difficult for me to say smoothly. Sometimes I nearly say *fume food*. I can't pronounce *obvious*. Many Japanese people don't understand the name of the US spaceship of SkyLab. They refer to it as ... What is the SkyLove? A host mother asked her Japanese ESL (English as a Second Language) school student, "You look serious. What are you thinking about?" "Nothing in particular. My mind's vacant," replied the student. The host mother didn't understand for a while what the student meant by "My mind's bacon." Then there was the University of Waterloo professor visiting at Kyoto University who thought a Japanese professor was inviting him to his lavatory instead of

² Or *e* of "eh" (the first letter in the Canadian alphabet) as the joke goes. (P. J. Poole)

³ English often mispronounce this as [e-noo-eh] (P. J. Poole)

his laboratory. (from Peter Poole)

The best-known confusion Japanese have is that Japanese people can't distinguish *r* and *l*. The following combinations of words, believe it or not, cause problems for me: long-wrong, right-light, flesh-fresh, collect-correct, clash-crash, link-rink, groom-gloom, berry-belly, region-legion, trouble-travel (also *b-v*), throw-slow (also *th-s*), wrap-lap, free market-flea market, rice-lice, led-red, lent-rent, rust-last-lust, lamp-lump-ramp-rump, rib-live (also *b-v*). "Are you ready?" "No, I'm a boy." Words in which *l* and *r* are in sequence are extremely difficult for me to pronounce: world, already, oil-rich, early, all right, girl, quarterly. "If you hear like *genelally*, instead of 'generally,' the speaker is a Japanese," said an American, who usually says *genelly*.

Now, let's move to how katakana and hiragana characters are pronounced. Here is a list of katakana and hiragana. The first, second and third row show the hiragana, the corresponding katakana, and the Roman letters expressing the sound, respectively.

あ	い	う	え	お	か	き	く	け	こ
ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ	カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
a	i	u	e	o	ka	ki	ku	ke	ko
さ	し	す	せ	そ	た	ち	つ	て	と
サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ	タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
sa	shi	su	se	so	ta	chi	tsu	te	to
な	に	ぬ	ね	の	は	ひ	ふ	へ	ほ
ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ	ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
na	ni	nu	ne	no	ha	hi	hu	he	ho
ま	み	む	め	も	や		ゆ		よ
マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ	ヤ		ユ		ヨ
ma	mi	mu	me	mo	ya		yu		yo
ら	り	る	れ	ろ	わ		を		ん
ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ	ワ		ヲ		ン
ra	ri	ru	re	ro	wa		wo		n

These forty-six characters are basic. A symbol “゛” in the following represents the voiced sound, and a symbol “゜” denotes the labial sound.

が	ぎ	ぐ	げ	ご	ぎゃ	ぎゅ	ぎょ
ガ	ギ	グ	ゲ	ゴ	ギャ	ギュ	ギョ
ga	gi	gu	ge	go	gya	gyu	gyo

ざ	じ	ず	ぜ	ぞ	じゃ	じゅ	じょ
ザ	ジ	ズ	ゼ	ゾ	ジャ	ジュ	ジョ
za	zi	zu	ze	zo	ja	ju	jo
					ちゃ	ちゅ	ちよ
					チャ	チュ	チョ
					tya	tyu	tyo
だ	ぢ	づ	で	ど	てい		でい
ダ	ヂ	ヅ	デ	ド	テイ		デイ
da	ji	du	de	do	ti		di
					ひゃ	ひゅ	ひよ
					ヒャ	ヒュ	ヒョ
					hya	hyu	hyo
ば	び	ぶ	べ	ぼ	びゃ	びゅ	びょ
バ	ビ	ブ	ベ	ボ	ビャ	ビュ	ビョ
ba	bi	bu	be	bo	bya	byu	byo
ぱ	ぴ	ぷ	ぺ	ぽ	ぴゃ	ぴゅ	ぴょ
パ	ピ	プ	ペ	ポ	ピャ	ピュ	ピョ
pa	pi	pu	pe	po	pya	pyu	pyo

みや	みゅ	みよ
ミヤ	ミュ	ミョ
mya	myu	myo
りゃ	りゅ	りよ
リャ	リュ	リョ
rya	ryu	ryo

As you notice, each syllable of hiragana or katakana ends with a vowel. Consonants alone can't exist in the Japanese pronunciation except ん [n]. Words which consists of pairs of a consonant and a vowel such as *Canada*, *Manitoba* and *Pinawa* are easy to pronounce for Japanese, with no intonation though. In other words, Japanese tend to pronounce English words with adding vowels: *desuku* as desk, *basu* as bus, *sutaato* (or *sutahto*) as start, *sutoppu* as stop, *taimu* as time, *Chakku* as Chuck, *Liizu* (or *Lihzu*) as Lise, and *Juudo* (or *Juhdo*) as Jude. It is said that Spanish and Portuguese are easy for Japanese to learn because the sound of Spanish and Portuguese words usually accompany vowels⁴.

⁴ **Jude's comments:** You're right about Portuguese. When I was in Brazil, I learned quickly to introduce myself as "Judy" because no one could pronounce a single-syllable name such as "Jude". **Jude's question:** The phonetic simplicity of Japanese, when written in Roman characters, makes it look easier to pronounce than it is. I've noticed that I tend to emphasize the wrong syllable – for example, at

Here are your names

It is easy to convert Japanese words (for example, Japanese names) written in English (Roman letters) into hiragana or katakana⁵. To do it for my family name, *Nakayama*, all you have to do is look for hiragana (or katakana) corresponding to *na*, *ka*, *ya* and *ma* in the above list. The *na* is な(ナ), *ka* is か(カ), *ya* is や(ヤ), and *ma* is ま(マ). So my family name is written as なかやま (or ナカヤマ in katakana). My given name is written as *Shinichi*. Really it may have to be hyphenated as *Shin-ichi*. You can find corresponding hiragana (or katakana) in the list; *shi* is し(シ), *n* is ん(ン), *i* is い(イ), and *chi* is ち(チ), and then we can get しんいち (or シンイチ in katakana). A Japanese novelist, MISHIMA, Yukio is written as みしま ゆきお (ミシマ ユキオ).

Katakana characters are usually used to express foreign names and things. But, it is impossible to convert correctly, say, the names of people here into Japanese letters, because some sounds are missing in the Japanese language, and because there are no Japanese characters to express such missing sounds. Hence Japanese people look for similar sounds and write. Now, the following are names of our Division's people which I tried to convert into Japanese letters. Guess which your name is. Family names are first. If you find your name, please print your name and sign. (Pretty sneaky! - Jude)

アーシャンボー ダニー
ウォルトン フランク
グリフォア リーズ
モイヤー デビー
サージェント ピーター

first I was saying “yo-SHI-ko” instead of “YO-shi-ko,” and many English speakers say “ma-tsu-SHI-ta” instead of “ma-TSU-shi-ta” for Matsushita. How do you know which syllable to emphasize? Or is it - like English - something that must be learned about on a word-by-word basis? (Yoshiko is SN's wife.) **SN's answer:** The concept of syllabification is rare in Japanese, but if you ask me, the answer is the word-by-word basis. In my impression, English speakers mostly say Japanese names with emphasizing the second last syllable, more exactly, the second last vowel like “o-SA-ka” and “yo-ko-HA-ma.” It is said that saying in such a manner is easy for English speakers to understand. I usually introduce myself as “na-ka-YA-ma.”

⁵ Jude says “You're right - before I had read this far, I had already deduced how to spell ‘Yoshiko’.”

セント デニス ボニー
ティックナー ケン
テイト ジョン
デュリュウ ダグ
ドーン ダイアン
ナットール キース
ハービー キース
バンデグラーフ チャック
バシンスキー ドナルド
ビルクス ピーター
マクドウェル サンディー
マクマリー ジュード
マッククランク グレン
マコネル ジョディ
ミラー ハンス
ヤンキー デーブ
レギーン マンフレッド

After writing these, I found that I need more grammar to explain. The symbol “ー” means a long vowel, for example.

Because Japanese words always consist of combinations of a consonant and a vowel, the names of Japanese are lengthy when spelled in the Roman letters. My name, *Shinichi Nakayama*, contains sixteen letters when written in English. As shown above, the hiragana (or katakana) formulation has eight letters. It decreases to four letters in the kanji style as 中山真一. These four letters are read as *naka*, *yama*, *shin*, and *ichi*, respectively. Before I learned kanji in the grade school, I wrote my name in the hiragana style as なかやましんいち. After a while, I learned some simple kanji, and I could get to write my name in the kanji-hiragana-mixed style as 中山しん一, where 中, 山, and 一 are kanji; I had not yet learned a kanji corresponding to しん. I could write all kanji for my name when I finished the elementary school.

The software of the word processor I am using now to write this note can deal with both Japanese and English. In the Japanese mode, there are two ways of inputting characters using either hiragana (or katakana) or Roman letters. The arrangement of alphabet keys on the keyboard is the same as yours. But, a katakana character is allocated to each key besides an English alphabet. In the hiragana (or katakana) inputting mode, a letter of な (or ナ) appears on the display by pushing the ナ key (which is the key of “u”). In the Roman letter inputting mode, we use “n” and “a” keys in sequence, then the “na” is automati-

cally converted to a letter of な on the display.

Continuing inputting “k”, “a”, “y”, “a”, “m” and “a,” the hiragana expression of my family name of なかやま is shown on the display. Then, push the return key, the なかやま is converted to the kanji expression of 中山. The software has a dictionary. Because there are several kanji characters which represent *naka*, I must choose 中 from a list of the several kanji. But, because the software has a learning function and recognizes that 中 is the most frequently used kanji which represent *naka*, the 中 appears first.

The first letter of my given name, 真, is not necessarily the most frequently used character among many kanji which represent *shin*. There are more than several dozens of kanji which represent *shin*. I must look for 真 from a row of the kanji. The row is shown at the bottom of the display

A family name comes first and a given name second in Japan. In names and also addresses, dates and organizations, Japanese order the words from larger to smaller. Here in Canada, mail is addressed to me as:

Shinichi NAKAYAMA
Geochemistry Section
Geochemistry Research Branch
Whitshell Laboratories
AECL Research
Pinawa, Manitoba
CANADA, R0E1L0

The order is reversed in the Japanese way. It begins with the biggest, Canada, and ends with the smallest, my first name.

Japanese usually don't have middle names. Some Christians have their baptismal names as their middle names, and some married women keep their maiden names as middle names. Unlike in Canada and the US, married couples in Japan legally should have the same family name – his or hers.

There was a feature article in the periodical *Science* of October 23, 1992 titled *Science in Japan*. This article included a note on the modern history of science in Japan. The author was *Akihito*, the 125-th Emperor of Japan. The Emperor's family is the only one with no family name in Japan. The drivers' licenses and passports of the Emperor's family have only their first names, I believe. *Akihito* is educated as a scientist. The last Emperor, *Hirohito*, who passed away on January 7, 1989, was an avid student

of biology and wrote fourteen books including his most famous book, *Hydrozoa of the Ogasawara Archipelago*.

One more different custom of Japan, which is not related to the Japanese language though, is digitization of numbers. Units of one, ten, hundred and thousand are common here and in Japan. Bigger units here are million, billion, trillion, i.e., the three-digit system. In Japan, there is a bigger unit called *man* which is ten times thousand. Above the *man*, we employ the four-digit system; *oku* is 10,000 times *man* and *chou* is 10,000 times *oku*. 10,000 is read as one *man* instead of ten thousand, 100,000 is read as *ten man* instead of one hundred thousand, and 10,000,000 is read as thousand *man* instead of ten million. The *man* does not have the plural form. We do not say *men*.

I need a few moments to read numbers in English, and I often get confused to convert Japanese readings for larger numbers into English readings. The 1993 budget for the AECL/JAERI cooperative research for waste management was 760,000CDN\$. You can simply read it as seven hundred sixty thousand dollars, but in the Japanese way I read it as, after considering for a while, seventy six *man*. In the Japanese currency, it is about seventy thousand six hundred *man* yen. We never say “seventy six hundred.” It is easier for me to say seven point six times ten to the fifth power dollars. More confusing is that, to comply with the Western system, i.e., international system, a comma is used every three digits for the Japanese four digit system.

Loan Words and Japanese English

Japanese has borrowed a large number of words (loan words) from other languages. The oldest and largest group of borrowed words is from China. However, because the meanings assigned to most of the Chinese words used in Japan are different from the original Chinese meanings, it is not quite proper to call them “loan words.” Korean words have been imported in a large number. But since they are assimilated into Japanese, most borrowed Korean words can't be distinguished from Japanese words.

The largest group of loan words is from English. English words have been popularized by introduction of English courses to secondary schools. The number of loan English words is countless. The pronunciation of almost all loan words are changed to the Japanese pronunciation. As I said before, because katakana characters are used for foreign names and things, loan words are written in katakana characters.

Since Europeans who first contacted with Japa-

nese were Portuguese, there are many Portuguese words, most of which are mistakenly thought to be Japanese words by Japanese people. The words include: ボタン [reading=botan]←*potaō* (English = button), パン[pan]←*paō* (bread), タバコ [tabako]←*tabaco* (cigarette), カルタ[karuta]←*carta* (card), ブランコ [buranko]←*balanço* (swing), and てんぷら [tenpura](!)←*tempero* (tempura, maybe).

The Netherlands was the only European country that was allowed trade relations with Japan during the age of isolation of the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. Most of the early knowledge of Western ideas and affairs, particularly of medicine, were introduced through this trade. Examples of loan words from the Netherlands are コック [kokku] from *kok* (English=cook), ピント [pinto] from *brandpunt* (focus), オテンバ [otenba] from *otembaar* (tomboy), コーヒー [koohee] from *koffy* (coffee), ガラス [garasu] from *glas* (glass), and ゴム [gomu] from *gom* (rubber).

Loan words from Italy and France are those connected to music, food, and arts, and those from German are mostly connected to natural sciences. Early Japanese scientists in the modern age learned science in Germany, just as early North Americans did. There are still now elder Japanese medical doctors who write their charts in German. They had medical education in German. (Doctors from the next generation write in English, and nowadays Japanese is used.) Most of the Japanese names of chemical elements are from German. I often nearly say Natorium instead of sodium to Ken Ticknor in the laboratory. I have long believed that “Bombe” is an English word; it’s a German meaning (gas) cylinder.

Japan invaded Southeast Asia before and in the beginning of World War II. Some Southeast-Asian words such as Malaysian, Cambodian and Javanese became Japanese words. But, there is no relationship between *Javanese* and *Japanese*.

I wonder if Japanese people like to shorten words. Some English words were shortened to be commonly used in Japanese daily life: テレビ [terebi]←television, パソコン [pasokon]←personal computer, エアコン [eakon]←air conditioner, インフレ [inhure]←inflation, デパート [depaato (or depahto)]←department store, アパート [apaato (or apahto)]←apartment, オートメ [ootome]←automation, etc. It is obvious that Japanese don’t care about the original meaning. The television consists of *tele-* and *-vision*. It is reasonable that British people say *tele*, but Japanese say *televi* with Japanese pronunciation as *terebi*,

because it is easier to pronounce.

Besides these modified Japanized English words, I mention here some “pure made-in-Japan” words which seemingly look English and which many Japanese people believe to be English (like “sharp pencil,” which I mentioned in SN Canada Note No.2). I am afraid I have used some of them unconsciously in Canada.

The following italicized words are Japan-made words: *back mirror*→rear-view mirror, *front glass*→windshield (wind-screen), *engine key*→ignition key, *handle*→steering wheel, *winker*→flasher, *consent*→electric output (plug), *catchball*→playing catch, (His hair is) *all-back*→(His hair is) combed back, *baton girl*→baton twirler, *tour guide*→escort guide, *side business*→moonlighting, *golden hour*→prime time (of TV), *towelket*→towel blanket, *electric range*→microwave, *Macaroni Western*→Spagetti Western, *manshon*→...

This word, *manshon*, needs explanation. I think a real estate agent first used this word for a higher-priced apartment. The *manshon* came from “mansion.” Since then lower-priced apartments are called *apaato* as shown above, and higher-priced ones *manshon*, even though most of them are still tiny. The *manshon* is entirely different from mansions in the southern US. Irresponsible naming can be seen right and left about houses in Japan. A variety of “fancy” Japanized words are added to apartments which are shabby and very much smaller than the Birchwood Apts., 20 Alexander, Pinawa, like: Chateau Birchwood (from French), Maison Birchwood (Fr.), Castle Birchwood, Heime Birchwood (Ger.), Heights Birchwood, Residence Birchwood, Casa Birchwood (Sp.), Demeure Birchwood (Fr.), Habitation Birchwood (Fr.), Coop Birchwood, etc. I looked in my address book. Some of my friends are living in strange apartments: Grand Chateau ..., Bell Maison..., Mel Green ..., Villa Sunshine ..., Eldim....

One more example of Japan-made English is the usage of the word of “my.” This word is often used meaning “personal” or “private” in Japan. “My car” - which may have to be spelled as “*mai-cah*” - means my private vehicle. “Is it your *mai-cah*?” Personal computers ([pasokon] as shown above) were once called [maikon]; the [mai-] also came from *micro-computer*.

OL is office lady, meaning women working at offices. Japanese call baseball night game the *nighter*. *Good-bye game* is the baseball game which is gained by come-from-behind victory at the bottoms of the

ninth or extra innings.

Japanese is said to be generous to take in foreign words. Beginning with borrowing from China in the ancient time, countless foreign words have been brought into the Japanese language and digested as Japanized words. The more they are adapted, the more mistakes and the more confusion in international commerce. "Any living culture and language digests words from other cultures. English is enriched by Latin and French (from the Norman Conquest) and from cultures of its colonial conquests. So, too, is Japanese influenced by cultures worldwide in this age of world trade." (Peter J. Poole)

Lastly, let me show a few Japanese words.

Hello – Kon-nichi-wa
 Good-bye – Sayou-nara
 Thank you – Ari-ga-tou
 Good Morning – Ohayou

Because the pronunciation of *Ohayou* is similar to that of Ohio (State), they say that North Americans should find it easy to remember, but I am afraid that they misremember to say Indiana, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Kentucky... instead of Ohio.

Acknowledgment: SN thanks Peter J. Poole, a good commander of Japanese, for providing me with Japanese wording and pronunciation. SN also thanks Jong Wan Choi of KAERI for information about the Korean language, Hangeul.

The above text was written while I was in Canada. I add the following two supplements which I got to know after I came back to Japan.

Why were two kana systems invented?

There are two kana systems in Japanese, hiragana and katakana, as introduced in the text. The above question or "Why are two similar systems needed?" was raised from Jude, and, I guess, naturally from many readers. I must confess that I did not know the reason. We Japanese have used the two systems conventionally and unconsciously. After I got back to Japan, I went to a city library to study the origin of the kana systems.

Hiragana and katakana were invented independently. They had different needs and were invented at different ages. Japanese didn't have own letters and

therefore adopted Chinese letters kanji in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Katakana was invented by taking a part of a kanji letter. For example Katakana was invented by taking a part of a kanji letter. For example 力 ([ka]) is from a kanji of 加. Katakana was used to read literatures and Buddhist scriptures all written in kanji. Katakana was written in between lines of the Chinese sentences.

Hiragana was created by simplifying or running kanji letters. For example, あ([a]) is from 安. It can be said that hiragana was invented and used by women. Reading and writing kanji literatures was a knowledge necessary only for men of limited higher classes at that time. Because women did not learn kanji, they invented simplified letters.

In modern times, Japanese sentences are mostly written in combination of kanji and hiragana. Generally katakana is used to express foreign names and things.

The order of names

A family name comes first and a given name the second in Japan. But, we have conventionally written down our names in the order of the given name first and the family name last outside Japan. I write Shinichi Nakayama in various forms to fill out and as an author of English scientific papers. So have other Japanese. A debate has risen recently to reconsider this tradition.

About one hundred years ago, when some first Japanese visited European countries and introduced themselves, the European people wrote down the names of the Japanese visitors in the given-family order because it's the European habit. Since then, Japanese have used the given-family order when they write their names in Roman letters. This is a strange habit.

We use the different order for our names between in and out of Japan. Chinese and Koreans, whose order of the names is family-given in their countries, write their names in the same order in Roman letters. Names are part of our identity. It may be time to change the strange habit, but changing the long-planted habit must be pretty difficult.

Food and Medicine in Pinawa

My wife, Yoshiko, enjoyed very much her first long stay abroad and had an exciting life. Among others, she had some eye-opening experiences as a pharmacist and housewife.

From the pharmaceutical experience, Yoshiko unexpectedly recognized a difference in the physical make between North Americans and Japanese. A Japanese friend of Yoshiko came to see us and stayed for two weeks in Pinawa in February, the coldest month. As we had feared, she caught cold and developed a hacking cough. We went to a drugstore to buy a non-prescription, over-the-counter cough syrup, which says "Relieves: dry coughs" on the box. Although our friend and Yoshiko are not good at English, they, who both are pharmacists, managed to identify the medical ingredient - *dextromethorphan hydrobromide* -, which is effective for cough.

The description says "DOSAGE: Adults and children 12 years and over, 2 tsp. every 6-8 hrs. Children 6 to 11 years, 1 tsp. every 6-8 hrs. Children 2 to 5 years, 1/2 tsp. every 6-8 hrs. Maximum 4 doses/day. 15mg *dextromethorphan hydrobromide*/5 mL or 1 tsp."

The syrup surely had an effect on her; her cough was gradually passing away. There was a prompt and serious side effect, however; she felt dizzy. It was much stronger than we had expected. She could not eat well and remained in bed.

Yoshiko wondered about this and checked the dosage in her medicines handbook which she happened to bring from Japan. The handbook, published in Japan, explains about all medicines in use at medical services in Japan, and listed the corresponding medicine to what they had purchased. A medicine with the same ingredient is sold in Japan with a different name. Yoshiko read the explanation carefully and found the difference in dosage between Japanese and North Americans.

According to the dosage on the box, the amount of the ingredient, *dextromethorphan hydrobromide*, for the adult dose is 2 tsp. x 15 mg = 30 mg. On the other hand, the Yoshiko's handbook says that the allowed dose for adults of the Japanese medicine is 15 to 30 mg with the recommended dose of 15 mg. We need a doctor's advice to take more than 15 mg. Our friend took too much; twice as much as the recommended dose for Japanese. She should have stopped at the dose for "Children 6 to 11 years," one teaspoon of syrup.

The difference in dosage may result from many factors relating to metabolism, the strength of which varies among races. The most direct factor is, according to Yoshiko, weight. Doses are determined

based primarily on weight. Doses are 50-kg basis for Japanese but are probably 70-kg basis for North Americans. Yoshiko and I, heavier than the Japanese average, may have to follow the North American standard. Actually, Yoshiko once prescribed a surprisingly high dose. The patient was a Sumo wrestler. He needed enough medicine for an army, and an extra big bed. An American friend of mine who stayed in Japan and looks heavier than the average Japanese complained that Japanese medicines were so weak. He should consult a doctor or a pharmacist. Considering the weight basis dose, our friend should have paid attention to her weight. She is smaller than the Japanese average. Her weight is less than 40 kg. The dose for "Children 6 to 11 years" is still too much for her.

Another cause for her dizziness was, of all things as a pharmacist, that she took the syrup more frequently than the recommended maximum (4 doses/day). But, we cannot blame only her. Naturally non-prescription medicines are much weaker (diluted) than doctor-prescribed ones. She and Yoshiko knew that *dextromethorphan hydrobromide* is categorized into powerful drugs like narcotic drugs, and therefore had believed that the syrup available over-the-counter would be much diluted. They never thought that the syrup they purchased would be as highly concentrated as that where a doctor's advice is needed on the Japanese standard.

Pharmacies have not been separated from medical practice in Japan. The separation has just begun. Patients who go to hospitals receive their medicines at the hospitals. Drugstores can sell only non-prescription medicines. Japanese who are involved in medical services and interested in the system know that pharmacies are separated from medical practice in Canada and the US. Most of them, however, mistakenly think that all medicines need a doctor's advice in these countries. So did Yoshiko. She did not know that there are medicines that can be sold at drugstores and supermarkets without doctors' or pharmacists' advice.

Yoshiko was also interested in the medical system and how the Pinawa hospital and the town's drugstore worked. I proposed that she visit and talk with the staff. But, we are sorry that we could not because we had little time during our stay.

We also had a mistaken belief about food. One day Yoshiko bought a cake mix. She added water, according to the recipe, to the ivory-white powder, and the powder immediately turned to green gelatine.

The green was very bright and was the obviously artificial color. We realized a fact that food in which such artificial additives are used can be sold without any notice in this country where we had heard and believed regulations on food additives are well developed and strictly enforced. Chemicals-added food are sold here and there in Japan. The regulations have yet been less strictly enforced in spite of consumer groups' protests. The regulations are complicated. I do not know very much about it. The cake mix that Yoshiko bought may not be illegal. Which food we choose depends on us.

One more example about choice of food is the consumptions of calories. In our impression, the calorie intake in Canada is higher on the average than that in Japan. I stayed in Pinawa for a year and Yoshiko three months. Both of us gained about 3 kg. This is not entirely due to the higher-calorie food; we also lacked exercise in winter. Considering our rapid decrease in the weight after coming back to Japan, however, we think higher-calorie food was one of causes for our gaining weight. I admire North Americans that they always have to pay attention to choose food so that they do not get extra calories. If Yoshiko and I had continued a Canadian life, we would have gained much more weight.

We had planned to introduce a few Japanese cooking lessons in this note. But, we soon found it difficult. First it is difficult to get the ingredients in Manitoba. Winnipeg is not an attractive market for Japanese food; there are only ten Japanese families living in Manitoba, I think. Second, describing how and what the materials are like is also difficult for us lacking English vocabulary.

Yoshiko was sometimes muttering, "Where can we get materials to make non-oil soup?" Japanese soup are basically oil free. A typical one is made by adding *kombu* (dried kelp) and *katsuo-bushi* (dried bonito fish) flakes to water. Although some North Americans may know Japanese food such as *tofu* and soy sauce, I wonder if they can imagine what kombu and katsuo-bushi are like.

Sushi, a famous Japanese food, does not require any cooking. Sushi is a generic name of vinegared and slightly sweetened rice and fish. The "Su" originally means "sour." There are many types and combinations of food called sushi. When we speak of sushi however, we usually mean a piece of marinated raw fish on top of rice.

Tofu is a useful food. Besides eating it "as is," tofu is added to a variety of dishes and is cooked in various ways such as tofu steak. Tofu is said to be a

healthy food because of its very low calories. But, we Japanese seldom have tofu without adding any taste. Using soy sauce to tofu makes it salty. Some foreigners have tofu with strawberry jam like yogurt. I have not investigated if the jammed tofu is healthy or not in terms of calories.

We bought Japanese food in a Chinese supermarket in Winnipeg. The price label attached on the package of raw fish said, "Imported from Japan. Product of Canada." The fish were caught at probably the Northern Atlantic, exported to Japan, wrapped in Japan, exported to Canada, and eaten by Japanese in Canada - waste of time. More than half of the seafood consumed in Japan now is imported from foreign countries.

Comments to SN CANADA Note No.2

Cars drive in the right lane in Korea and China. I wrote "left" in the SN CANADA note No.2. I thank Satoshi and Chuck for pointing it out. Hong Kong in China is an exception; cars there drive in the center.

I show in this article a few comments from the SN CANADA Note No.2. Most of the comments concentrate on the article of *Why not American Cars*. One very informative comment for the article of *These are Japanese* was from Wayne T. Schellekens (Computing & Information Systems) on the "mechanical pencils"; they are sometimes called "eversharps," but Jude did not know the word. He taught me that Chryslers are called "disposable cars." It is also Wayne who taught me that Northwest is called "Northworst" due to frequent loss of luggage.

Impressed, negatively impressed, stories in *Why not American Cars* are those on Satoshi's car, whose engine did not stop after pulling off the ignition key, and on a brand new car containing rotten Kentucky fried chicken.

Gary Young (Computing & Information Systems) gave answers to my questions in the last paragraph of *Why not American Cars*. The last paragraph was "There are two things that I have noticed here in Canada. One is that automobiles do not have tool kits. All automobiles in Japan are equipped with tool kits. Tool kits minimize the car breakdowns, and this is one reason why Japanese cars are said to be of good quality(?). The other thing is a question about how to call for help if we have trouble on highways in secluded areas. The roads called highways in Japan are

all toll roads. People complain that they are expensive, but a benefit is that they are equipped with emergency telephone every 1 km.”

Gary’s answer for the first question is: “I cannot imagine what the average North American would do with a tool kit if their car broke down. In any case, there is less you can do to fix new models with simple hand tools; it is more likely that special tools are required in addition to electric diagnostic equipment. Although I may carry my tools on a long trip, I can change the headlamps in my late model Ford without tools and the accessory belt with the tire wrench.

“I have also noted over the years that even though American cars may be troublesome, very few leave you stranded on the road helplessly. On the whole, I would say (most) American made power trains are very reliable, without saying they are better or worse than Japanese units. I also observe cars which are 10 years old and older and have noted that Japanese cars and trucks are well represented amongst those that have severe corrosion problems and those that show signs of worn engines (puff blue smoke). Which cars will I be noting 10 years from now?

It seems to me that Japanese cars and trucks have earned their quality reputation on fit & finish and innovative design features (I have owned 3 Japanese vehicles). I read a lot of automotive magazines and it is my impression that this gap in fit & finish is on the decline”.

About secluded highways, he said, “This is a very very low risk situation in terms of life or death. Sooner or later someone will come along to help you if stranded. In the winter you should be prepared to be stranded in a storm for several hours but be sure to stay in your car (this situation would be a very rare occasion). But this part of being Canadian. Cellular telephones may change all that... too bad!”

He gave me a general comment as;

“This is a very interesting article where you have characterized not only the American auto manufacturers but also typical insensitive, bureaucratic, slobby American corporations. Some of these corporations are still struggling to survive, some have changed their ways and some have died. The American auto-maker’s “Japanese bashing” are just sounds they are making as they gasp and struggle to survive. Let’s hope some of them do survive to provide us consumers with good healthy competition here and in Japan.” Thank you, Gary.

Chuck mentioned the tool kit, too. I agree with his comment, “a good car does not need a tool kit.” And Gary’s above comment, “There is less you can do to fix new models with simple hand tools,” is abso-

lutely true. Actually I have not used any tools from the kit that came with my Honda Civic in Japan except some screw drivers. I used them to fix my bicycle and a loose handle on a coffee pot. As a matter of fact, that’s one of my questions; why do recent cars have to have tool kits?

Chuck says, regarding the Japanese inspection system which costs \$1,000, “If we paid \$1,000 each time, maybe we could also have ‘better’ car!” But, what are “better” cars? All brand new cars are sold in a good shape; there is no difference between Mazda, Toyota and Honda in breakdown probability. And all cars, including “better” cars, must receive the \$1,000 regular inspection⁶.

“You should look at older Datsun, Mazda and Toyota, and observe the amount of rust!” says Chuck. This was pointed out by Gary as above. I did not know the problem. Japanese cars are designed to be discarded after ten years. Chuck’s comment to “American cars do have a lead on Japanese cars in the safety technology, such as air bags, anti-lock braking systems (ABS), impact-absorbing bumpers and daytime running lights” is “This is probably a response to poor driving habits of North American drivers!” and to me. More information from Chuck about the lowest breakdown probability is “Japanese < American, German < Italian, French < British < Romanian, Russian.”

In *These are Japanese*, I mentioned an American student I met several years ago who believed that Japan is connected to the Asian continent by land and that it is a Chinese colony. Chuck tells me not to feel bad and told me jokes; Americans (USA) have been known to cross into Canada in the summer with skis on their cars, and some Americans think New Mexico is not in the US. It is no wonder that people are unfamiliar with places which have been historically unrelated to and geographically far away from their home countries. East European countries are all mixed up for many Japanese, among many African countries only Egypt is known, and as a consequence of Japanese Western-directed habits, many Japanese can’t name Southeast Asian countries.

⁶ I took the inspection last summer for my Honda Civic. I paid US\$1,250 (US\$1=100 yen, as of August, 1993). This cost includes labor (US\$384), parts replacement (US\$172), inspection fee (US\$95), tax (US\$278) and liability insurance (US\$321). The net cost for inspection and repair is therefore US\$556 from first three. Automobile owners pay the local tax annually and the national tax basically every other year. The tax above is the national tax.

I was careless about native owners of lands which were mentioned in *American Alaska is as Young as Canada*. I wrote "Alaska was thus discovered (by Russians)." But "Don't let the native Aleuts in Aleutian see this (note)!" (Chuck). And I wrote "As a result of the French Indian War (1760), the Nouveau France collapsed and ... the northwestern third (except Alaska) belonged to no one." I correct "belonged to no one" to "belonged to only native Indians." (Chuck)

Thank you very much for your comments.