

**AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF THE ADOPTION OF ENGLISH LOANWORDS  
IN SPANISH AND JAPANESE**

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**Abstract**

In this paper I will examine various examples of English loanwords found in Japanese and Spanish. Loanword incorporation occurs on multiple levels, including those of morphology, phonology, pronunciation, grammar, and orthography. Through various examples of words from each language, however, I will argue that after initial loanword incorporation is finished, the desire to maintain as much of the native/recipient language as possible is apparent. Native language preservation, as I will demonstrate, is implemented through various means, including morphology, grammar, pronunciation, and orthography. This effort to preserve native character can be observed in both Spanish and Japanese, and occurs in ways that are unique to each language.

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## Introduction

A loanword is a word that is borrowed from one language and then used in another. Instances of loanword use are numerous, but this paper will specifically focus on English loanwords that are used in Spanish and Japanese. The processes through which languages incorporate loanwords differ depending on the foreign language and the recipient language. I believe that the mere act of bringing in loanwords demonstrates a willingness to look outwards from one's own language and recognize a linguistic world beyond one's own. I also believe, however, that while this openness to accepting foreign vocabulary exists, the initial adoption is followed by even further adaptation through complex processes that adhere to the morphological norms of each language, resulting in preservation of the native language's character rather than that of the English-origin word. In other words, in accepting a foreign word that does not adhere to the native language's norms, an effort is made to maintain said norms as closely and as accurately as possible, demonstrating, ultimately, a desire to preserve characteristics of the native language and avoid excessive outside influence. Obviously, there are exceptions to this statement, most notably among the dialects used in bilingual communities in the United States, where contact between Spanish and English has created hybrid dialects and where speakers frequently code-switch, that is, alternate between languages even within a single utterance.

In this paper I will take a descriptive, not a prescriptive, approach to examining the use of loanwords; that is to say, I will make observations about language based on naturally occurring linguistic phenomena, not based on previously established rules about "proper" usage of grammar or lexical function. Thus, the use of loanwords in any setting is eligible to be studied, regardless of the level of formality found therein.

Spanish and Japanese differ from each other in several ways, and it is necessary to review them because they are relevant to each language's adoption of English loanwords. While the Spanish sound system is similar to English in that it consists of individual letters that can be classified as either consonants or vowels, the Japanese sound system consists of syllables such as *ki* and *ku*, or *mi* and *mu*. There are also vowels in Japanese, but these are considered syllables, as well. Thus, with the exception of the unique nasal *n*, it is not possible to end a syllable with a consonant in Japanese, a condition that results in phonological adaptations of English words that are many syllables longer. In addition, while the Spanish language uses one written alphabet, like English does, Japanese has three written alphabets: *hiragana*, a visual representation of the syllabary that is used primarily for Japanese grammar items, *katakana*, a visual representation of the syllabary that is used primarily for spelling foreign loanwords, and *kanji*, a writing system based on Chinese characters. The stark difference between English and Japanese writing systems results in a visual representation of loanwords that is completely unrecognizable to an English-speaker who does not speak Japanese. Finally, there are certain sounds that the two languages simply do not have in common with English. The most notable ones are the Spanish trill, represented in IPA format as [r], which does not exist in English, and the distinction between *r* and *l* made in English and Spanish, which does not exist in Japanese. The lack of exact equivalents for these sounds causes phonological approximation and pronunciation of loanwords in both languages to sound markedly different from their English relatives.

LaCharité and Paradis argue that, from the auditory and spoken perspective, the nature of loanword incorporation is primarily phonological and not phonetic (LaCharité 224). They discuss the treatment of the English [ɹ] as a rhotic phoneme in Japanese despite the existence of other sounds, such as [w], which are closer to the [ɹ] than the Japanese [r] is (LaCharité 250).

This phoneme-based incorporation (rather than the approximation of actual raw sounds) demonstrates adherence to native language pronunciations; this theme is recurring throughout my analysis when discussing native language preservation.

The linguistic facets in which the overall characters of Japanese and Spanish are preserved can be divided into four main categories: (1) morphology, (2) grammar, (3) pronunciation and, by association, (4) orthography. These categories are interconnected and thus cannot be separated for examination in this paper; instead I will systematically review specific types of loanwords in each language that demonstrate the categories of native language preservation listed above.

#### An Examination of Musical Terms as a Way of Easing into Loanword Study

In order to become well acquainted with English loanwords in Japanese and Spanish, we may first examine a cultural domain in which both languages use a multitude of English-origin words: the music industry. Musical genres in particular offer a variety of words borrowed from English. For example, “rap” is also known in Spanish as *rap* (although it may be preceded by the masculine definite article *el* as such determinants are much more widely used in Spanish than in English). Even though it is a loanword that maintains its English spelling, the pronunciation changes to conform to the Spanish sound system: the initial “r” is trilled and the “a” is pronounced like the “a” in “father.” Thus, when represented in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), it is pronounced in Spanish as [rap] rather than the American English [ɹæp]. This example illustrates native language preservation in terms of pronunciation; while the word

itself is foreign, after adoption it is made to fit in seamlessly with the rest of the Spanish language.

In Japanese, the word *rappu* is also used; its transcription in IPA format is [rap:u]. Because the English [ɹ] does not exist in Japanese, the /r/ at the beginning is pronounced as a tap, which is a common existing Japanese phoneme. Similar to Spanish, the /a/ is pronounced [a] because [æ] also does not exist in Japanese. Gemination is required for the pronunciation of /p/ (hence the double /p/) in order to establish the word as a singular entity and imitate slightly the English pronunciation (while this could be considered counter to the argument that despite loanword incorporation languages preserve their own characteristics, formal gemination occurs with much less frequency in English than it does in Japanese, so it is still a sound that is native and familiar to the Japanese speaker). Finally, because of the nature of the Japanese syllabary, the word must end in a /u/ because there exists no such sound as a /p/ at the end of a syllable.

In addition, in Spanish, while a rapper can be called a “cantante de rap” (literally, “a singer of rap” or “a rap singer”), “rapero” is another often used term; searching either term on the Internet will yield countless results, ranging from YouTube videos to forums in which people ask for “raperos buenos” (“good rappers”). This transformation of the original English word “rap” is an example of morphological preservation of the Spanish language; many words related to career or occupation end in “-ero”, such as *caminero* (“road worker”), *ingeniero* (“engineer”), and *cartero* (“mail carrier”). The addition of a suffix used with native Spanish words to an English loanword shows that an effort is made to integrate the foreign word into the native vernacular so as to make it sound as natural as possible.

Interestingly, the Japanese Wikipedia page for “rap” indicates that a person who raps is called a *rappaa* (“rapper”), not a Japanese phrase such as *rappu suru hito*, meaning “a person

who raps” (ラップ). While this demonstrates an effort to incorporate the English word, it does not do so on a phonological level: the word-final /r/ does not exist in Japanese, so the approximation *aa* is often used. This incongruity with the original English word, along with the gemination of the consonant /p/, shows that more effort is made to conform to Japanese phonology and pronunciation than to adopt their English counterparts.

There are many other music-related loanwords that both languages use, such as rap, rock, and jazz, but excluding modern musical genres, the two languages actually differ greatly in the types of musical terms they have accepted due to the differences in Eastern and Western musical traditions. Many terms associated with western music have been brought into Japanese as English loanwords, while the same has not happened quite so much in Spanish. So, while in Japanese, the word for “bass” (i.e. the stringed instrument played in rock or jazz bands) is *beesu*, a word adapted from English, it is called a *bajo* in Spanish. Similarly, “guitar” is *gita* in Japanese but *guitarra* in Spanish. This difference stems from the fact that the Spanish words share similar roots, such as Latin and Greek, with English, while Japanese does not. Thus, it is only natural that Spanish would have words that sound similar to their English counterparts but that do not come from English.

Other contemporary western musical terms adopted into Japanese from English include such words as *doramu* (drum) *bookaru* (“vocals”), *merodii* (“melody”), and *rizumu* (“rhythm”). The prominent use of western-origin musical terms in Japanese is exemplified perfectly by Japan’s popular music industry. Five-piece band Sakanaction prides itself in preserving a Japanese identity while releasing contemporary music, but still uses these English-origin terms. In an interview, the band’s vocalist uses the word *ririkku* (“lyric”) rather than the equivalent Japanese term *kashi*, which is used more frequently (Ikeda).

In Spanish, however, Western musical terms referring to instruments or music theory are not borrowed from English. While in Japanese, “guitar” is *gita*, in Spanish it is simply *guitarra*. Other examples include “drum” (*doramu* in Japanese, but *tambor* in Spanish), “drum kit”/“drum set” (Japanese: *doramukitto*, Spanish: *batería*), the previously discussed word “lyrics” (Japanese: *ririkku*, Spanish: *letra*), “concert” (Japanese: *konsaato*, Spanish: *concierto*), and “orchestra” (Japanese: *ookesutora*, Spanish: *orquesta*). All of the Japanese words are modified English loanwords, while the Spanish words share with the English words common roots in either Latin, Greek, Arabic, or French (*Diccionario de la lengua española*).

The Japanese adoption of English words like those mentioned above demonstrate a willingness to borrow such concepts on a cultural level (indeed, the idea of a rock band did not spring out of the Meiji Era, but now Japan is a hotspot for rock and pop music), but not on a phonological level. Each word is pronounced according to the phonological adaptation process that occurred; vowels that did not exist in the original English word abound, gemination is applied, the “tap” of the roof of the mouth is used instead of the English /ɾ/, and the “-er” of words like “concert” is converted to an elongated Japanese /a/ because of the fact that neither the [ə] nor the English [ɪ] exist in Japanese. All of these changes show that while the words and concepts related to band and music industry terminology have been imported into Japanese, their pronunciations are altered so as to fit Japanese standards.

#### Verbs: The Incorporation of Loanwords on a Complex, Grammatical Level

While musical terms such as the above listed provide good examples of loanword usage in Spanish and Japanese, they constitute only the tip of the iceberg in terms of loanword incorporation. The aforementioned examples do not go beyond the mere use of an English-

origin noun which can be surrounded in a sentence by words of the native language. Many other English loanwords, however, have not only been incorporated as isolated nouns but have also been incorporated on a complex, grammatical level. These complex processes, which occur on a morphological and grammatical level, demonstrate adherence to native language norms rather than adoption of those of English.

In both languages, the aspect in which the grammatical incorporation of English loanwords can be best observed is the use of verbs. While the use of English-origin nouns is very common in Spanish and Japanese as a way of incorporating loanwords, the process of converting loanwords into verbs is considerably more complex, as it goes beyond simply using a foreign word and actually involves morphologically altering it. I have separated into categories what I find to be the most interesting and notable processes of loanword incorporation and conversion into verbs. Here I will discuss these processes and provide examples for each one. Because Spanish is spoken in so many more countries than is Japanese, there is more variation in the frequency of usage of certain loanwords and in the kinds of grammatical structures that arise from their incorporation. Thus, it should not be assumed that the use of any phenomena described here is uniform throughout the Spanish-speaking world. However, those that I discuss represent widespread tendencies.

### 1. “To do” Verbs

The first category is what I will call “to do” verbs. These verbs consist of an English loanword (usually a noun) and each language’s word for “to do,” thus acting as a sort of set phrase. In Japanese, “to do” is expressed by the verb *suru*. Thus, *jogingu suru* means “to jog” or “to go jogging.” The word *rappu* (the phonetically adapted form of “rap”), which was

mentioned earlier as a loanword used in the musical world, can be paired with *suru* to create *rappu suru*, meaning “to rap.” This process of adding *suru* after a noun and thus creating a verb phrase is already an oft-used construction in Japanese, implemented especially with words that were borrowed from Chinese centuries ago. For example, while *benkyoo* means “study” as a noun, *benkyou suru* becomes the verb “to study.” The fact that English-origin nouns are treated the same way as Japanese nouns when creating a “to do” verb phrase indicates that an effort has been made to integrate them seamlessly into the Japanese grammatical system.

In Spanish, “to do” verbs follow a similar pattern, but the order of the noun and the verb is reversed. *Hacer*, which means “to do” or “to make” is placed before the loanword and is conjugated accordingly. Dumont and Vergara Wilson identify *hacer* in structures like this as a “light” or “operator” verb which contributes to tense, aspect, and mood. The word that follows *hacer* is the lexical element that provides the crucial meaning aspect of the compound verb (Dumont et al 445). There are many set phrases that follow this structure, including *hacer zapping* (“channel-hopping/channel-surfing”), *hacer footing/hacer jogging* (“to go jogging, to jog”), and *hacer surfing/hacer surf* (“to surf”) (Kellogg). Another example is *hacer bullying* (“to bully”), which is, interestingly, used despite other existing Spanish equivalents such as *abusar*, *acosar*, *intimidar*, and *atemorizar*. Perhaps the use of the English *bullying* is attached to a larger cultural movement or has overarching social connotations; the push to stop bullying obviously is not restricted to English-speaking places, but it is possible that the English word has become attached to the movement. Another clever “to do” verb is *hacer puenting*, which means “to bungee jump”; it consists of the operator *hacer* followed by a gerund created by combining the Spanish word *punte* (“bridge”) and the English suffix *-ing* (Kellogg). The usage of all of these “to do” verbs, at times despite the existing Spanish equivalents, demonstrates that as cultural

phenomena they are widely recognized, but as linguistic entities they adhere to Spanish language norms. This adherence demonstrates how, on a grammatical and syntactical level, there is an effort made to preserve what is standard in Spanish while incorporating loanwords.

One very interesting, although relatively obscure, case is that of specific contact dialects in the United States. Dumont and Wilson discuss a phenomenon found in the New Mexico Spanish-English Bilingual corpus in which a bilingual compound verb, which consists of the operator *hacer* followed by a lexical element in the form of a bare English infinitive is used (Dumont et al 445). Examples include *hacer decide*, *hacer rent*, and *hacer smoke*. This unusual combination borders on code-switching because of the distinction made in the pronunciation of each word (Spanish for *hacer*, English for the lexical element), but the fact that the English word is placed into a Spanish grammatical structure (*hacer* + word) shows that the tendency is still to strive for a flow of words that fits into the Spanish grammatical and syntactical template.

## 2. *Morphologically Incorporated Verbs (MIVs)*

Another more complex example of verbs containing English loanwords is that which I prefer to call “morphologically incorporated verbs”. Davis and Tsujimura call these “innovative verbs”, but because I feel that any case of loanword incorporation demonstrates innovation and creativity, I will refer to them as morphologically incorporated verbs (MIVs). In Japanese, these kinds of verbs are formed by adding the common Japanese verb ending *-ru* to an already phonetically adapted English loanword. Davis and Tsujimura identify a more or less reliable process of conversion from an English loanword to an innovative verb, stating that first, the loanword must be at least two morae long (a mora being a syllabic unit). In addition, the last two

morae of the root loanword cannot consist of one elongated vowel. After the clipping process has occurred and said standards are met, the ending *-ru* is added (Davis et al 804).

Some examples of the MIVs like the aforementioned include *kopiru* and *sutabaru*, meaning “to make a copy” and “to go to Starbucks”, respectively. The former consists of the trimmed version of *kopii* (“copy”) and the common verb ending *-ru*. The latter contains a trimmed version of *sutabakkusu* (“Starbucks”) with the same *-ru* ending. Both adhere to the MIV formation rules as defined by Davis and Tsujimura in that they contain the adequately long English-origin base and the added *-ru* ending. The trimmed loanword portion of each MIV is written in *katakana*, while the ending *-ru* is written in *hiragana*, which is used for native Japanese words and often for grammatical purposes such as verb inflections. Thus *kopiru* is written as コピる, not こびる, and *sutabaru* is written as スタバる, not すたばる. In this way, the distinction between the English origin of each verb root and the traditional verb ending is represented through orthography, making the word identifiable as a MIV. Inflection of these verbs when forming the past tense necessitates gemination, as it does with native Japanese verbs of the same type. So, *kopiru* becomes *kopitta* and *sutabaru* becomes *sutabatta*.

While the above described verbs and their conversion process represent a large portion of MIVs in Japanese, there is another, smaller group of verbs that come from English loanwords whose endings (after phonological adaptation) permit them to be treated as verbs without any necessary change. These verbs already end in *-ru* in their adapted state, so there is no need to do any trimming or suffixing. I will call these verbs “convenient morphologically incorporated verbs”. One example is the word *apiru*, which means “to appeal” (in the sense of trying to make a good impression of oneself). We can observe the use of *apiru* in accordance with Japanese grammar in a Yahoo! Answers forum post, wherein one user asks, *apirareru toki ha,*

*wakariyasui apirikata no hoo ga ii desu ka?*, meaning, “When you [guys] are being flirted with, do you prefer an easy-to-understand way of flirting?” (男性の方...). The verb *apiru* is changed grammatically in two different instances; *apirareru* is the verb in its passive form (indicating that the sentence’s subject is on the receiving end of the action), and *apirikata* contains the suffix *kata* (which means “the way that something is done”), becoming “way of flirting”. The word *apiiru*, with an elongated [i], also exists in Japanese, but is treated as a noun or used with *suru* to become a “to do” verb, as discussed previously (Ahlström).

Another example like “appeal” is the word *guguru*, meaning “to Google”. Because the word “Google”, when approximated phonologically in Japanese from its original English form, already ends in *-ru*, there is no need to add the *-ru* verb ending as detailed by Davis and Tsujimura. Thus, the adapted loanword *guguru* functions as a name for the website, but also, because of its convenient *-ru* ending, as a verb. Because of their convenient endings, it is even easier for these types of MIVs to blend into Japanese grammar seamlessly, providing us with yet another example of loanword incorporation followed by native language preservation (this time on a grammatical level).

In Spanish, there occurs a similar process of converting English loanwords into verbs that morphologically conform to existing Spanish-origin verbs and therefore fit easily into its grammatical system. Similar to what occurs in the aforementioned Japanese case, the verb “to Google” is created by converting the word “Google” into “googlear” or “guglear”, resulting in an *-ar* verb that can be conjugated just as easily as any other Spanish-origin *-ar* verb. The spelling of this verb varies; sometimes it is written as “googlear”, preserving the original English orthography, while other times it is written as “guglear”, opting for a phonetic adaptation reflected through orthography that adheres to the Spanish sound system and alphabet. This

leeway when it comes to orthographic adaptation is no doubt because of the fact that the English and Spanish alphabets are more closely related to each other than they are to the Japanese syllabary. Either way, the nature of Spanish verbs is maintained by adding the common *-ar/-ear* ending to the word.

Other examples of these Spanish MIVs are *aparcar* (“to park”, as a car), *surfear* (“to surf”), and *rapear* (“to rap”). This last example constitutes another version of transformation of the loanword *rap* after it has been incorporated, as we observed earlier in the case of *rapero* in Spanish and *rappaa* in Japanese. One amusing example is the word *enguaynarse*, which means “to become intoxicated by wine”; the prefix *-en* indicates entering a state or condition, the *guayn* is the phonological approximation of “wine”, the *-ar* is the verb ending, and the *-se* indicates reflexive action (or action done to oneself) (Azevedo 364).

One can observe the use of MIVs like “googlear/guglear” in various places on the Internet; one example is an article from the website *El Financiero* that reads “Y tras el Brexit, los británicos googlean: ¿qué es la Unión Europea?”, which translates to “And after Brexit, the British google: ‘What is the European Union?’” (Y tras Brexit...). We can see here that “googlear” has been conjugated so that it appears in the present tense third person plural form “googlean”. “Googlear/guglear” may, however, still be considered a young loanword that has yet to be widely accepted as legitimate; a search for either spelling in the Real Academia Española’s dictionary yields no results (*Diccionario de la lengua española*).

### Calques and Japanese-Born English Phrases

Other phenomena that demonstrate loanword incorporation with native language preservation include calques and what I will call Japanese-born English phrases. Calques are

phrases in one language that are created by literally translating that same phrase from another language. These occur quite often in Spanish spoken in the United States. Examples of calques in Spanish include *jugar un rol/un papel* (“play a role”, where *jugar* originally means “play” but in the sense of fun and games; *rol* is the Spanish approximation of the English word “role”, and *papel* is the original Spanish word for it), *correr para presidente* (“run for president”, where *correr* originally refers to the physical activity of running), *ser familiar con* (“be familiar with,” despite the existence of the verb *conocer* as a Spanish equivalent of this English phrase; in addition, the word *familiar* traditionally means “familial”) or *tienda de grocerías* (“grocery store”, even though *grocerías* is not considered a real word, and *groserías* with an “s” traditionally means “profanity”/“vulgarity”) (Azevedo 363). In all of these examples, while the lexical components are translated literally from English into Spanish, the phrases themselves are still in Spanish and make sense on a fundamental, grammatical level. While traditionally accepted Spanish semantics are not used, English vocabulary is not used either; in this way, the overall flow of potential sentences is maintained because all words being used are still in Spanish. They do not venture outside of the Spanish sound system (or, for that matter, the language’s standard intonation or prosody).

In Japanese, phrases are created that consist of English loanwords but that do not exist in English. One example is *shiikuretto shuuzu*, “secret shoes”, which refers to platforms hidden in the heel of a man’s shoe so as to create the illusion that he is taller. Another is the phrase *peepaa doraibaa* (“paper driver”), which describes a person who has a driver’s license but is not comfortable driving; thus, he or she is a driver “on paper”, but does not drive in reality (Ahlström). These phrases would be unrecognizable to the average English speaker, because not only do they conform to Japanese phonological norms, but they also do not exist in English.

This distance thus placed between them and the original source of the individual loanwords demonstrates native language preservation.

### Abbreviated Forms in Spanish and Japanese

Certain abbreviated forms of loanwords in each language demonstrate preservation of native language tendencies. In Spanish, the Rolling Stones are sometimes referred to as *los Rolling*, which literally translates to “the rolling” in English. While adjectives precede nouns in English, they most often come after nouns in Spanish, so the nickname *los Rolling* might have come into existence because it was assumed that “rolling” was a noun. This nickname is used in the title of a YouTube video of the band performing in Cuba in 2016, along with the word *roliston*, which is a phonological approximation of the band’s name (“rolling stones en vivo...”). We can see that there has been deviation from the original orthography of the words, as the two words “Rolling Stones” have melded into one word, one “l” and the “-ng” in “rolling” have been deleted, and the word “stones” has now become singular by losing its final “s”. In addition, pronunciation of the word *roliston* employs Spanish phonemes, such as the trilled [r] at the beginning of the word.

A similar change occurs in Japanese, wherein each abbreviated form is created by deleting certain syllables from the phonologically adapted versions of English loanwords and, sometimes, combining the syllables that remain. This can be seen in such examples as *burapi* (Brad Pitt), *rosu* (Los Angeles), and *sekuhara* (sexual harassment). An especially interesting example is *kintore* (“muscle training”), which is formed by the combination of *kin*, the Japanese word for “muscle”, and *tore*, the shortened form of *toreningu* (“training”) (Ahlström). This process of abbreviating words is used frequently with Japanese words; one example is *shuukatsu*,

which is a shortened form of *shuushoku katsudoo*, which means “job hunting activities” (Ahlström). Another is *toodai*, the shortened form of *tookyoo daigaku* (Tokyo University). Abbreviated forms of English loanwords in Japanese support the claim of native language preservation in that a) they are converted to a state that is unrecognizable in English because of phonological approximation and syllable deletion, and b) the shortening process is something that is also applied to Japanese words. Native language preservation in this case is demonstrated on the morphological and phonological levels.

### Conclusion

There are many examples of incorporation of English loanwords in Japanese and Spanish, but through morphology, grammar, pronunciation, orthography, each language succeeds in maintaining its own character. Native language preservation is observable on all of these levels; the complex grammatical and morphological altering of English words integrates them seamlessly into the vernacular, and the phonological and orthographic adaptation leans toward native language tendencies as well, resulting in loanword pronunciation that is affected accordingly. In conclusion, while the mere act of incorporating an English loanword demonstrates a desire to look outward beyond one’s own linguistic sphere, the complex processes through which incorporation occurs show us that ultimately the character of the native language is preserved as much as possible.

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