

## **International Lecture of the Eurasia Foundation, Fall Semester 2022**

### **Series Lectures (9): “Asian Community: The Construction and**

### **Transformation of East Asiaology”**

### **Topic: Japanese “Gairaigo” in Taiwan**

For the 9th Eurasia Foundation International Lecture in the 2022 academic year of Chinese Culture University, Professor Chung, Chi-Ju, from the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at the Chinese Culture University, was invited to give a lecture on the topic of “Japanese ‘Gairaigo’ (loanwords) in Taiwan.” Professor Chung has been studying Japanese loanwords in Chinese since 1997. Based on her 25 years of research, this speech started with the basic understanding of loanwords, introduced the characteristics of loanwords in Chinese, detailed the types, historical evolution, and usage of Japanese loanwords in Taiwan, and analyzed the impact of Japanese loanwords on Taiwan’s language society.

#### **Basic knowledge of loanwords**

All languages in the world contain loanwords to some extent, and loanwords are a phenomenon that will inevitably occur during cultural exchanges between countries in the world. The reason for using foreign words is usually to introduce new things, concepts, ideas that did not exist before, or to use foreign words deliberately for original items in order to give the item a new feeling. After a foreign word enters the language, it may be integrated into it and become a part of it; it may also be just a temporary language phenomenon and disappear soon. Unlike Japanese loanwords, which are usually written in katakana, it is quite easy to distinguish. Loanwords in Chinese all used Chinese characters, you can only read the content from the beginning to the end, and judge where the loanwords are from words in the context.

#### **Loanwords in Chinese**

Because Chinese people are conservative and do not like new and foreign things, compared with other languages in the world, Chinese has a relatively small number of foreign words. Chinese characters are ideographic characters that are not suitable for transliteration, while sense-for-sense translation takes too much time and cannot produce a large number of loanwords. As a result, there is a relatively small number of loanwords in Chinese. There are two periods when a large number of Japanese loanwords entered Taiwan. One was the modern period of the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, and another was the period after the 1980s. A considerable proportion of the

Japanese loanwords that appeared in these two periods became everyday expressions and were frequently used.

There are several ways to translate foreign words: 1. “Transliteration” that borrows the pronunciation of a foreign language and writes it in the closest Chinese characters. 2. Take the meaning of foreign languages and use Chinese to create “sense-for-sense translation” of new words. 3. “Borrowing form” from the type of characters of foreign language. Since both China and Japan use Chinese characters, “borrowing form” is the largest number of Japanese loanwords. Even if the form of Chinese characters is used, the meaning and culture of the content have been Japanized. Words of borrowing form are the main focus of the study of Japanese loanwords.

### **Three kinds of Japanese loanwords in Chinese**

The Japanese loanwords in Taiwan can be divided into three main categories in chronological order: 1. Modern loanwords: At the end of the Qing Dynasty in China, a large number of Western civilizations were introduced to China. At the same time, Japan was undergoing the Meiji Restoration and was also absorbing Western culture. Both China and Japan translated a large number of Western works during this period, resulting in a considerable number of loanwords from foreign languages. Because the Japanese translations were simple and easy to understand, they gradually replaced the difficult Chinese translations (such as: democracy 德謨克拉西 (Dé mó kè lā xī)→民主 (Minshu/Min-Jhu)). Part of the Japanese translations during this period were “returned words.” That is, words that were originally from ancient Chinese books were borrowed by Japan, and after they were given new meanings in Japanese, they were passed back to Chinese language, such as economics [經濟] and society [社會].

2. Remaining loanwords: Taiwan was a colony of Japan from 1895 to 1945. After many years of strengthening Japanese education, Japanese was extremely popular. At that time, Taiwanese had to use Japanese in public, and they spoke their mother tongue (Hokkien, Hakka, etc.) when they were at home. Naturally, the two languages were mixed and merged into one over time. These Japanese words that have been integrated into Taiwan’s various languages remain and become Taiwan’s unique Japanese loanwords, such as Tatami (たたみ), Ojisang (おじさん), Tenpura (てんぷら) and so on.

### **Research on New Loanwords**

After World War II, Japan was defeated and Taiwan had been ruled by the Kuomintang government. The government swept away the influence of Japanese rule,

abolished Japanese in language policy, banned Japanese in public places, and reduced the frequency of communication with Japan to a minimum. As the times changed, commercial exchanges with Japan gradually resumed. Martial law was lifted in 1987, and import restrictions on Japanese pop culture were slowly lifted. In 1993, the government lifted the ban on the cable TV, and the TV station was finally able to broadcast Japanese programs, resulting in the social phenomenon of the “Japanophile” group. There are more and more popular products from Japan, and a large number of new loanwords are borrowed, which has a considerable impact on Taiwan. Professor Chung called the Japanese loanwords introduced into Taiwan during this period “new loanwords” in Professor Chung’s study. First, in order to grasp comprehensive information, Professor Chung collected 1721 Japanese loanwords using the magazines *Nippon Digest* (日本文摘) and *Taipei Walker*, which reported information related to Japan, published in Taiwan. Among them, words of “borrowed form” accounted for 70% of the proportion and most of them are regarding popular, daily life, and economics. Then Professor Chung used *Liberty Times* to investigate two new loanwords that were very active in the early 21st century, namely “達人 [Daren/Tatsujin]” and “ポケモン [Pokemon],” and continued to observe and analyze the evolution of various new loanwords.

Professor Chung’s ultimate goal is to establish a database of current usage of new loanwords; thus, more people will pay attention to the topic of loanwords. She also hopes that students attending the lecture can stretch out their tentacles of language learning, and be more sensitive to the Chinese and Japanese that are used every day and enhance the effectiveness of learning Japanese through this process.

(Web link: <https://eurasia.pccu.edu.tw/index.php>)

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