



"May Your Life Be Marvelous:" English Language Labelling and the Semiotics of Japanese Promotion

John F. Sherry, Jr.; Eduardo G. Camargo

The Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 14, No. 2. (Sep., 1987), pp. 174-188.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0093-5301%28198709%2914%3A2%3C174%3A%22YLBME%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O>

The Journal of Consumer Research is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

“May Your Life Be Marvelous:” English Language Labelling and the Semiotics of Japanese Promotion

JOHN F. SHERRY, JR.
EDUARDO G. CAMARGO*

A recent trend in consumer research is the broadening of the notion of consumer behavior to include activities not merely epiphenomenal to marketing. Another trend with earlier historical origins is the semiotic interpretation of consumption activities. These trends are merged in the present article, which contrasts the vehemence with which Japanese cultural uniqueness is linked with the spirit of the language (*kotodama*) with the Japanese readiness to use English language loanwords in establishing an identity for indigenous product offerings. The article focuses on the investing of indigenous consumer goods with meaning through use of loanwords in a culturally conservative blocked market context. It explores the meaning of such investment from the perspective of consumer and analyst, using product labels and other promotional vehicles as a primary data base. Finally, it treats the diffusion of cultural elements such as language and lifestyle, and their subsequent adaptation to local systems of meaning, as a significant macroconsumption pattern.

The specialized use of non-native English language in Japanese consumption settings is the focus of this article. While a variety of consumer domains is examined, we have selected packaging—more specifically, labelling—as the vehicle for an extended exploration for a number of reasons. First of all, much Japanese behavior is characterized by elaborate interaction ritual and impression management (Goffman 1959, 1967). The practice of exchanging business cards (*meishi*) for purposes of establishing the ground rules for appropriate interpersonal behaviors encapsulates these characteristics. (In fact, one of the authors participated in a *meishi* exchange at a Tokyo Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.) The uniforms, routinized demeanor, scripted interactions, and stylized gestures of department store elevator girls is another example; both Buruma (1984) and Hochschild (1983) have commented on such behavior. We feel that packaging is a structural embodiment of interaction ritual and

impression management. While this is apparent strategically at the functional level of the marketing mix itself, the cultural significance of such embodiment among the Japanese is our particular concern.

Second, the concept of packaging, or wrapping (*tsutsumi*), has a venerable history in Japan. It has been an art for over ten centuries (DeMente 1981). Not only does it play a central role in a range of spiritual and cultural aspects of Japanese life (Ekiguchi 1985), but it has also become an end in itself insofar as the symbolic and monetary value of the package often exceeds that of its contents (Oka 1975). Special rules and terms exist for wrapping particular items, and materials and style vary according to the occasion (Ekiguchi 1985). While the aesthetics and semiotics of Japanese packaging are most clearly visible in gift giving practices, and, by extension, in consumer product packaging, their echoes are also present in the urban ecology of the islands. The sunshine laws that impact architectural style, the sound baffles that muffle traffic noise on highways and expressways, and the great tarps suspended from scaffolding that conceal construction work on buildings and shield passersby from the noise and debris (not to mention the unsightliness) of the actual construction work, are all examples of packaging writ large. One is even tempted to include the omnipresent business suit of the salaryman as part of this ecological backdrop. Nakayama (1976) has extended the concept of packaging through numerous domains of Japanese experience. Cultural critics such as Buruma (1984) maintain that

*John F. Sherry, Jr. is Assistant Professor of Marketing and Eduardo G. Camargo is a Ph.D. candidate in Marketing, both at the J. L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60201. The authors wish to thank Harumi Befu, Russell Belk, Ferdinand Mauser, David Plath, Richard Wilk, and several anonymous reviewers for constructive comments provided on earlier drafts of this manuscript. They also acknowledge the support provided by the Northwestern University Center for the Study of U.S.-Japan Relations.

the Japanese are obsessed with appearances irrespective of the real meanings behind them. In our present case, the issue is not to determine whether some “real” meaning exists, but rather to understand which meanings are real for our principal actors.

Finally, the occidental visitor to Tokyo is quickly struck by the aptness of Barthes’ (1982) metaphor characterizing Japan as an empire of signs. There is literal as well as figurative truth in his observation. The urban landscape is wrapped in signs meticulously lettered and garishly painted. Some flash incessantly their neon messages, while others engage the consumer’s attention more subtly. Posted advertisements are everywhere, from billboards to utility poles to handstraps in subway cars. Yet Tokyo exhibits a kind of “domiciliary obliteration” (Barthes 1982) in its toponymy: while street addresses may exist, they seem accessible to few but postmen, and seem to follow no geometric or linear (i.e., occidental) logic. Because Tokyo seems largely unclassified in this discursive, denotational sense, Barthes believes it to be knowable only through ethnography. Since pattern is ineluctably local, and meaning systems contextual, we would extend the utility of ethnographic knowing to urban studies in general. In this empire of signs, the city resembles a package.

In his discussion of contemporary packaging issues, Kotler (1984) has asked, “Should the main function(s) of the package be to offer superior product protection, introduce a novel dispensing method, suggest certain qualities about the product or the company, or something else?” We will suggest that “something else” is one of the critical functions of a particular form of packaging in Japan. The confluence of utilitarian and expressive traditions shaping Japanese conceptions of packaging is alleged to represent the triumph of a conservation ethic over a consumption ethic: nature, propriety, and handicraft conspire to teach that inner, spiritual satisfaction cannot be found merely in material abundance (Oka 1975). Perhaps more accurately interpreted, consumption of tradition-laden products is a cultural imperative; tradition may be conserved even as greater quantities of material are consumed. Thus, double packaging of electronics products—an outer shell for transportation purposes and an inner package for display and disposition—can be interpreted as a culturally conservative, if ecologically wasteful, practice. Lebra (1976) has suggested that Japanese “materialism” is more properly construed as social preoccupation, and signifies both the need to keep pace with or slightly exceed the social standing of others. Consequently, the Japanese may respond to pressures for ecological conservation more out of this social preoccupation than out of any idyllic cultural ethos. The enormous difficulty, tremendous expense, and small profitability involved in tapping the tiniest housing niche in Japan—the buying, selling, and moving of traditional farmhouses (*minka*)—has not daunted the efforts of some entrepreneurs to preserve these “living antiques” (Tharp

1986). It is clear from Barthes’ (1982) description that the package is often the primary product, or rather, object, which embodies a host of meanings. Fields (1983) interprets these meanings in no uncertain terms for consumer research. The same box of Lux toilet soap becomes an affront rather than a valued gift if presented in the wrapper of a supermarket rather than a department store. The house brand concept that reduces product cost to the consumer in part through minimum packaging has failed to catch on in Japan. The pressure for proper social form extends to packaging: breaches of propriety in formal presentation (whether through packaging or other promotion) can prompt rejection of product offering. While such rejection can occur in any culture (Gardner 1967; Sacharow 1982), it is an especially likely proposition in Japan.

Similarly, Kotler (1984) holds that labels perform several specific functions. Labels identify products and brands, grade products and brands, describe things about products and brands, and promote products and brands. The package and labels with which we are concerned fulfill each of these functions, and more. They embody communication (Gardner 1967). Dichter’s (1975) impression of packaging—as intriguing and provocative as any of his insights—is helpful in interpreting the Japanese perspective. According to Dichter, whether it is a bridge or a barrier to a consumer’s acceptance of a product, the package is ultimately a drama, and its unwrapping has a particular psychology. In the balance of this article, we will review this drama by exploring the ways in which English language labelling helps to infuse local products with particular symbolic meaning. In so doing, we will examine some of the macroconsumption issues involved in treating linguistic behavior as a consumer research phenomenon. While nonverbal dimensions of packaging such as graphic design will be considered, we will concentrate primarily on the signifying function of the verbal messages themselves. The relationship between these dimensions, beyond the metonymic or figure-and-ground function that one provides for the other, will not be examined in detail. Rather, we acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between verbal and nonverbal components that produces meaning, and opt to explore the significance of the verbal in this article.

The forms of communication that command our attention are the ones conducted in the English language, or, more accurately, in a promotional patois combining English and Japanese to arresting effect. This indigenization, or nativization (often called “Japlish,” after such other common hybrids as “Franglais” or “Chinglish”) is especially interesting from the perspective of consumer research, as it represents a very particular macroconsumption issue: linguistic diffusion is essentially new product adoption at the societal level, with resonance in consumption patterns at the local level.

Consider several examples of such linguistic borrowing:

- The Japanese government has begun a five-year program to eliminate Japanese language road signs in favor of installing bilingual signs in English and Japanese.
- Akio Morita abandoned the idea of naming his company "Sonny," despite its appropriate latinate root and its personally pleasing English connotation of mischief, in favor of the more globally neutral "Sony" (Lyons 1976).
- Some years ago, one of Japan's "Big Three" newspapers with a circulation exceeding five million copies carried an ad printed entirely in Japanese except for the headline, which read: SMOOTH AS A BABY'S ASS (DeMente 1981).
- Drivers cruise the streets of Tokyo in vehicles with model names such as "Fairlady," "Gloria," "Bongo Wagon," and "Cherry Vanette."
- As part of its "Humanication" strategy of office automation, Hitachi markets a personal word processor named "Mine," along with such software packages as "MyCalc."
- Japanese consumers read such magazines as "Happy End," "Big Tomorrow," "Popeye," "Roadshow," and "Saiensu" (Science).
- Products with names such as *nopan kissa* (bottomless coffee shops), *pasokon* (personal computer), *deodoranto* (deodorant), *appuru pai* (apple pie), and *Pocari Sweat* (a branded "ion supply" drink), and advertising appeals such as *stoppu rukku* (stop and look) for revealing swimsuits, and *yuniku* (unique) for anything just a little different are becoming increasingly popular in Japan (Buruma 1984; Fields 1983; Sandow 1984).
- "Datsun" is a second generation model derived from the "Datto" automobile. The approximate meaning of the prototype—"rapidly running rabbit"—is combined with the filial sense of "son," to produce a Japanized trade name. A similar rationale was adopted by the three Torii brothers, who used the Japanese word for "three" (*san*) to create the tradename "Suntory," spelling it as if it were an English word (Kitahara 1983).

It is to such intriguing linguistic consumer behavior that the balance of this article is addressed.

The ability to use the English language has come to signify a transmutation of the non-native speaker and of the adopting speech community that Kachru (1984) has likened to alchemy. English symbolizes modernization, the potential for expanded functional roles and ultimately social mobility, and an internationalized outlook. Kachru (1984) observes that English use in non-native contexts can become a vehicle of disharmonic conflictual (i.e., culturally disruptive) values as well as the basis of elite group membership that cross-cuts ethnic, religious, linguistic, and political boundaries. Whether it is Hispanicized (Spanglish, Englanol, Pringlish), Africanized, Indianized, Caribbeanized, or Japanized, English carries significant symbolic weight (Kachru 1982). Linguistic chauvinism (Farb 1973) is a common cross-cultural stance. For example, the commission on terminology established by Pompidou in 1970 had by 1977 virtually banned the use of foreign

words where French equivalents existed in ads, broadcast media, and official documents in France (Ardagh 1986), in an attempt to eradicate terms like "*le drug-store*," "*le weekend*," "*le fast-food*," "*le marketing*" and "*un oil-rig*." The technological snob appeal of English creates resistance to such purifying efforts, as in the case of computer operators who process *un batch* of data, who *fait un dump* onto *le floppy* disk, and who must occasionally *debuggent* their software (Hudson 1985). The sociopolitical significance of language is perhaps nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in the efforts of Mexico's Commission for the Defense of the Spanish language to eradicate the apostrophe (a symbol not found in Spanish orthography) from incursive anglicisms; nationalist contradictions have assisted the formation of a countervailing Council to Defend Indigenous Languages (Riding 1984). The "vehicular load" of English—its status as the primary medium of modern science and technology—creates a power that elites can use to recruit members to their cause (Kachru 1984). Thus the kind of code mixing that concerns us here—that is, the use of English lexical items in the stream of discourse of Japanese promotion—can be interpreted as a linguistic strategy used by marketers to involve consumers with a product by investing that product with connotations less efficiently or less elegantly achieved through the native language.

THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC VIEW

In his scalding criticism of state of the art linguistic studies in Japan, Miller (1977, 1980, 1982) has accused Japanese scholars of elevating to a fetish the view that the origins of the Japanese language are undiscoverable, and has advised Western scholars to treat Japanese linguistic studies as a highly sophisticated metalanguage. It is not sufficient merely to classify Japanese as an Altaic language that has been shaped over millenia by other Altaic languages such as Korean or by non-Altaic languages such as Chinese and Malayo-Polynesian (Miller 1980), and in recent years by other contemporary languages. Rather, the meaning of language in its sociocultural context is the issue with which we must be critically concerned.

Miller (1982) turns to culture history in his quest to decipher this meaning. Three times in its history, Japan has been locked in a "massive, life-and-death cultural confrontation" with speakers of a foreign language. Korean and Chinese antagonists presented themselves at the dawn of Japanese culture. At the turn of the sixteenth century, Portuguese, Dutch, and British English-speakers threatened the nation's cultural autonomy. Finally, after the Second World War, American English speakers occupied, and seemed bent upon transforming, the Japanese homeland. The principal reaction to these linguistic confrontations—especially the postwar engagement—was the emergence of the Japanese language

as the "fetish focus" for a new national sustaining myth, which Miller has labelled the "modern myth of *Nihongo*" (1982, pp. 4–5):

For most Japanese, and indeed for modern Japanese society and culture in general, the Japanese language is not simply a language. It is not merely a social convention, something that the society and the culture can use and then forget about. Above all, the Japanese language in modern Japan is never regarded simply as a set of social conventions, arbitrarily agreed upon. For modern Japan, the Japanese language is a way of life, and the enormous amount of speculation, writing and talking about it that goes on at every level of Japanese life constitutes an entirely distinctive and marvelously self-contained way of looking at life . . . It has assumed the dimensions of a national myth of vast proportions.

Simply stated, the myth asserts the uniqueness of Japanese culture, and ties that uniqueness to *kotodama*, the spirit of the Japanese language. Thus, the language embodies aspects of classical mystical and mythic experience, and its scholarly metalanguage becomes a vehicle of communion by which a full-fledged folklore is institutionalized (Miller 1977).

In a curiously instructive cautionary discussion of advertising in Japanized English, a discussion which reinforces Miller's thesis, linguist Amy Horiuchi (1963) reacts negatively to the opinion of the editors of the Asahi newspaper who feel that "anything in *kana* looks fresh and sweet," and who "bow to it [linguistic borrowing] and value it overmuch." Horiuchi feels that not only does Japanese advertising corrupt English, but Japanized English advertising threatens the integrity of the Japanese language. This "psychological atrocity" threatens to obliterate the distinction between loanwords and Japanese words altogether and to inhibit communication between generations of Japanese. Great social vigilance is required to ensure that social solidarity is preserved and enhanced through use of a "mother tongue" rather than eroded through use of linguistic "frills." Because advertising is such a prominent conduit for loanwords, it bears close watching, in Horiuchi's opinion.

The current revival of the cult of *kotodama* is reflected in Japan's popular literature of introspection (*nihonron*), whose efflorescence is attributed to the cultural identity crisis precipitated by Japan's internationalization (Befu 1983). As Japan becomes more enmeshed in the global economy, it searches for ways to adapt the idea-systems of other nations embodied in the mechanics of world trade to its own indigenous culture (Sherry 1987b). This adaptation is more complex than monocausal or prematurely reductionist interpretations—from perspectives as varied as economic (Thurow 1985) and psychoanalytic (Doi 1971; Kitahara 1983)—might suggest. With the coming of affluence in the 1970s, and with the domestic Japanese reaction to the widespread success of Japan's penetration into world markets (Miller 1982), the need to rediscover or create

a satisfying national identity has become quite pressing. Thus, the Japanese language, whose degree of difficulty of acquisition by natives is proclaimed to be tremendous, and by foreigners prohibitive (Befu 1983), provides a convenient foundation for cultural autonomy and integrity. (Unfortunately it fuels as well the processes of ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and cultural hegemony.) The paradoxical nature of the cult of *kotodama* in the face of extensive linguistic borrowing is addressed at length below.

A NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

To provide the appropriate context for interpreting the items in our corpus, a note on orthography is in order. There are four ways of writing Japanese, and each of these ways has a different image and effect from the perspective of a native speaker (DeMente 1981). *Kanji* are multistroke Chinese ideograms that represent the traditional or indigenous Japanese language. When used as a promotional vehicle, *kanji* can give a very formal, even stiff impression, which if used injudiciously, might hinder the effectiveness of an advertisement. *Hiragana* are simplified one or two stroke characters that represent the sounds of Japanese syllables. When used as a promotional vehicle, *hiragana* create a soft intimate style that can convey a feminine mood. *Katakana* are also simplified characters that comprise another syllabary. *Katakana* are used to express foreign words that have been Japanized in pronunciation. When used as a promotional vehicle, *katakana* can impart a foreign, crisp, direct feeling to advertising copy. Finally, *romaji* are roman letters used to spell out Japanized loanwords. Thus "bread" becomes "*bu-re-do*," and milk becomes "*mi-ru-ku*" (DeMente 1981).

Japanese consumers are highly attuned to the nuances of each of these styles. Marketers are able to invest products with specific meanings simply by selecting the style of writing used in promotion. Traditional and foreign-derived words can be used to discriminate subtly between product categories and perceptions. Take for example two pharmaceutical products identical in every respect except for place of manufacture. The Japanese drug, promoted in *kanji*, acquires connotations of the herbal remedy evolved through thousands of years of oriental wisdom. The foreign drug, promoted in *katakana*, conjures up images of a Western laboratory (Fields 1983). Each product may thus appeal to a different segment. In some cases, the foreign product (ineluctably so designated by *katakana*) is disadvantaged, in others it may well benefit, depending upon the consumption setting in which it appears. Certain indigenous product categories have taken to using *katakana* to imply their Western origin, so that *katakana* is no longer an infallible guarantee of Western origin (Fields 1983).

The language of Japanese tourism brochures is similarly enlightening. Loanwords in the international

travel literature are primarily descriptive adjectives and nouns ("unique," "fresh," "nostalgic," "exotic," "romantic," "surfing mecca," and "downtown area," for example). The language of domestic tourism, however, emphasizes Japanese words (unique = *dokutoku*, fresh = *azayaka*, nostalgic = *natsukashii*, etc.) with one major exception: urban tourism. When city tours are promoted, once again loanwords become prominent, with words like "crystal," "academic," and "thrilling" gaining currency. Clearly, "city" connotes modernity and more cosmopolitan values, making loanwords appropriate promotional vehicles (Moeran 1983).

The items in the corpus from which our interpretation proceeds are written in the *romaji* script. While examples from numerous Japanese lifeways in any of the four scripts might have been employed, we have selected *romaji* and a promotional register as vehicles for this particular article. The rationale for this selection is provided in a subsequent section of the article.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LOANWORDS IN JAPANESE

While Japanese has loanwords from most major contemporary languages, English has become the most important contributor in terms of vocabulary items and frequency of use throughout all levels of Japanese society. Attempts to quantify loanword frequency are confounded by the rapidity of assimilation and decay of English words, such as those tied to trends or fads, and by the coining of words in Japanese that mask their English origins (Miura 1979). In loanword surveys, English has been estimated to account for upwards of 80 percent of all borrowed words in Japanese, its nearest competitor being French, which accounts for less than 6 percent (Sonoda 1975). One linguist attempted to count the English loanwords in a current edition of the popular Japanese literary journal *Bungei Shunjū*, but gave up after recording 7,000 occurrences, for an average of over 15 words per page (Miller 1982). In a content analytic study of Japanese popular magazines spanning the years 1953 to 1983, Belk and Pollay (1985) have documented the increased frequency of usage of English words, both translated and untranslated, in Japanese advertisements over time, until a plateau is reached in the 1970s. Curiously, relatively few Japanese words have been borrowed by English, except for those describing items which are viewed as uniquely Japanese, such as kimono, geisha, samurai, hibachi, and the like. Whether Americans borrow business terms such as *kanban* along with borrowed business practices remains to be seen. By contrast, numerous English terms have become widespread in Japan even though perfectly adequate Japanese words exist for the concepts expressed. In fact, some English words have completely replaced their Japanese counterparts (Miura 1979). Describing what he perceives to be a "cline of foreignness" for En-

glish loanwords, Stanlaw (1982) identifies borrowed items that many Japanese believe to be native terms. *Tabako*, for instance, the loanword for "cigarette," has become so entrenched that it is even written in hiragana. Similarly, "coffee" has come to be written in kanji on the storefront signs of some Tokyo shops.

As indicated earlier, Japan has a long history of linguistic borrowing. Sonoda (1975) has traced this history from the Tokugawa shogunate of the early seventeenth century through the contemporary era, documenting the ways in which mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism, militarism, and ultimately marketing have aided the diffusion of English to Japan. As early as 1856, the Institute for Foreign Studies and Translation had begun the formal teaching of English. The Meiji empire accelerated the diffusion of English as it embarked upon a course of modernization. In what we have come to think of as typical Japanese fashion, the Meiji Minister of Education proposed in 1873 not only that English be adopted as the national language, but also that English be recast to eliminate expressions that made the language difficult even for native English speakers. This notion of creating a phonetic English that would benefit the entire world, advanced in a number of countries, has yet to be realized. The postwar Occupation marked a new era in the diffusion of English (and related lifeways) to Japan, and the contemporary advertising industry has accelerated the diffusion process (Sonoda 1975). For example, Buruma (1984) feels that the nuclear family is being promoted as the ideal by advertisers trying to fuel consumerism through such "modish" slogans as "*mai homu*" (my home), "*mai kaa*" (my car), and "*mai famiree*" (my family). "My" is favored because its Japanese equivalent would sound "too possessive, too egotistical, stressing as it does, private over the collective" (Buruma 1984, p. 203). *Mai-homu-shugi* (my-homism) is used to describe the anti-establishment value complex of placing home above work (Miura 1979). (In fact, "my" is the only English first personal pronoun to have transferred effectively to Japan (Sonoda 1975), although "I" is now gaining currency.)

The Japanese have designated newly imported objects and ideas in essentially three ways: through English loanwords, through neologisms, and through modification of the meanings of everyday Japanese words to expand their semantic fields (Sonoda 1975). Both denotations and connotations may differ in transferring from English to Japanese, so that cognates such as boss and *bosu*, slipper and *surippa*, and Christmas and *kurisumasu* may have slightly to radically different meanings. Miura (1979) has identified classes of connotation that attach to loanwords. Loanwords frequently connote "new" or "modern" (as when "boots" shift from *nagagutsu* to *būtsu*). Loanwords can connote Westernization (as when "kitchen" shifts from *daidokoro* to *kitchin*). Loanwords may be used as euphemisms (as when "toilet" shifts from *benjo* to *toire*). Finally, loanwords may connote prestige, and thus ennoble either

the speaker or the speech (as when “inferiority complex” shifts from *rettōkan* to *konpurekkusu*).

It is apparent, then, that English as employed in Japanese promotion should be treated as a foreign language by the native English speaker (DeMente 1984). Focusing on what a word actually means seems more a Western than a Japanese disposition, and living in a cacophonous environment may be less unsettling to Japanese consumers than to their American counterparts (Fields 1983). If we remember that language is not merely communication, but the transmission of a values system, then interpreting “Japlish” (the term “Enganese” (Seward 1983) also has intriguing possibilities) becomes a fascinating exercise in cross-cultural consumer research.

In his comparative analysis of syntactical and semantic parallelism in Japanese and English advertising slogans, Moeran (1985) hypothesizes that Japan’s “wholesale adoption of Western culture” may eventually affect the way the Japanese express experience, leading to a departure from the traditional poetic function of English. This fruitful hypothesis must be expanded in the case of the promotional vehicles considered in this article to include all of the functions of language identified by Jakobson (1960): referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic. The referential function is a denotative, cognitive one referring to the verbal structure of the message. The emotive function is expressive, revealing the speaker’s attitude toward the message. The conative function is the orientation toward the receiver of the message. The phatic function refers to the socially integrative, ritualistic way in which language binds communicants. The metalingual function refers to discourse about language itself, that is, deliberation upon the code in use. The poetic function is the focus on the message for its own sake. Jakobson contends that one of these functions will predominate in any given verbal communication, but that others may be present in subsidiary roles. Since advertising is ultimately a cultural rhetoric (Sherry 1987a), each of these functions is copresent in the persuasive message, and each is grounded in the categories and evaluations of the culture from which the message emerges. Thus, the comparative differences in parallelism Moeran (1985) attributes to poetics must also be attributed to other functions as well. For example, disdain for the hard sell (Fields 1983) shapes Japanese promotion every bit as much as do aesthetic canons. Each of the functions of language, then, may be altered in the use of Japanese English.

The basic argument elaborated here is that language, broadly interpreted as symbolic communication, has a profound impact upon cognition. Whether we consider the time constraints observed by mass media as shaping individuals’ attention spans (Postman 1984), or the cartoon format adopted in Japanese textbooks as promoting a quickly apprehensible, Gestalt-oriented worldview (Maruyama 1985), it is apparent that symbol

systems mediate perception. While research into cultural dimensions of information processing is clearly in its infancy, some work (Sibatani 1980; Toelken 1979) has indicated that processing occurs in different hemispheres for different languages. Researchers such as Tsunoda (Sibatani 1980) have argued that the neural structure of the Japanese brain differs from its counterparts elsewhere as a result of the peculiarities of the Japanese language. While such premature theorizing pushes the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf 1956) to furthest extremes, it also advances the cult of *kotodama* into the sphere of sociobiology; that Tsunoda’s research has become a bestseller in Japan is also telling.

PROMOTIONAL PATOIS: A PURPOSIVE SAMPLE

The data base from which this study emerges is a corpus of items—beverage can labels, numerous types of signs, advertisements, T-shirt slogans, and product brand names—collected by the authors during a two-month field research project in Japan. Each of the items is a local (i.e., Japanese) artifact that employs the English language to enhance its meaning. The items discussed are not translations; they are English words spelled in English. The words are exactly reproduced, with apparent misspellings and punctuation errors preserved. While the authors’ impressions of the significance of linguistic borrowing derive from the entire information environment (which includes such promotion-centered phenomena as subway posters, product inscriptions, brand names, shop names, store and restaurant signs, T-shirt slogans, and truckpanel ad boards), we have chosen to narrow our focus for the purposes of this article to the interpretation of beverage can labels. To gain an appreciation of the range of situations in which Japanized English occurs (if not a sense for the rationale of these usages), the reader is urged to consult Derek Davies’ regular column “Traveller’s Tales” in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

The authors selected beverage can labels as an interpretive vehicle for several reasons. The cans are omnipresent in Tokyo in the thousands of sidewalk vending machines and local shops and in the subway stations and supermarkets throughout the city. They can be collected or photographed with great ease. English is used across beverage categories—softdrinks, sports drinks, coffee, beer, wine, whiskey, etc.—so that consumer perceptions relevant to the study crosscut Japanese market segments. Beverage choice is also thought to shape and reflect many aspects of a consumer’s lifestyle and life cycle (Levy 1986). Finally, since the field study took place over the summer months, the authors were able to observe numerous consumption instances and to speak with consumers in naturalistic settings as well as to sample the beverages themselves.

In the following paragraphs, we present the texts of many of the labels in our beverage can corpus. Prosodic

and thematic interpretations of these labels are advanced, as are interpretations of the multiple meanings of the labels from the perspectives of consumer and analysts. We realize the limitations inherent in generalizing from such a purposive sample, and stress the exploratory nature of our investigation. The semiotics of labelling reveals a number of interesting dynamisms at work in contemporary Japanese society, as our discussion indicates.

Structure of Promotional Appeals

Beverage can labels deliver their polyvocal messages in several formats. Ritual salutation, or toast, is an apparent vehicle:

Give Cheers to
Asahi Draft Beer! and
May your life be Marvelous.
Natural taste is alive in
Asahi Draft Beer.

(350 ml. "Live Beer")

The boast is another common appeal:

There's a gallon of deliciousness
in every drop. Reach for the taste of
good taste. Reach for DyDo.

(125 ml. DyDo "Mixed Nectar")

Frequently, a challenge or invitation is issued to the consumer:

Imagine gives you fine taste and
fashionable feeling. If it's a good time
for you, serve well chilled and appreciate taste.

(250 ml. "Imagine" softdrink)

Occasionally, a picture will carry the message alone, as in the famous Suntory campaign employing penguin cartoons. Suntory Draft Beer features a surfing penguin on one of its 135 ml. cans; penguins engaged in assorted activities are found on a variety of Suntory cans. An extended narrative is another format favored by promoters, as the following cautionary tale indicates:

Wow! Better watch yourself.
She's looking
this way and her eye's
on you. A girl in
love with love.
Be careful with
a man like
him. He'll do
what you want to
get what he wants.
The man always
wants the first kiss,
but it is the woman
who wants the second
kiss. Both hold back
thinking that it's
what the other one wants.

Net contents: 250 ml.
All aluminum can
Serve Chilled
Natural flavoring
Carbonated soft drink—contains no juice.

(250 ml. "Kirin Lemon 2101")

The last distinctive appeal is a relatively straightforward listing of the product's attributes:

A refreshing thirst-quencher, combining grape juice
with the sweetness and sourness of yogurt in perfect proportions.

A new drink created for the enjoyment of health-conscious people

(250 ml. "Grape Sour" by Belmie)

or

Ion supply drink

(250 ml. "Pocari Sweat")

Each of these formats may be combined with one another to produce labels that are hybrids of sorts. For example, narrative and invitation combine to produce:

Him and Her . . . Friend to friend. A new drink enjoy
it as

Pair-feeling . . . Come on and join the "Pair-Sensation"!

(250 ml. "Can Pair" *chūhai* [potato sake
and lemon juice mix]).

The appeals produced by combining formats appear to be more common than those delivered in a solitary modality.

Prosody, Tropes, and Tone

While no developed theory or systematic set of principles treating versification is advanced in this article, it is interesting to observe that most of the labels in our corpus exhibit a poetic structure. This structure is most often that of the prose poem, with cadence, imagery, and figurative language contributing to an overall effect. Thus,

Our brewmaster's inspiration
Canned in draft through microfiltration
(“Suntory Draft 400 Beer”)

scans as a closed couplet of sorts, the second line approaching trochaic tetrameter, but, in the tradition of prose rhythm, never quite making it. Similarly, scansion reveals a structure approaching the haiku for many of the labels. The haiku is a three-line stanza consisting of five, seven, and five syllables, respectively. Scanned with some latitude, the haiku informs the following labels:

Welcome to heaven
As Time brings
softness
found in this can
(“Mild Coffee”)

Why hurry?
Life's the same wherever you are
So relax

("Blend Coffee")

Come together in old and new
There is a light that shines on me
Vivid aqua. PLUMSODA is it!

(250 ml. "PLUM SODA" by B.V.C.)

I'M OFF.
I'll gladly work off 12 ozs.
to savor a good beer.

(350 ml. "Kirin Light Beer")

Such scansion is supported by Yamaki's (1984) principle of euphony in traditional meter. These labels resemble adapted or Westernized haikus for other reasons as well. Traditionally, the haiku captures a clear picture to arouse a particular emotion and to prompt a specific mystical insight. Miller (1977) speaks of the haiku and other short poetic forms as a metaphor for the transient nature of the mystical experience of the language itself. While Westerners may assign the haiku to one or the other realms of meaning—symbol or reasoning, metaphor or syllogism—Barthes (1982) believes the haiku breaches meaning: it is intelligible, yet means nothing; it suspends language, as does the koan, to produce insight. This contradiction is denied to Western art. As a part of the literary branch of Zen, the haiku is not a rich thought reduced to brief form, but a brief event that immediately finds its proper form (Barthes 1982). The insights to be realized through these labels are discussed at length later.

Tropes, whether figures of speech or figures of thought, abound in the labels of our corpus. Apostrophe (addressing some quality or person as if actually present) is a common trope:

The legendary KIRIN is a symbol of
good luck. Open up KIRIN today,
and you'll see what it is all about

(1.5 liter "Kirin Draft Beer")

Simile and metaphor also recur throughout the corpus:

Pokka White Sour is refreshing and
white like Alpine snow. Its sour
taste of yogurt will extend on your
tongue softly and be a sweetheart.

(250 ml. "Pokka White Sour")

Hyperbole ("a gallon of deliciousness in every drop") and onomatopoeia ("Pocari") were demonstrated in labels described earlier. Tropes such as imagery and personification are also common:

under the blazing sun
on the beach at sunset
it's always you and the sound
of waves that quench
my thirsty body.
tomorrow, I'll let myself

flow beyond the waves
as the sea breeze blows

(250 ml. "Pokka Beach Boy Lemon
Squash")

While this list is far from exhaustive, it is apparent that the labels employ many of the dramatic and poetic devices of more conventional art forms.

Finally, a comment on the tone of the labels is in order. Tone connotes the mood of a verse, the underlying attitude it conveys about its subject, and its audience. Much has been written lately about the importance of mood in Japanese advertising (Fields 1983; Trucco 1985). Surveys indicate that Japanese consumers do not share the American hostility toward advertising. Commercials tend to be short, have splashy sets, and feature big-name entertainers (many of whom are Western, especially American) and eminent directors. Most ads neither preach, promise nor praise; some don't even portray product attributes. Rather, they forego rational, discursive presentation in favor of emotional appeals and the establishment of a mood that is expected to color the sponsor's offering. According to Trucco (1985, p. 44):

The main thing Japanese ads set out to do is attract customers to a product, catching their attention and regaling them with an ad. In advertising as in much else in Japan, how something is said is more important than what is said. Packaging is done with the utmost care. Japanese ads are a lot like rock music videos, a deft blend of music, images and sounds that dazzle the eye and arouse the senses. Words are minimal, often emblematic, designed to fashion an image and stick in the mind but almost never actually impart any information about the product. . . . One ad executive here compares such ads to Japanese haiku, which share the same economic, elliptical qualities.

Just as American advertising can be understood as an artform called "capitalist realism" (Schudson 1984), Japanese advertising can be so interpreted, but with an ineluctably local twist. To gain some synergy with Gibney's (1982) analysis of Japan's economic miracle, and to recognize the longstanding role of the artist in Japanese society, perhaps "Confucian capitalist realism" may be advanced as an art style (without denigrating Buddhist or Shinto contributions to the syncretic complex). The tone of the packages and labels that here concern us conforms to this style. This tone invites consumers to experience a set of themes emblematic of the new Japan, and to become world customers in a distinctly traditional mode.

Thematic Analysis of Package Labels

Two thematic clusters emerge from the messages on the labels. The first cluster, or complex, embodies a contrast between nature and culture. The second embodies a contrast between traditional Japanese society, and the emergent contemporary Japanese society. These

themes intergrade and overlap throughout our corpus, becoming a virtual condensed symbol in some cases. This intergrading is evident in a number of labels already presented. Each of these oppositions is mediated by technology, whose significance or meaning is objectified by the product, reinforced by the label and legitimized through consumption. In a very real sense, marketing and consumer behavior ultimately mediate these oppositions, because these behaviors are largely responsible for the direction in which Japanese culture is currently evolving. The dilemma to be resolved by Japanese society is profound: how can the culture resist the homogenizing process set in motion by participation in a global marketplace, or stated less reactively, how can the culture individuate at the same time it undergoes modernization, and still enjoy the "good life" that Westernization appears to afford its adherents? Resolution may lie in the time-tested cultural strategies of selective borrowing and adaptation.

The first thematic complex, the mediation of nature and culture via technology, is evident in a number of labels:

The superior filtration method and
total microorganism-control gave birth to
Sapporo draft beer
(300 ml. "Sapporo Draft Beer")

The adjective "total" indicates the precision, completeness, and superiority with which the manufacturer is able to harness the forces of nature to the ends of new product development. Similarly:

Every satisfying sip a flavour experience,
delicious refreshment is a DyDo tradition.
Relax and enjoy thirst quenching
beverages at their best.
DyDo is your ticket to drink paradise.
There's a gallon of deliciousness in
every drop. Reach for the taste of
good taste, reach for DyDo.
Your assurance of superb flavor is
the Dydo trademark.
DyDo Drinco, Inc.
(250 ml. "M Coffee")

The hyperbole cited earlier ("a gallon . . . in every drop") is more a miracle of miniaturization in the age of the microchip. The product promises to transport the consumer to an idyllic destination at once primeval and futuristic (both Eden and Nirvana suggest themselves), as if the beverage were some metaphysical rail pass. This metaphor may be well turned, if the influence of Mahayana Buddhism—literally, the "greater vehicle"—is accepted (Reischauer 1978). The Japanese have traditionally used Buddhism to ensure their "this-worldly" welfare (Lebra 1976). The implications of such a back-to-the-future orientation are considered below. Images of "refreshment" and of "tradition" commingle on this label, reminding the consumer that elements of the old must temper or legitimate aspects of things new.

Snippets of this long verse appear on other DyDo products as well. The transformation of natural items through technology into significant cultural artifacts is reflected in a final example:

Top-quality MOCHA blend coffee
with a rich and velvety taste, created by using a high
proportion of specially selected MOCHA beans which
have been
subjected to our unique extraction process.
With sweetness suppressed, a new smooth flavor
and after taste for your enjoyment.
(250 ml. "Mocha Blend" Coffee)

Again, through precise control of nature, the good life can be achieved. Recall the Grape Sour label presented earlier, which also afforded consumers access to the good life through the manufacturer's ability to combine strong opposites in "perfect proportions." Given both the traditional Shinto reverence for nature and a value orientation that increasingly links happiness to the ability to conquer nature (Befu 1981; Reischauer 1978), the celebration of this theme on beverage labels is quite appropriate.

Lebra (1976) has noted that a seemingly contradictory attitude of the Japanese toward nature—extolling their harmony with it on the one hand, while controlling it through miniaturization on the other—infuses Japanese aesthetics. For her, the essence of Japanese naturalism lies in an appreciation of the interaction and affinity between humans and nature, and not in the belief that nature is independent of or dominant over humans (Lebra 1976). This view of naturalism reflects the belief of Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) that adaptiveness (or "good adjustment") is the knowledge of how and when to exert the processes of primary and secondary control, and how to integrate them. Primary control involves bringing the environment into line with one's wishes; secondary control involves bringing oneself into line with environmental forces. Thus, a recent study characterized by its own authors as exploratory and ahistorical (Weisz, Rothbaum, and Blackburn 1984) that finds secondary control to be more highly valued in Japan must be tempered with more contemporary perspectives such as those of Befu (1981) or Maruyama (1985), with an enlightened understanding of Japanese aesthetics, and with an ethnographic appreciation of Japanese business practices (for example, Abegglen and Stalk 1985; Morita 1986). A morality based on social relativism (particularism-situationalism) has proved a source of adaptability and progressivism to the Japanese (Lebra 1976).

Investing the package with the imagery of nature is a centuries-old Japanese practice. Traditional packages were fashioned from natural items, such as leaves, grasses, or wood or rice paper. As artificial wrapping has displaced such natural containers, natural designs have been incorporated into packaging. Thus, wrapping paper in various earthen tones, imprinted with pictures

of flowers or plants, is commonly available. Through the imagery of their labels, the beverage cans in our corpus are a sort of skeuomorph of these original, natural containers, in the same sense that our Western barrel-shaped glass pickle jars are skeuomorphs of the wooden pickel barrels of earlier times. In each case, the product contained in the skeuomorph, although quite modern in production, enjoys the connotations of "old-fashioned" and "traditional" in their fullest positive sense. Thus, technology has not so much triumphed over nature as it has permitted nature to speak to and through its contemporary inhabitants. Culture has renewed and reaffirmed its ties to nature through appropriate technology. Even the "mechanical packages" housing these beverages—vending machines—have this natural veneer affixed to their panels:

Terra—love and life
on an asteroid of water.
Gazing at the twinkle of the Milky Way
through the blowing solar wind
drink TERRA

("Terra" by Ajinomoto)

A vending machine owned by AVOS, housing the beverages of several firms, has a number of trees painted on its panels, giving it a natural aspect in its urban environment. Print advertising for categories in which brand choice reflects personal taste or social status most frequently employs nature symbolism to convey mood (Madden, Caballero, and Matsukubo 1986).

The second thematic complex, evident in many of the labels we have quoted, concerned the "two Japans," that is, the traditional culture and the emerging culture. Once again, technology presides over this transformation. Images from our corpus that support this complex are varied. The old is contrasted, explicitly and implicitly, with the new. Images of being and of meditation are contrasted with those of doing, achieving, and acquiring (as in the Pokka examples). Belk, Bryce, and Pollay (1985) have found the latter images to be especially prominent in television advertisements, as befits the nature of this mass medium. The ethereal is contrasted with the mundane and pragmatic. Traditional boundaries between gender roles are blurred (as in the Can Pair and Kirin Lemon 2101 examples). Conceptions of self based upon individuality and conformity to the group contend, and sometimes coexist, within the labels. This thematic complex reflects the identity crisis in Japanese society described earlier. Consider as ancillary data two outdoor posters for the soft drink "KI LA LA":

- Walking alone on the beach surrounded by the strange music of wind and wave. A flavor from another world
- The drink for the active life. A sudden,

chance encounter . . . love
at first sight
in the city.

The first verse conveys images of stark individuality in a weird cosmos. It is as if Shakespeare's naked, unaccommodated man has received some unearthly boon. Schodt (1983) has encountered a similar motif in Japanese comics. In the second, modern existence is juxtaposed with Zen philosophy; their fusion in technopolis is catalyzed by the product. The modernity promised by KI LA LA is an individualistic, urban one. A traditional Japanese proverb counsels individuals to "trust to chance" (*umpu tempu*). This is progressive advice.

Another ancillary datum is an outdoor poster for Kirin Beer, which features a bare-chested, sweaty likeness of actor Sylvester Stallone with the following copy:

TOGETHER

Together, we can make dreams come true. Together, find courage in our hearts.

Love is twice as strong, sorrow half the meaning.

Together, we can make dreams come true.

Even dark endless nights must turn into new days. And those black stormy clouds eventually go away.

Because love is ours. It gives us the courage, to walk through life forever.

Hand in hand together. So let us begin.

Together, we can make dreams come true. Find courage in our hearts.

Love is twice as strong, sorrow half the meaning.

Together, let us begin.

Here, appeals to social solidarity, to hard work and achievement, to pragmatism and perseverance are wedded under a paraphrase in promotional patois of a proverb that occurs in numerous cultures: if one has a partner(s), joyful experiences are magnified, and sorrowful ones reduced, through sharing. If advertising is construed as myth, and myths speak through themselves to themselves (Schudson 1984; Sherry 1987a), then such posters may serve as a source of inspiration and consolation to a culture attempting to weather an identity crisis. Or, as Stevie Wonder puts it, in a subway station poster for TDK audio and videocassette tapes:

I like, beautiful, clean, pure, sensitive, colorful, fresh, peace.

I like TDK so much. and I believe in human beings.

Sound YES.

TDK

Video YES.

These are the attributes of propriety in contemporary Japan, and rules of proper conduct for a citizen of the world.

The beverage label for Plumsoda presented earlier in our discussion is one of the most striking examples of the transition of Japanese society, and bears repeating. It is virtually a metaphor of the Japanese condition, and is presented here as a summary native interpretation of this condition:

Come together in old and new.
There is a light that shines on me.
Vivid aqua. PLUMSODA is it!

Themes of tradition and modernity, social solidarity, of being in the public eye, of vitality and birth, of urgency and immediacy all find their objectifications in contemporary Japanese society. The societal form toward which the Japanese are moving—the “good life” as depicted in promotional patois—will be constructed with the bricolage of the idea systems embedded in the products they choose to adopt from other cultures, but, as with the products, the idea systems themselves will be reinterpreted and adapted to suit the Japanese reality.

Aesthetics, Modernity, and Promotional Patois

Individual interviews and focus group discussion with Japanese consumers confirmed a number of insights into the relationship between aesthetics, modernity, and promotional patois that articulate well with existing literature. Lebra (1976), herself a native analyst, maintains that Japanese aesthetics favors avoidance of artificial appearance and embrace of naturalness. Further, ostentatious or conspicuous creativity is regarded as being in bad taste, while simplicity, modesty, and refinement are regarded as touchstones of aesthetic sophistication. Hasegawa (1966) contrasts the Japanese taste for plainness, austerity, and delicacy with the “Western prejudice for grandiloquence, overcomplexity, and overstimulating effects.” Small scale perfection and delight in detail are regarded as more important than overall design and structure. In discussing the Japanese aesthetic vocabulary, Lebra (1976) suggests that “taste” derives less from “perfectionism in conforming to a single standard” of creation or performance than from “a slight deviation from the standard in tune with the situational variation.” Consumer response to the labels in our corpus reflects the compromise between Oriental and Occidental aesthetic traditions that a modernizing Japan continues to strike.

Not only did many of our informants have difficulty in enunciating and decoding the literal messages on the labels, but some of them also expressed disbelief that the packages themselves had a Japanese origin and destination. Even among some informants who were able to interpret the literal and symbolic significance of the printed message, no primacy of impact was attributed to verbal “meaning” over iconic value of the script itself. For many Japanese, English is an element of graphic design as much as it is a linguistic code. Whatever close reading of these labels occurs is likely to take place casually, during idle time spent waiting on a rail platform, for example. Thus, literal meaning may be no more important than the euphony (Yamaki 1984) or pleasant appearance of the script, or any of the other dimensions of symbolic weight attributed to English earlier in this

article. And yet, nonsense messages—gibberish, randomly selected words or irrelevant phrases—were judged by our informants to be inappropriate, even impermissible, for labelling purposes, despite the alleged indifference of most consumers to literal meaning. English language labelling is expected to reflect the image of a particular brand, even if only key words (such as “beach” in Pokka Beach Boy or “2101” in Kirin Lemon 2101) are understood by the consumer. Further, sentence structure and scansion of the English labels were thought to resemble Japanese sufficiently to aid symbolic comprehension. One of our informants suggested that such messages may be created by Japanese copywriters fluent in “understandable foreign” idiom.

Comparison of consumer perceptions of English language labelling to Japanese language labelling is also instructive. Not only were the English messages felt not to be transliterations of Japanese, but also our informants confirmed that such elaborate messages are unlikely to occur in Japanese on analogous products. Factual information—that is, discursive, denotational messages regarding ingredients, brand name, manufacturer, anti-littering requests, and the like—rather than poetry or poems, appears on Japanese language labels; this observation echoes the findings of Madden et al., (1986) for Japanese print ads. Informants felt such symbolic elaboration would be out of place in Japanese language labelling. Field observations and extant literature (e.g., Japan Package Design Association 1976, 1982; Sakane 1986) support this view.

In contrasting the English and Japanese language labelling practices in discussions with consumers, the concept of *waconyōsai* was evoked. *Waconyōsai* is the infusing of Western technology with a Japanese soul. The term nicely captures the adoption and adaptation processes that are our central concern. The English language labels are perceived as “foreign” to some degree, because they are “not simple;” in language and design, the labels are noisier than their traditional counterparts. These labels are perceived as native artifacts as well, insofar as they are meticulously detailed and “ambiguous;” the labels are projectable in the sense that regardless of the culturally significant symbols that may be present, whatever meaning the consumer is able to wrest from the message is acceptable. The label embodies elements of old and new, traditional and modern. It is reflective of the transition the culture is undergoing. Flexibility and cultural conservatism are wedded in the concept of *waconyōsai*. English language labelling is just one current manifestation of this concept. So also are they wedded in the strategy of *datsuanyuō* (literally, “leaving Asia, entering Europe”), a movement of significant historical and economic import conceived in the Meiji period that contemporary consumers and marketing managers alike are consciously creating. As nationalistic sentiment increases with Japan’s growing stature in the global marketplace, the incidence of linguistic borrowing may actually decline. Already a re-

surge of Japanese is evident in advertising copy for products such as cosmetics. The darker side of such sentiment has been discussed by Fields (1986).

Clearly there are limits to the generalizations that derive from a study as exploratory as ours, especially in regard to phenomena as elusive as consumers' perceptions. We have attempted to capture what Awashima (1976) has called the "immaterial heart" of package design. Several additional avenues of research remain to be pursued. A systematic investigation of the range of operative interpretations within and across consumers (both natives and non-natives) of each of the brands in the corpus is one option. A systematic comparative content analysis of English and Japanese labels is also indicated. Perhaps the most ambitious and rewarding line of pursuit is a field investigation of copywriting practices that would focus on the actual creators of the messages themselves. Such an investigation would explore the dynamics of writer-centered writing (Becker 1986) and consumer hermeneutics. Finally, an examination of the themes addressed in this article across a range of the domains of Japanese experience is also warranted.

CONCLUSION

The use of loanwords (whose designation as a class by the term *gairaigo* itself proclaims foreignness, as in *gaijin*) reveals something of a dialectical process ongoing in Japanese culture change. On the one hand, the loanwords and the idea-systems they embody represent distinctly anti-establishment values that pose a threat to traditional social order and the spirit of the language (*kotodama*) upon which claims to cultural uniqueness (and to hegemony, perhaps) rest. As a symbol of things foreign and perceptually superior, loanwords appear to erode cultural autonomy. The diversification of values and lifestyles to include segments of nonconformist consumers such as "Style-Oriented Japanese," "Do-It-My-Way Japanese," and "Confident Theoreticians" (Hakuhodo 1983) has been expressed in part through Japanized English. The decline in *hitonami* consciousness—the tendency to align oneself with other people described as "keeping up with the Satos"—no matter how slight, should accelerate the adoption of loanwords. On the other hand, loanwords with all their symbolic cultural freight are, by virtue of distinct orthography, virtually always recognizable as foreign, and therefore suspect. Their phonology and semantic sense, and the grammar in which they are embedded, are adapted to local sensibilities. The loanwords are Japanized, becoming a distinctive communication neither entirely alien nor entirely traditional. They provide a visible and aural symbol of the consequences of cultural contact, which nativists and vitalists alike are able to mobilize for their respective platforms.

The linguistic borrowing we have described in this article shares features in common with the tendency

toward "U-turn anti-internationalism" evident not only in Japan, but among other members of the economic world system (Befu 1983; Sherry 1987b). That is, neo-nationalism, or internal differentiation, develops under the guise of internationalism or cultural convergence. Kurita (1983) describes his society's neo-nationalism as "the product of a search for something more "advanced" and more modish than what we have found in our century-long quest for new culture." He feels the Japanese are re-examining their culture, returning to and redefining traditional practices, in harmony with T. S. Eliot's observation that tradition is a transformative principle that breaks off in substance, but continues in form. Thus, the Japanese language is presented as inscrutable to all save natives. This inscrutability is evident in the gratuitous flattery a novice speaker receives from natives, the suspicion with which a fluent foreigner (whose very fluency, itself a sign of knowing too much, brands the speaker a *henna gaijin*) is met by natives, and the ridicule a hyphenated Japanese (a Nisei or Sansei, for instance) receives at the hands of natives for his or her fluency, dialectal difference, or inability to speak the language. In a land where phenotype connotes fluency, non-fluent individuals of Japanese appearance are also subject to ridicule. Recently, this inscrutability has been institutionalized in Japanese popular culture through the annual "*Gaikokujin Kayo Taisho*," a televised Japanese "Singing Competition for Foreigners," an oriental Gong Show of sorts in which foreigners are rewarded for their efforts by peals of hysterical laughter from audience and studio technicians alike (Rothman 1986). In light of such practices, it is doubtful that loanwords will pose a serious threat to the integrity of the Japanese language. Collectively, however, they signify the impact of consumption patterns on the maintenance and change of cultures in a global marketplace. Tendencies toward convergence are tempered by the society's mission to individuate. It is little wonder then, that "Jingle Bell Rock" can be used as background music for the traditional Dance of the Dead Festival, without producing dissonance in the ritual (Booth 1986).

Convergence and individuation are clearly at work in the contemporary Japanese marketplace. While wrongly designating the "worship of anything Occidental" as a peculiarly Japanese "ethnic trait" (the Mexican *malinchismo* complex being just one counter-example), Murata (1981) insightfully identifies the *osumitsuki* syndrome as one powerful determinant of Japanese consumer behavior. The *osumitsuki* syndrome refers to the preference of the Japanese consumer to purchase goods whose authenticity is attested to by a certificate of genuineness signed by a foreign authority. The contemporary brand name (and by extension, all marketing communication assimilable to the brand) has replaced the feudal *osumitsuki*. The use of English is part of this "syndrome," and the disease metaphor is particularly apt, given Miller's *kotodama* thesis. Conversely, foreign

exotic goods (*hakuraihin*) traditionally prized because of quality and price, and consequently infrequently purchased, are still rarely purchased, but now for a more contemporary rationale: such goods are now popularly believed to be shoddily produced and inferior to native products (Fukushima 1986). A remark attributed to a commentator on the most highly rated Japanese news program one day following the American space shuttle disaster is indicative of this contemporary mood (Fukushima 1986):

Even in aerospace technology, the last bastion of supposed U.S. technological superiority, we find that the United States has failed.

Thus are the Japanese able to assert their autonomy, and suggest their superiority, in a global marketplace. What is borrowed is perfected, reinterpreted, and transmuted, assuring that the future remains traditional. So it is that the term "consumer" is being replaced by the phrase "life designer," as an ever-increasing proportion of the Japanese population expressed its wants autonomously, rather than merely reacting to the blandishments of the contemporary marketplace (Hakuhodo 1983).

In this article, we have attempted to account for the permeation of one Japanese register—that of promotion—with English. Loanwords in marketing communication are especially fascinating, given the cline of proficiency (Stanlaw 1982) in the use of English in Japan, which ranges from spoken and written fluency to knowledge of just a few vocabulary items. Despite the fact that few Japanese speak English well enough to converse rudimentarily with foreigners (even after six to 10 years worth of study), the Japanese consumer is literally bombarded with English-language promotional messages issued by Japanese marketers. As we have demonstrated, English has both a discursive, denotational aspect, and a presentational connotative aspect. English is valued for its symbolic weight, and for its ability to function as a vessel for traditional values.

The macroconsumption issues central to our interpretation are clear. The reworking and reinterpreting of borrowed ideas, techniques, and products are more than established cultural practices (Arensberg and Niehoff 1964); they are the very stuff of cultural change. The dynamic tension between cultural stability and change is heightened in a truly global marketplace. As a major player in that marketplace, Japan has undergone a rapid modernization by incorporating foreign resources as complex as idea-systems and as straightforward as technology into its consumption-use systems. Sherry (1987c) has used the concept of syncretism to explore the structural, functional, and symbolic properties of a resource that suit it to completing or transforming more than one consumption-use system. Language is just one of a number of resources that now shape and reflect the evolution of Japanese culture. This syncretic disposition, the strategic flexibility character-

izing Japanese worldview and ethos, is one adaptive mechanism to which consumer researchers should thoughtfully attend.

While the ethnographic particulars presented in this exploratory study are unique to Japan, the process by which consumption aids in the mediation between cultural stability and change is characteristic of high-intensity, high-energy market cultures and of acculturative interaction that participation in a global economy encourages (Leiss 1976; Sherry 1987c, 1987d). It is a fundamental dynamic of cultural evolution (Dholakia and Sherry 1987). This mediation is a continual synthesis of old and new, and is accelerated through culture contact (Sherry 1986). As a modernizing nation, Japan is vulnerable to external forces of both negative and positive valence. These forces can be incorporated into the fabric of society in a nondisruptive fashion only if they are brought in under controlled conditions and nativized (DeVos 1985; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). This syncretism is one effective way to ward off perceived threats to cultural autonomy; protectionism, U-turn anti-internationalism, and militarism are others. Each of these strategies, along with others, is practiced by many cultures around the world to regulate the degree and impact of borrowing. By examining some critical macro and microconsumption issues, by interpreting them according to local canons of strategic flexibility, and by relating these issues back to such fundamental consumer behavior concerns as diffusion of innovation and economic development, we hope to stimulate additional inquiry into the cultural dimensions of consumption.

[Received June 1986. Revised March 1987.]

REFERENCES

- Abegglen, James and George Stalk (1985), *Kaisha: The Japanese Corporation*, New York: Basic Books.
- Ardagh, John (1986), "How the French Got a New Start," *The Wilson Quarterly*, 10 (1), 46-75.
- Arensberg, Conrad and Arthur Niehoff (1964), *Introducing Social Change*, Chicago: Aldine.
- Awashima, Masakichi (1976), "The Immaterial Heart of Package Design," in *Package Design in Japan: Its History, Its Faces*, ed. Japan Package Design Association, Tokyo: Rikuyōsha, 9.
- Barthes, Roland (1982), *Empire of Signs*, New York: Hill and Wang.
- Becker, Carl (1986), "Writing for Whom?" *Student Times*, May 9, 9.
- Befu, Harumi (1981), *Japan: An Anthropological Introduction*, Tokyo: Charles Tuttle.
- (1983), "Internationalization of Japan and Nihon Bunkaron," in *The Challenge of Japan's Internationalization*, eds. H. Mamari and H. Befu, Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Belk, Russell W. and Richard W. Pollay (1985), "Materialism and Status Appeals in Japanese and U.S. Print Adver-

- tisings," *International Marketing Review*, Winter, 38–47.
- , Wendy J. Bryce, and Richard W. Pollay (1985), "Advertising Themes and Cultural Values: A Comparison of U.S. and Japanese Advertising," in *Proceedings of the Inaugural Meeting of the Southeast Asia Region, Academy of International Business*, eds. K. C. Munn and T. C. Chan, Hong Kong: Academy of International Business, 11–20.
- Booth, Alan (1986), *The Roads to Sata: A 2000-Mile Walk Through Japan*, New York: Viking.
- Buruma, Ian (1984), *Behind the Mask*, New York: New American Library.
- DeMente, Boye (1981), *How to Do Business in Japan*, Phoenix, AZ: Phoenix Books.
- DeVos, George (1985), "Dimensions of the Self in Japanese Culture," in *Culture and Self: Asian and Western Perspectives*, eds. Anthony Marsella, George DeVos, and F. L. K. Hsu, New York: Tavistock, 24–55.
- Dholakia, Nikhilesh and John Sherry (1987), "Marketing and Development: A Resynthesis of Knowledge," *Research in Marketing*, Vol. 9, ed. Jagdish Sheth, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Dichter, Ernest (1975), *Packaging: The Sixth Sense*, Denver, CO: Cahnners.
- Doi, Takeo (1973), *The Anatomy of Dependence*, Tokyo: Kodansha.
- Ekguchi, Kunio (1985), *Wrapping: Creative Ideas from Japan*, Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Farb, Peter (1973), *Word Play: What Happens When People Talk*, New York: Bantam.
- Fields, George (1983), *From Bonsai to Levi's*, New York: New American Library.
- (1986), "Racism is Accepted Practice in Japan," *Wall Street Journal*, November 10, 19.
- Fukushima, Glen (1986), "Bilateral Relations: An Interview with Glen Fukushima of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative," *Japan Economic Institute Report*, 17, 1–8.
- Gardner, Burleigh (1967), "The Package As a Communication," in *Marketing for Tomorrow . . . Today*, Chicago: American Marketing Association, 117–118.
- Gibney, Frank (1982), *Miracle By Design*, New York: Times Books.
- Goffman, Erving (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York: Anchor-Doubleday.
- (1967), *Interaction Ritual*, New York: Anchor-Doubleday.
- Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living (1983), *Hitonami: Keeping Up With the Satos*, Tokyo: HILL.
- Hasegawa, Nyozeke (1966), *The Japanese Character: A Cultural Profile*, Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Hochschild, Arlie (1983), *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Horiuchi, Amy (1963), "Department Store Ads and Japanized English," *Studies in Descriptive and Applied Linguistics*, 2, 49–67.
- Hudson, Richard (1985), "Computers Threaten Another Tradition: The Glory of France," *Wall Street Journal*, October 10, 1, 24.
- Jakobson, Roman (1960), "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in *Style and Language*, ed. Thomas Sebeok, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 350–377.
- Japan Package Design Association (1976) *Package Design in Japan: Its History, Its Faces*, Tokyo: Rikuyōsha.
- (1982) *Package Design in Japan: Its History, Its Faces*, Tokyo: Rikuyōsha.
- Kachru, Braj, ed. (1982), *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- (1984), "The Alchemy of English: Social and Functional Power of Non-Native Varieties," in *Language and Power*, eds. C. Kramarac, M. Shulz and W. O'Barr, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 176–193.
- Kitahara, Michio (1983), "Popular Culture in Japan: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 17, 103–109.
- Kotler, Philip (1984), *Marketing Management*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kurita, Isamu (1983), "Revival of the Japanese Tradition," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 17, 130–134.
- Lebra, Takie (1976), *Japanese Patterns of Behavior*, Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii.
- Leiss, William (1976), *The Limits to Satisfaction: An Essay on the Problem of Needs and Commodities*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Levy, Sydney (1986) "Meanings in Advertising Stimuli," in *Advertising and Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 3, eds. Jerry Olson and Keith Sentis, New York: Praeger, 214–226.
- Lyons, Nick (1976), *The Sony Vision*, New York: Crown Publishers.
- Madden, Charles, Marjorie Caballero, and Shinya Matsukubo (1986), "Analysis of Information Content in U.S. and Japanese Magazine Advertising," *Journal of Advertising* 15 (3), 38–45.
- Maruyama, Magoroh (1985), Review of "Concept Notes 1984" and "Fifth Generation People," *Journal of Macromarketing*, Fall, 75–80.
- Miller, Roy (1977), *The Japanese Language in Contemporary Japan*, Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research.
- (1980), *Origins of the Japanese Language*, Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- (1982), *Japan's Modern Myth: The Language and Beyond*, New York: Weatherhill.
- Miura, Akira (1979), *English Loanwords in Japanese: A Selection*, Tokyo: Charles Tuttle.
- Moeran, Brian (1983), "The Language of Japanese Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 10, 93–108.
- (1985), "When the Poetics of Advertising Becomes the Advertising of Poetics: Syntactical and Semantic Parallelism in English and Japanese Advertising," *Language and Communication*, 5 (1), 29–44.
- Morita, Akio (1986), *Made in Japan*, New York: Dutton.
- Murata, Kiyooki (1981), "The Guadagnini Syndrome," *Japan Times*, December 25, 14.
- Nakayama, Kimio (1976), "Creation to be Thrown Away," in *Package Design in Japan: Its History, Its Faces*, ed. Japan Package Design Association. Tokyo: Rikuyōsha, 12–13.
- Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko (1984), *Illness and Culture in Contemporary Japan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Oka, H. (1975), *How to Wrap Five More Eggs*, New York: Weatherhill.
- Postman, Neil (1984), *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, New York: Viking.
- Reischauer, Edwin (1978), *The Japanese*, Tokyo: Charles Tuttle.
- Riding, Alan (1984), *Distant Neighbors: A Portrait of the Mexicans*, New York: Vintage.

- Rothbaum, Fred, John Weisz, and Samuel Snyder (1982), "Changing the World and Changing the Self: A Two-Process Model of Perceived Control," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42 (1), 5-37.
- Rothman, Andrea (1986), "This May Not Seem Funny to You, But They're Screaming in Tokyo," *Wall Street Journal*, March 18, 33.
- Sacharow, Stanley (1982), *The Package as a Marketing Tool*, Radnor, PA: Chilton Books.
- Sakane, Susumu (1986), "Japanese Packaging and Its Roots in Tradition," in *Packaging Design in Japan 1*, Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Sandow, Gregory (1984), "Japanspeak: Moon Grow Over Tokyo," *Wall Street Journal*, December 11, 30.
- Schodt, Frederick (1983), *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*, Tokyo: Kodansha International.
- Schudson, Michael (1984), *Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion*, New York: Basic Books.
- Seward, Jack (1983), *Japanese in Action*, New York: Weatherhill.
- Sherry, John (1986), "The Cultural Perspective in Consumer Research," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 13, ed. Richard Lutz, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research, 573-575.
- (1987a), "Advertising as a Cultural System," in *Marketing and Semiotics: New Directions in the Study of Signs for Sale*, eds. Sidney J. Levy and Jean Umiker-Sebeok, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- (1987b), "Some Cultural Correlates of U.S. and Japanese Protectionism," in *Protectionism: Can American Business Overcome It?* ed. Douglas Lamont, Indianapolis, IN: Booksraft, 79-91.
- (1987c), "Cultural Propriety in a Global Marketplace," in *Philosophical and Radical Thought in Marketing*, eds. Richard Bagozzi, Nikhilesh Dholakia, and A. Fuat Firat, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- (1987d), "Heresy and the Useful Miracle: Rethinking Anthropology's Contributions to Marketing," *Research in Marketing*, 9, ed. Jagdish Sheth, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Sibatani, Atuhiko (1980), "The Japanese Brain," *Science* 80, 1 (8): 22-27.
- Sonoda, Koji (1975), *A Descriptive Study of English Influence on Modern Japanese*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University.
- Stanlaw, James (1982), "English in Japanese Communicative Strategies," in *The Other Tongue*, ed. Braj Kachru, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 168-197.
- Tharp, Mike (1986), "Japanese Contractor Rebuilds Farmhouses at New Locations," *Wall Street Journal*, November 19, 1, 24.
- Thurrow, Lester (1985), *The Management Challenge: Japanese Views*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Toelken, Barre (1979), *The Dynamics of Folklore*, New York: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Trucco, Terry (1985), "The Mood is the Message," *Winds*, June, 43-49.
- Weisz, John, Fred Rothbaum, and Thomas Blackburn (1984), "Standing Out and Standing In: The Psychology of Control in America and Japan," *American Psychologist*, 39 (9), 955-969.
- Whorf, Benjamin (1956), *Language, Thought, and Reality*, New York: Wiley.
- Yamaki, Toshio (1984), "Kokkoku Hyōgen No Kokusai Hikaku," *Nenpō Shakaishinrigaku*, 25, 93-111. ("Advertising Tone and Manner: An International Comparison," special edition on Social Psychology of Consumer Behavior, *Japanese Annals of Social Psychology*.)