
The New Wild in Language Education: Attitude toward foreign loanwords and invasive species

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Résumé

This paper discusses the role of foreign loanwords in Second Language (L2) education, applying the idea of *The New Wild* suggested by an environmental journalist Fred Pearce (2016). As is the case with many other languages, vocabulary borrowed from English is rapidly expanding in Japanese and it has been pointed out to be particularly difficult for L2 speakers to learn such loanwords due to the complex system of phonetic transcription (Quackenbush 1977). L2 learners, both native and non-native English speakers, thus find it more cumbersome to use loanwords. Furthermore, according to a survey discussed by Jin'nouchi (2008), there is also a bias among L2 learners that Western-based loanwords are not 'pure Japanese' due to their foreign origin. Such a negative view is also shared by a large number of L1 speakers who find Western loanwords more difficult to understand and see them as a possible source of linguistic corruption. However, loanwords constitute an important element in language that gives clues to understand the history of cultural interactions and the social diversity. In order to discuss the gap between the popular discourse and the linguistic reality regarding foreign loanwords, the paper draws an analogy between biology and language, examining arguments on the so-called 'invasive' species. According to Pearce, alien species are in fact not invasive to chase away native species but the 'new wild' that strengthen the local ecosystem. In Japanese, the word for alien species (*gairaishu*) and the word for loanwords (*gairaigo*) share the morpheme *gairai*. (foreign, alien), demonstrating a common perception that they are outside of the native ecosystem or linguistic system. Employing the idea of the 'new wild', in the case study of Japan, the paper suggests that loanwords is an element that enriches the lexical diversity of a language and should be rigorously taught in L2 education.

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Biodata

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Mots-Clés: Second language education, loanwords, ecolinguistics, Japanese, English