

**THE NOTION OF 'WEST' IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN:
A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**Naoko HOSOKAWA¹

Abstract

The concept of an East-West division has been one of the common tools to describe the world. Yet, the definition of the division is highly context-bound and never fixed. This paper will examine how the notion of the East-West division is understood and expressed from a sociolinguistic perspective. Using the case study of the discussion on 'Western' loanwords, the paper will suggest that the notion of 'West' is an integral part of Japanese linguistic and national identity, as it plays a key contrapuntal role in Japan's self-image.

Keywords: Japan, language, sociolinguistics, identity, media discourse, East, West.

1. Introduction

The East-West dichotomy is one of the most familiar ways to divide the world. However, despite its widespread use, the concepts of 'East' and 'West' do not have fixed and shared definitions. Etymologically, the term 'East' referred to "the quarter of sunrise" or 'dawn' from the Greek *eos* (Skeat, 2005: 187), while the term 'West' referred to "the quarter where the sun sets" (ibid.: 708), or 'evening' from the Greek *hesperos*. (Seelye, 2000: x) While these original meanings were based on the movement of the sun², there are now myriad interpretations of these two concepts. Within Europe, we can touch upon the distinction between Eastern and Western Europe which, during the Cold War, separated the socialist and capitalist worlds. In the colonial period, 'West' and 'East' could also refer to the divide between the occidental 'colonisers' and the oriental 'colonised'. Beyond these familiar dichotomies, the binary division between 'East' and 'West' has arguably received countless specific interpretations. The editor of the book *La Division du Monde* (The Division of the World), Sabine Euverte insists that there are as many 'divisions' of the world as 'visions' of the world. (Euverte, 1995: 193) At any rate, this 'East-West' division is a very influential element in our understanding of the

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² The term South derived from the term 'the sunned quarter' (Skeat 1993: 453) and some see the root for the term North in the Umbrian word *nertru* 'left hand,' as the North is on one's left side when facing the sunrise (Skeat 2005: 403).

world, notably in the construction of national and regional identities. This paper examines how this East-West division of the world manifests itself in the identity discourses in contemporary Japanese society. In particular, I scrutinise the way in which the ideas of ‘East’ and ‘West’ are used in the discussion on the ‘national language’ in contemporary Japan, analysing discourses in two major nation-wide newspapers. The main objective of the analysis is to examine the relation between the East-West discourse and the Self-Other discourse in the construction of national identity.

2. The division between ‘wa’ and ‘yō’

In discussing the Eastern-Western dichotomy in a Japanese context, it is useful to point to the frequent reference to the division between ‘wa’ [和] and ‘yō’ [洋]. The morpheme ‘wa’ (or sometimes also ‘*nihon*’ [日本] or ‘*hō*’ [邦]) is used to compose many words to add the meaning of ‘Japanese-style’, while the morpheme ‘yō’ conveys the meaning of ‘Western-style’. These are often used as pairs or contrasts as in *washoku* [和食] – *yōshoku* [洋食] (Japanese cuisine – Western cuisine); *wafuku* [和服] – *yōfuku* [洋服] (Japanese clothes – Western clothes); *wafū* [和風] – *yōfū* [洋風] (Japanese style – Western style); *washiki* [和式] – *yōshiki* [洋式] (Japanese way – Western way); *washitsu* [和室] – *yōshitsu* [洋室] (Japanese room – Western room); *wagashi* [和菓子] – *yōgashi* [洋菓子] (Japanese sweets – Western sweets); *washo* [和書] – *yōsho* [洋書] (Japanese book – Western book); *nihonshu* [日本酒] – *yōshu* [洋酒] (Japanese liquor – Western liquor); *hōgaku* [邦楽] – *yōgaku* [洋楽] (Japanese music – Western music); *hōga* [邦画] – *yōga* [洋画] (Japanese movie – Western movie), and so on³. As the above examples show, this division between ‘wa’ and ‘yō’ is a common reference and it seems to be more frequently used than East [*tōyō*, 東洋] and West [*seiyō*, 西洋].

However, one may notice the peculiarity of the division between ‘wa’ and ‘yō’, as it is not a typical ‘East-West’ contrast, but a distinction between Japan, as particular, and ‘West’, as general. In this regard, Guarné points to “the Japan/West cultural polarity (*wa/yō*) that permeates Japanese social life and material culture”. (Guarné, 2015: 174) In fact, the persistent and peculiar comparison between ‘things Japanese’ and ‘things Western’ in popular discourse, particularly in the post-war period, has been repeatedly identified by a number of scholars as part of the so-called *nihonjinron* (theories of Japaneseness) which gained currency in post-war

³ See also Guarné, B. 2015. “Cultural Intersections: Ambivalence and Hybridity in Japanese Katakana” in Ertl, J., J. Mnock, J. McCreery, and G. Poole (eds.), *Reframing Diversity in the Anthropology of Japan*. Kanazawa: Kanazawa University Center for Cultural Resource Studies Graduate Program for Cultural Resource Management.

Japan⁴. The *nihonjinron* literature has been often criticised for its excessive focus on the uniqueness of Japan. For example, Sakai has signalled that in the *nihonjinron* discourse, Japan is not set against “the wide range of societies with which the nation might meaningfully be compared – Korea, Thailand, France, Britain, Nigeria, Mexico, etc.” (Sakai, 1996: 19-21), but to a monolithic entity called ‘the West’. Similarly, Morris-Suzuki remarks on the tendency of Japanese civilizational theories to focus “almost entirely on the relationship between ‘Western’ and ‘Japanese’ civilisation”. (Morris-Suzuki, 1998: 157)

Although the popularity of the division between ‘*wa*’ and ‘*yō*’ in the *nihonjinron* context is generally considered to be a phenomenon of the post-war period, this division seems to have originated in the Meiji period (1868-1912), the moment of modern nation-building after the period of self-imposed closure (*sakoku*) that lasted over 250 years. In 1853, the country opened up with the arrival of commodore Matthew Perry’s so-called ‘Black Ship’ and Japanese society underwent rapid modernisation which, to a large extent, was synonymous with Westernisation. According to Morris-Suzuki (*ibid*: 5), it was in this period when the concept of ‘Japan’ or ‘Japaneseness’ was redefined within a new discourse of culture, ethnicity, and civilisation, “in relation to images of other powerful nation-states (such as the United States, Britain, and France)” from which Japan was importing new technologies, social, political, and economic structures, ideas and concepts. In other words, it can be said that since the beginning of the modern period, Western countries in their totality have been strongly identified as Japan’s ‘Other’.

This insistent contrasting of ‘Japan’ with ‘West’ can be observed in language-related discussions, particularly those regarding lexicon. In Japanese, there are three main vocabulary groups: *wago* or *yamato kotoba* (Japanese native words), *kango* (Sino-Japanese loanwords and Japanese words created following the Sino-Japanese word formation rules), *gairaigo* (recent Western loanwords)⁵. However, in the public discourse on the Japanese language, *wago* and *kango* are often grouped together as ‘Japanese’ vocabulary, while *gairaigo* is referred to as ‘Western’, despite the fact that the majority of *kango* is of Chinese origin and some *gairaigo* words are well-assimilated into the Japanese language. On this point, Ishiwata underlines that the combination of *wago* and *kango* are contrasted to *gairaigo*, despite the similarities between *kango* and *gairaigo* which both entered Japanese from abroad (Ishiwata, 1985: 138). Furthermore, Loveday has also pointed out that there is a clear psychological demarcation between *wago/kango* as

⁴ The alleged *Nihonjinton* literature includes: Chie Nakane, *Tate shakai no ningen kankei: Tan'itsu shakai no riron* [Japanese Society – A Practical Guide to Understanding the Japanese Mindset and Culture] (1967), Takeo Doi, *'Amae' no kōzō* [The Anatomy of dependence] (1971), and Tadanobu Tsunoda, *Nihonjin no nō: Nō no hataraki to tōzai no bunka* [The Japanese brain: The functions of the brain and cultures of the East and the West] (1974) among many others.

⁵ Some researchers include a fourth category of mimetics that is often written in *katakana*.

nihongo (Japanese language) and *gairaigo* as *gaikokugo* (foreign language). (Loveday, 1996: 48-49) This mental differentiation is also a result of the use of different script types. In general, *wago* is written in *hiragana* (cursive syllabary), *kanji* (Chinese characters), or a combination of the two, while *kango* is written in *kanji*. On the other hand, *gairaigo* is written in *katakana* (angular syllabary). This creates a visual distinctiveness of *gairaigo*, which is, for this reason, also referred to as *katakanago* (words in *katakana*). Indeed, Kay argues that the linguistic and cultural borrowing, “kept separate from native language and culture”, has led to “a Japanese/Western dichotomy in Japanese life and language”. (Kay, 1995: 67)

What would then be the relationship between this persistent dichotomous view of Japan and ‘West’ and the classical distinction between ‘East’ and ‘West’? In the ‘*wa*’ and ‘*yō*’ worldview, the concept of ‘East’ seems absent. The hypothesis of this article is that in the contemporary process of identity construction, the idea of ‘East’ has been minimised and incorporated into the concept of ‘*wa*’, as shown in the examples of the Sino-Japanese lexicon, regarded as part of the ‘Japanese vocabulary’, while the idea of ‘West’ has been extended to encompass also the general idea of foreignness, as shown in the examples of the Western loanwords seen as ‘foreign’ language’. In order to investigate this hypothesis, a special focus will be placed on the images associated with vocabulary groups that correspond to the contrast between ‘East’ and ‘West’, as well as between Self and Other, in contemporary Japanese society. Since language plays an essential role in constructing national identity, particularly in Japan, as pointed out by scholars such as Miller (1982), Dale (1986) Gottlieb (1995) and Stanlaw (2005: 265-278), public discourse on the Japanese language is expected to shed valuable light on the country’s self-image and world view.

3. Methodology

In this analysis, the purported ‘Japanese’ vocabulary, *wago* and *kango* will be discussed in relation to the supposed ‘Western’ vocabulary, *gairaigo*. Entries in two major nation-wide newspapers, *Asahi Shimbun* and *Yomiuri Shimbun*, extracted from their electronic archives, are the principal source for the analysis. I have manually selected relevant entries – including articles, editorials, and readers’ letters to the editor – that included the terms such as *wago*, *kango*, and *gairaigo*. The period covered in the analysis is from 1 January 1991 to 31 December 2010 during which time discussions on language use were particularly active, as signalled by Carroll who believes that the normative view on language prevailed in Japan in the post-1990 period through the phrase ‘confusion in the language’ (*kotoba no midare*). (Carroll, 2001: 74-75)

Among the various forms of existing media, the newspaper is one of the most trusted sources of information for the general public. Although newspapers may

not be the only mediation of reality available today, they remain a major source of information for most people and still sustain a high degree of public trust. In Japanese society, in particular, newspapers constitute one of the most commonly used sources of information despite the recent thriving of the Internet and mobile telecommunications. According to the opinion poll on sources of daily information carried out by the Agency for Cultural Affairs in 2009, 77% of respondents answered that they obtain their necessary information from newspapers, which came second after television (86%), largely distancing from the Internet (29.8%) and mobile phones (12.1%). Furthermore, in an opinion poll carried out in 2010⁶, 75.8% of respondents answered that they read newspapers regularly (often or sometimes), ahead of magazines (40.6%) and Internet news (40.6%)⁷. This suggests that of the written media newspapers are the most important source of information for the majority of the Japanese and therefore constitute a credible source for analysis.

Furthermore, the two newspapers, *Asahi Shimbun* and *Yomiuri Shimbun* are the newspapers with the largest circulation figures, selling around 18 million copies daily – *Yomiuri Shimbun*, considered to be moderately conservative, issuing about 10 million and *Asahi Shimbun*, moderately liberal, about 8 million – largely distancing from the third largest circulation figure of *Mainichi Shimbun* with only 3 million copies⁸. Articles from these two newspapers are therefore seen as relevant materials that reflect the mainstream perceptions in contemporary Japan.

The analysis follows the framework of discourse analysis suggested by Fairclough (1989, 1995), Fowler (1986), and Conboy (2007) with a particular focus on the expressions of contrast and assimilation. In their opinion, language is a tool to conceptualise reality. The conceptualised reality is then expressed through language. Thus, language is both a conceptual tool and an expressive tool, inevitably embedding, whether explicitly or implicitly, a certain idea, an opinion, or a point of view on reality. It can therefore be said that through the choice of various linguistic elements, be it words, expressions, grammatical structures, or news stories are always “reported from some particular angle” (Fowler, 1991: 231). More specifically, it is believed that the critical analysis of the language in the above mentioned newspapers will reveal perceptions related to the division between ‘*wa*’ and ‘*yō*’ as well as between ‘East’ and ‘West’. Subsequently, I

⁶ It is the latest opinion poll which incorporated this particular question. Available at: http://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei_hakusho_shuppan/tokeichosa/kokugo_yoronchosa/pdf/h21_chosa_kekka.pdf (accessed on 10 October 2017)

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⁸ Respondents were asked to choose the three most appropriate answers from a list that included: television, newspaper, personal computer (Internet), magazines, radio, leaflets, and mobile phones.

compare the words associated with and contrasted to ‘Japanese’ and ‘foreign’ vocabulary to the words associated with and contrasted to ‘East’ and ‘West’. I expect the comparison to reveal the relationship between the two divisions in the contemporary Japanese worldview: ‘*wa*’- ‘*yō*’ and ‘East-West’.

4. Discourse of contrasting and associating: extracts from newspapers

The total of 1,977 entries (1,011 from *Asahi* and 966 from *Yomiuri*) were extracted from the two newspaper archives with the keyword ‘*gairaigo*’⁹. The entries were then examined qualitatively. There were recurrent references in discussing the phenomenon, the most characteristic of which include the following with key elements underlined.

1. 近代化を急いだ明治時代の先達が、西欧の言葉を漢字で翻訳した苦労は知られている。
It is known that our pioneers who rapidly modernised Japan in the Meiji period made great efforts in translating Western words using kanji (Editorial, *Yomiuri*, 2 October 1996).
2. 幕末から明治にかけて大量に流入した欧米の言葉は、福沢諭吉や西周らが「演説」「哲学」などの日本語に翻訳することで定着していった。
The large number of Western words which flooded Japan from the end of the Edo period through the Meiji period gradually took hold as they were translated into nihongo by scholars such as Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nishi Amane, as, for example, ‘*enzetsu*’ [speech] and ‘*tetsugaku*’ [philosophy] (*Yomiuri*, 17 December 2002).
3. 明治時代、我々の先人たちは、多くの欧米語を漢語で造語した。[...] そうした漢語は、作る側にも使う側にも、漢字や漢籍の教養があったからこそ定着した。
In the Meiji period, our ancestors created numerous kango that corresponded to ōbeigo (Western words). [...] Such kango took hold only because those who created them and those who used them had education in kanji and Chinese classics (Editorial, *Yomiuri*, 26 December 2002).
4. 日本は明治維新の前から多くの欧米の言葉を巧みに日本語に吸収してきた。外来語の定着は従来の日本語を**変貌**させただけでなく、漢字の母国である中国語にも大きな影響を与えた。

⁹ For an analysis of the extracted entries, see also Hosokawa, N. 2015. “Nationalism and Linguistic Purism in Contemporary Japan: National Sentiment Expressed through Public Attitudes towards Foreignisms”. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 15 (1): 48-65.

Since before the Meiji Restoration, Japan has skilfully absorbed many Western words into nihongo. The newly established gairaigo has not only transformed nihongo, but also exerted a significant influence on Chinese, the source language of kanji (Letter from a Chinese instructor, *Asahi*, 17 July 2004).

5. 明治の開国後、日本は、欧米の技術や文化に追いつけ追い越せと受け身で外国語を吸収してきた。

After the opening of the country in the Meiji period, Japan has receptively absorbed gaikokugo in order to catch up and compete with Western technology and culture (Editor's response to a reader's letter, *Asahi*, 8 October 2007).

The above examples show that there is a contrast drawn between 'West' and 'Japan' in parallel to the contrast between 'Western words' and the 'Japanese language'. We can also observe that the other frequent reference points to the ideas of 'translation' (examples 1 and 2) and 'absorption' (examples 4 and 5) that characterise the relation of the Japanese language with Western words. Another commonality among the above extracts is the reference to the loan translation through the use of kanji during the Meiji period (example 3). As mentioned in Section 2, many Western ideas and concepts which had no equivalent were imported in the Japanese language. Intellectuals of the time created new words in the form of loan translation of Western concepts, using the Sino-Japanese word formation rules and writing them in kanji. These words are referred to as shinkango [new Sino-Japanese] or wasei kango [Japanese made Sino-Japanese], and today they are not generally treated as gairaigo, despite their Western origin. Examples of such words include tetsugaku [哲学, philosophy], keizai [経済, economy], and kagaku [科学, science] among many others. Interestingly enough, these were later exported to China and Korea where they are still in use with the adapted pronunciation for Chinese and Korean¹⁰. The use of kanji is therefore expressed as the 'Japanising' element of alleged 'Western' words.

A similar contrast between 'West' and Japan is shown in the discussions about the contemporary use of language. However, it should be noted that the boundaries between the concept of 'Western' and 'foreign' are blurred, as these words are used synonymously. Let us take into consideration other examples.

6. 遠山文部科学相は

[...]、官庁の公用文書や社会一般での外来語・外国語の乱用に歯止めをかけ、「伝統的な美しい日本語」を維持するため、来月中に有識者による委

¹⁰ For example see Kindaichi, H. 1982. *Nihongo no shikumi* [The structure of Japanese]. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō.

員会を設置する方針を明らかにした。委員会は[...]、外来語を日本語に適切に言い換える事例集を作成し、幅広く普及を図る考えだ。

The Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Tōyama [...], announced a plan to set up a committee of experts by the end of next month in order to put the brakes on the abuse of *gairaigo* and *gaikokugo* in the official documents of government agencies as well as in society in general, and to maintain the traditional and beautiful *nihongo*. The committee [...] is to compile a list of words to replace *gairaigo* with *nihongo* and to distribute it widely (*Yomiuri*, 26 June 2002).

7. かつて〈紋切り型〉と同義だったお役所言葉は、現代では〈意味不明のカタカナ語〉と言ってもいいほど外来語の乱用が目立つ。欧米の考え方や制度を表す言葉を訳さずにそのまま使う傾向が、年々強まっているからだ。
The language of governmental offices which once used to be synonymous to ‘a fixed template’ is now characterised by an outstanding abuse of *gairaigo* (incomprehensible *katakanago*). This is due to the fact that there is a growing trend to directly borrow words referring to Western ways of thinking and systems, without translating them (*Yomiuri*, 28 January 2003).

8. 小泉首相がこのほど、司法制度改革推進本部顧問会議で、専門用語について難解な横文字の多用を改めるよう指示した。まさに正論だと思う。最近では、カタカナ語が使われることがあまりに多く、私などは、外国にいるように感じられることすらある。日本には、漢字やひらがなという立派な文化があるにもかかわらず、なぜ自分の国の言葉を使わずに、外国語を使おうとするのだろうか。外国語の意味を理解したうえで、適切な日本語に訳そうという努力を怠っているように感じられてならない。
At the meeting of Task Force Centre for Judicial Reform, Prime Minister Koizumi has just pointed out the heavy use of difficult *yokomoji* (horizontal letters). I really think he is right. Lately *katakanago* has been used so often that sometimes I even feel like I am in a foreign country. Despite the fact that Japan has a splendid culture of *kanji* and *hiragana*, I wonder why people are trying to use *gaikokugo* rather than the language of our own country. To me it feels like they are too lazy to understand the meaning of *gaikokugo* and translate them into appropriate *nihongo* (Letter from a 70-year-old male, *Yomiuri*, 7 August 2003).

9. 日本語の乱れがたびたび指摘されるが、外国語の乱用もその一つと言えるだろう。立派な日本語があるのに、あえて耳慣れない外国語を用いたり、耳に響きのいい外来語を、本来の意味とは異なる使い方をしたりするのを知ることがある。
The disarray of *nihongo* is often discussed and I think that the abuse of *gairaigo* is part of the phenomenon. I hear that some people choose to use unfamiliar *gaikokugo* or good sounding *gairaigo* with a meaning different

from the original words, despite the fact that there are splendid Japanese words (Letter from a 61-year-old junior high school teacher, *Asahi*, 6 February 2007).

10. 横文字、略字、造語など言語のはんらんが時々話題になる時代ですが、せめて放送局のアナウンサーは、率先して標準的なよい日本語の範を示して欲しいと思います。

Although nowadays there are often discussions about the flood of *yokomoji* (horizontal letters), abbreviated words, and coined words, I would like the newscasters at the TV stations to be the first to take the initiative and show some examples of good standard *nihongo* (Letter from a 74-year-old male, *Asahi*, 27 March 2008).

In the above extracts, *gairaigo* is expressed both as 'Western' through the expression 'Western ways of thinking' (example 7) or '*yokomoji*' (example 10), and as 'foreign', through the expression '*gaikokugo*' (foreign language) (examples 6, 8, and 9). The word '*yokomoji*' literally means 'horizontal letters' and is used to refer to Western languages in general. The term is based on the fact that the Japanese language, like some other East Asian languages (Chinese and Korean), is traditionally written vertically, while Western languages are written horizontally, although nowadays Japanese texts can be written both vertically and horizontally and thus the expression is only symbolic. This expression focusing on the direction of the writing underlines the above-mentioned psychological demarcation between Japanese language, with its Sino-Japanese elements, and Western languages along with Western loanwords, as suggested by Dale who has pointed to the image of the verticality of *nihongo* and the horizontality of *gairaigo* (Dale, 1986: 44).

Another particularity of these entries lies in the fact that the discussions do not refer to any specific country to be contrasted with Japan, despite the fact that, in many cases, the words expressed as Western or foreign are of English origin. By employing the general term of 'West' contrasted to a specific country name, 'Japan', the alleged uniqueness of Japan is emphasised, while imparting a vague image of foreignness to the rest of the world, as indicated by Dale (*ibid.*: 40). The newspaper entries referring to the discussions of vocabulary use thus express the Japanese vision of 'East and West', where 'West' is generalised as foreign and 'East' is particularised as Japan.

In addition to this transformed East-West vision, it is also worth noting that there are certain images associated with each concept, as illustrated in the list below.

Japanese language:

- Traditional
- Beautiful
- Splendid

Western/foreign language:

- Incomprehensible
- Disorganised
- Unfamiliar

- Appropriate
- Good
- Standard
- Vertical
- Receptive
- Difficult
- Flooding
- Horizontal

The above list can be compared to the images associated with Japan and 'West' as identified by Dale (1986: 41-51).

Japan:

- Pure
- Vertical
- Spiritual
- Emotional
- Particular
- Unique
- Homogeneous
- Receptive

West:

- Miscellaneous
- Horizontal
- Material
- Rational
- Universal
- Heterogeneous
- Donative

Apart from the contrast between vertical and horizontal, which I have already discussed, the image of 'receptiveness' in my analysis of the Japanese language is common to Dale's interpretation of Japanese society/culture. Furthermore, the attributes such as 'beautiful' and 'standard' can be connected to the ideas of 'pure' and 'homogeneous' Japan as suggested by Dale, while the descriptions of 'incomprehensible' and 'disorganised' can be linked to the idea of a 'miscellaneous' and 'heterogeneous' West. Finally, the homogeneity and uniqueness of Japan is comparable to the Japanese language through the particularisation of East, while the universality of West can be compared to the concept of 'foreign', like the generalised image of West, as mentioned above.

There is thus a striking analogy between the images associated with Japan and Japanese language in relation to the images associated with 'West' and the Western language. In both cases, the contrasting images between Japan and 'West' are seen to be part of the negotiating process of Japanese national identity through the generalisation of 'West' and the particularisation of Japan. The idea of 'West' is employed as the general 'Other', in contrast with the specific 'Self' of Japan. Cohen further explains why the notion of the 'other' is as important as the notion of the 'self' by emphasizing the fact that individuals, 'self-conscious' cultures, and communities all "define themselves by reference to a 'significant other'". (Cohen, 1985: 115) Similarly, Gottlieb highlights that we understand ourselves by defining "what we are not". Consequently, the transformation of the 'East-West' division into the Japan-West demarcation can also be understood as the process of creating the 'Self-Other' boundaries. (Gottlieb, 2005: 4)

5. Conclusions

This article has analysed how the Eastern-Western division of the world is incorporated into the Japanese discourse through the use of certain morphemes, such as *wa* and *yō*, as well as through the contrast between *nihongo* and *gaikokugo*. Based on an analysis of several newspaper entries, it can be suggested that there is an implied demarcation between 'East and West' in contemporary linguistic discussions in Japan. However, in the negotiation of the Japanese national identity, the idea of 'East' is particularised in the concept of Japan, while the idea of 'West' encapsulates the broad meaning of foreignness that symbolises the generality as opposed to the specificity of Japan. The contrast is therefore transformed into a dividing line between *nihongo*, the Japanese language, and *gaikokugo*, the foreign language. In such contexts, Chinese-based elements, such as *kanji* and words created through Sino-Japanese word formation rules, are often grouped together with Japanese-originated elements such as *hiragana*, and *wago* (*yamatokotoba*), as an internalised part of *nihongo*. On the other hand, Western-based elements, such as Western loanwords and Western languages, are compared with Japanese elements. Thus, the idea of 'West' plays a contrapuntal role in defining the Japanese language, which represents the national and cultural identity of Japan, by creating an imagined 'Other'. The 'East-West' division has accordingly been transformed into the 'Self-Other' discourse in which Self refers to Japan, encompassing all its Eastern cultural roots, while Other is concerned with the general idea of the 'foreign' countries, represented by the Western nations. Furthermore, the associated image of the 'Other' is constructed through the adjectives used for Western elements of language, such as 'miscellaneous', 'heterogeneous', 'general', 'unfamiliar', and 'difficult'. The division between 'East and West' is often characterised as a tool of orientalism that estranges the non-Western world from a Western-centric perspective. However, as Befu (2001) has also maintained, the analysis of this paper suggests that the discursive structure of orientalism is also employed in Japanese discussions of identity, estranging the non-Japanese world under the name of 'West'.

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