

How Language Use Indicates Acculturation and Enculturation Processes of
Native Japanese and Japanese Americans
Examples from the 1946 Issues of *Hokubei Hochi*

Rena Kawasaki

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Professor Gustafson

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Abstract

The language used in the Post-World War II issues of *Hokubei Hochi*, a Japanese immigrant newspaper in Seattle, hints the struggles of Japanese Americans and native Japanese to conform to the U.S. and Japanese cultures. My research examines literature on immigrant adaptation processes, and how language use in the 1946 *Hokubei Hochi* publications indicates the dialogue of acculturation and enculturation processes specifically in the Japanese American community and in Japan. I analyzed four issues from the 1946 *Hokubei Hochi* newspaper because this time frame corresponded with the significant point of divergence in Japanese history. After Japan surrendered to the Western Allies in World War II, many Western policies including the Language Reform Policy were implemented in Japan. The Language Reform Policy led to the simplification and reduction of commonly used Kanji characters. This resulted in limiting expressions and eliminating the slight nuances of the Japanese language. This paper provides examples of the multiple ways in which language indicates the process of (1) acculturation or adaptation to the host culture, and/or (2) enculturation or maintaining of ties to their heritage culture. The power hierarchy of plural cultures furthermore complicates the notion of the adaptation processes. My findings from the analysis of the *Hokubei Hochi* publications elucidate the tension between acculturation and enculturation processes in the Japanese American community and in the Japanese society. It highlights that adaptation is not a unilinear process but is time and value-laden that requires a holistic perspective to understand.

Background

For readers who are not familiar to Japanese, this section will briefly explain how the language is constructed and the Language Reform Policy implemented in the post-World War II era. The Japanese language consists of three written characters which are used in combination; Hiragana, Katakana, and Kanji. The two former characters are phonetic and each consists of 50 syllabic characters. Hiragana characters (あいうえお corresponding to a, i, u, e, o) are used for Japanese or Chinese origin words, and Katakana characters (アイウエオ also corresponding to a, i, u, e, o) are mainly used for words derived from the West. Kanji characters adopted from Chinese are much more complex for each letter comprises a definition, and roughly 2000 characters are used in common written language. There are multiple ways to pronounce each letter in accordance to the context and multiple Kanji characters are used to represent a single phonetic symbol. For example, 新 may be read as “Shin,” “Ara-ta,” “Atara-shii,” or “Nii” in different contexts. Furthermore, all of the following Kanji characters are read as “Shin” but possess different meanings; 新 (new), 親 (parent), 信 (truth), 芯 (core), 清 (sophisticated), 神 (god) and 進 (progress).

The construct of Kanji characters underwent a significant change after Japan was placed under the occupation of the Allied Powers, led by the United States, in 1945. The General Headquarters (GHQ) issued directions to the Japanese Government, implementing various reform policies addressing demilitarization and democratization. This included the amendment of the constitution, women’s liberation, organization of labor unions, freedom in education, and the democratization of the economic system. Their purpose was to set Japan as a breakwater against communist parties in Asian countries, and furthermore, to present a leading model of democratization (Enmanji, 2007, p.29). This innovative and revolutionary perspective

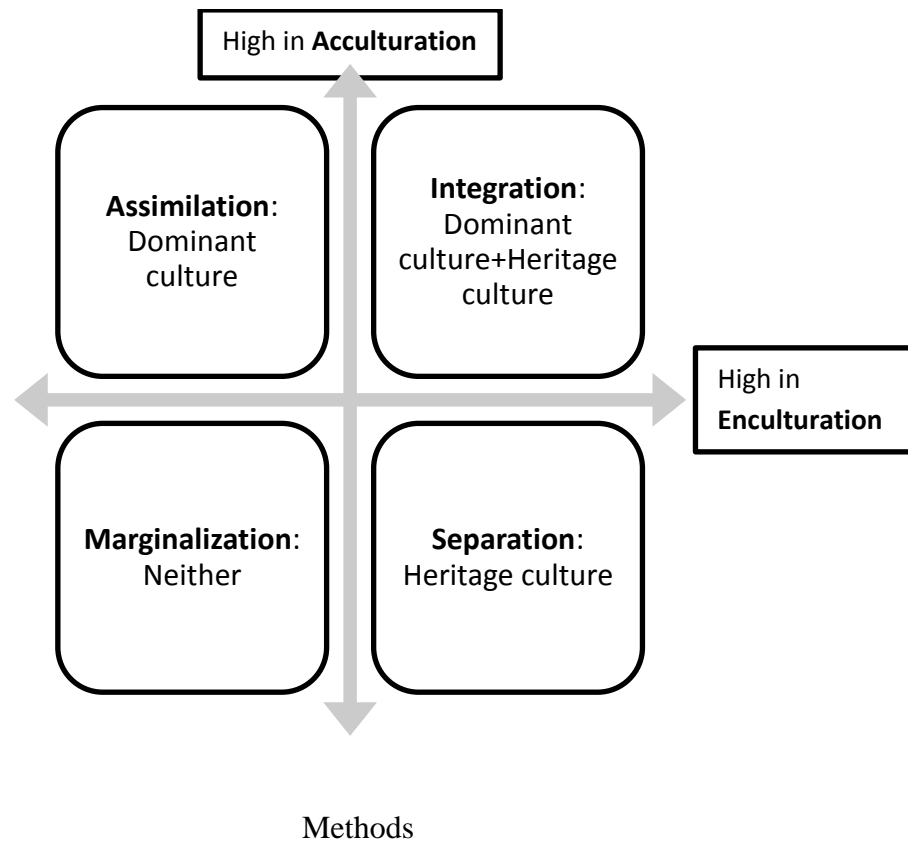
influenced many people to start attributing the cause of the defeat to the lack of democratization. The social trend rapidly drifted towards accepting transformation and changes to implement modern and democratic systems of the victorious countries. What was targeted as obstructing intellectual development and democratization were the time and effort spent on learning Kanji characters (Enmanji, 2007, p.2). Therefore, it was proposed that Japan's language and writing systems need to be changed altogether. Many believed that the adoption of phonetic symbols, in exchange to Kanji characters would disseminate education, in other words, if the usage of Kanji characters was banned or at least restricted, the nation would advance towards a democratic society (Enmanji, 2007, p.26). These ideas lead to the implementation of the Language Reform Policy in November, 1946. Many existing Kanji characters were simplified and the number of Kanji used in official publications such as governmental documents, newspapers, and magazines (Atsuji, 2010, p.46) were reduced from 4,600 (Takashima, 2001, p.10) to 1,850 characters.

Definition

The definition of the processes and outcomes of acculturation and enculturation is determined by the researcher due to the different methodologies they adopt. Moreover, Kim states that adaptation processes may significantly differ for those who have been socialized in their heritage culture before being exposed to the non-heritage culture, and second generations and beyond who were born into the non-heritage culture (2009, p.99). Thus, for this paper, I will adopt a rather simplified definition for clarification. "Acculturation" is defined as the ways in which individuals adapt to the norms of the dominant host culture (Kim, 2009, p.99). The other spectrum on the bilinear model (Figure 1.) is "enculturation" which Zimmerman defines as the extent to which individuals identify with their ethnic culture, feel a sense of pride in their cultural

heritage, and participate in traditional activities (1996, p.296). “Assimilation,” is often used in exchange to “acculturation,” but here I distinguish them. “Assimilation” is defined as a rejection of one’s native culture and the adoption of the host culture (Berry, 1997, p.8-9). In other words, it is one way of displaying acculturation processes but do not coincide with the full notion of acculturation. These concepts are central to the understanding of immigrant adaptation as it is related to the sense of belonging at an individual, community and institutional level.

Figure 1: Bilinear Model of Adaptation (Berry 1997)



This research is based on the archival data from a total of 18 pages from 4 weekly issues of the (October 23th to November 13th) 1946 *Hokubei Hochi* newspaper. It is a Japanese American immigrant newspaper founded in Seattle, Washington. The pre-World War II paper was published under the name *Hokubei Jiji* or *The North American Times* beginning in 1902 until it

ceased publication due to the Japanese American internment in 1942 (The North American Post Publishing, Inc.; Hokubei Hochi Foundation). The Post-WWII issues which continue to today were first published in June, 1946. It was renamed as *Hokubei Hochi* or *The North American Post*. Harrison states that when the publication first hit its financial crisis and were about to cease publication in 1974, the community rallied and raised money to maintain the business. Later in 1981, when the newspaper had again fallen on hard times, the community formed a group to buy the paper from the publisher (2006, p.13). The community involvement in maintaining the publication explains how deeply embedded this source was to the lives of the Japanese Americans in the Seattle area, and suggests the important roles of immigrant newspapers in preserving one's connection to his/her heritage culture, often described as enculturation and ethnic identity.

My research analyzes specifically the 1946 issues of the *Hokubei Hochi* because it corresponds to the time frame of the Language Reform Policy implementation in Japan. The 1946 publications also provide contextual understanding to the transitions in political, economic, philosophical and religious issues of Japan and the local Seattle community. In addition, the *Hokubei Hochi* is the largest and oldest Japanese-language newspaper in the Pacific Northwest (The North American Post Publishing, Inc.) and thus, it is a credible resource and easily accessible to compare different time frames in further research.

I chose to examine the relationship between the changes in Kanji characters and the shift of cultural identity of Japanese people on an institutional level. I also examined the acculturation and enculturation processes of Japanese Americans on an individual and community level. Drawing from previous literature on acculturation and enculturation theory in the field of psychology, anthropology and sociology, I attempt to connect the transformation of the Japanese

language to the change in Japanese and Japanese Americans' identities, when multiple cultures combine.

Findings

The *Hokubei Hochi* newspaper archives displayed a mixture of different adaptation processes in both the Japanese society and the Japanese American community in the post-World War II era. The transformation of Kanji characters starting in 1946 exemplified the multidimensional adaptation processes for native Japanese under reigning Western forces. The simplification of Kanji characters wiped out the delicate shade of meanings associated with them. Some Kanji characters were simply abbreviated, and others eliminated Japanese-specific ideas and adopted a Western ideology. Overall, the Western influence on the philosophy of Japanese society could be seen when comparing Kanji characters before and after the Language Reform Policy. The language used in the *Hokubei Hochi* archives furthermore revealed similar adaptation processes for Japanese American immigrants in the U.S. I examined proper nouns because it exemplifies the sense of possession or ownership which facilitates the understanding of acculturation and enculturation. Inconsistent writing of place names displayed the struggles of identifying a place as foreign or somewhere of ownership. The display of a personal name in the advertisement revealed a story of how one identified himself as Japanese and an American. All of the findings suggest that when multiple cultures combine, people experience a complex adaptation process that cannot be reduced to a linear understanding.

The year of the *Hokubei Hochi* archives that I examined coincide with the crucial time frame when the language transformation movement took place in Japan. Although most of the writings were still in the old language, I found some old and new Kanji characters such as the old 聯 and

the new 連 used interchangeably throughout an article issued on October 23, 1946. It either suggests the gradual transition from the usage of old Kanji to the new Kanji characters, or that there were no strict rules to use an abbreviated character even in formal publications. Enmanji stated, “(Kanji) characters” are intrinsically a way of conveying meaning, but because of the intricate thoughts that are tied into each Kanji character, Kanji may function as a symbol that contains more than its literal meaning (Enmanji, 2007, p.144, translation by Kawasaki).

Although, this may have been true with the original Kanji characters, the simplification of them as I will further describe, elucidates the loss of these intricate thoughts and meanings associated to each Kanji character. After the language reform policy, certain parts of Kanji characters were simply omitted in some Kanjis. In others, they were replaced by simplified components that often do not portray the meanings of the original characters.

From here on, I attempt to analyze a few Kanji characters (figure 3.) that changed its form in the language transformation policy that exemplify the Western influence on the philosophy of the Japanese society. These are a few of the most commonly used Kanji characters throughout the October 23rd to November 13th, 1946 weekly *Hokubei Hochi* newspaper. The first Kanji means “consumed” written as 盡 in its old form and 尽 in the new. To deconstruct the old Kanji, it is composed from 筆 which means brush and 皿 which means plate (Kamada & Yoneyama, 2008). The literal meaning, therefore, is to brush off whatever is on the plate until it is empty. This notion of void or nothingness is central to “Zen” a branch of Japanese philosophy. However, this ideology is entirely omitted when the Kanji is simplified to 尽. This Kanji still possesses the meaning of “corpse” (Kamada & Yoneyama, 2008) which partly shares the meaning of nothingness, but has lost its totality.

The second Kanji I examined means to “line up” “sequence” or “allies” written as 聯 in the old Kanji and 連 in the new. The old Kanji consists of 耳 which literally means “ears,” and two 糸 which mean “strings.” According to Kamada & Yoneyama, the definition of “lining up” or “sequence” derives from the historical rituals of warriors lining the enemy’s left ear they have cut off to count their victory and distinguish themselves in war. “Strings” are a symbol of connection and thus contribute to creating the overall meaning (2008). The new Kanji is constructed from 之 which means “road” or “walk” and 車 which means “car.” This Kanji character illustrates the image of people pulling their cars in line. Although both the old and the new Kanji characters stand for “line up,” they derive from different historical backgrounds. The old Kanji is war-oriented, whereas the new Kanji involves cars which represents modern technology, as well as, the sophisticated idea of lining up to regulate the traffic system.

Whether or not the changes in philosophical and theoretical concepts were intentional, it is interesting to note that the Japanese ideology underlying in each Kanji character was altered due to the Language Reform movement. Formerly, each element of a Kanji character implied a meaning and in total composed an intricate concept. However, due to the simplification of Kanji characters, they lost much of their original meaning. Although the resistance to the Western phonetic writing system and maintaining the use of Kanji characters may be considered a form of enculturation, the influence of the dominant culture is explicit. This suggests that acculturation and enculturation processes not only occur when people migrate to a foreign country, but may occur in native lands when cultures of different power dynamics intermix.

As I stated, examining proper nouns contribute to the understanding of acculturation and enculturation processes of Japanese American immigrants. Throughout the four newspaper issues I examined, “Seattle” was referred to in four different ways: 沙市 (City of Seattle), 沙港

(Port of Seattle), シアトル (Seattle in phonetic symbols that reads as “Shi-a-to-ru”), and シヤトル (Seattle in phonetic symbols that reads as “Shi-ya-to-ru”). The two former writings are in Kanji characters which are used for Japanese-origin words. It indicates that the Japanese American community in Seattle had a sense of ownership towards this land. The latter two writings are in Katakana characters which are used for words with foreign connotations. This depicts that “Seattle” was sometimes perceived as a foreign land. These four terms were used interchangeably for majority of the time, suggesting the immigrants’ struggle to conform to either culture.

However, I observed one pattern in the use of four terms that is worth consideration. The use of 沙 (Seattle in a Kanji character) was consistent when the articles referred to priests or other significant people with strong ties to the Japanese American community, coming “home” to or “revisiting” Seattle. This may indicate that the use of Kanji characters for place names are associated with people who considered Seattle as their homeland, thus experienced a high acculturation process, regardless of whether or not they experienced enculturation.

Another example of a proper noun is personal names which shows the ways in which individuals identified themselves. The most explicit example was found in the advertisement section of multiple 1946 *Hokubei Hochi* newspaper issues. As seen in Figure 2, 篠田道雄 (Michio Shinoda) identifies himself as “Mitch,” a Western-oriented name to an English speaking audience. While this may be a display of acculturation, it may also be considered an enculturation process due to the fact that he did not adopt an English name. In addition, he writes his name in Kanji characters for a Japanese audience which displays that he also has ties to his identity as Japanese. As previously discussed, each Kanji character possesses its own meaning. When he writes his name in Kanji characters as 篠田道雄 (Michio Shinoda), it distinguishes

himself from other names also written as “Michio,” but in different Kanji characters. This example shows that acculturation and enculturation is value-laden as one identifies oneself differently to different audiences. It addresses our attention to the multidimensional adaptation processes which may shift along both acculturation and enculturation spectrums according to the social context the individual is being placed.

Figure 2: Example of a Proper Noun



Discussion and Conclusion

In this research, I examined language use as an indicator of adaptation processes. The examples from the *Hokubei Hochi* articles and the transformation of Kanji characters denote the tensions between acculturation and enculturation that occurs when one is exposed to a culture that is different from his/her culture of origin. With the examples of Kanji character simplification, I displayed Japan's subjection yet rejection to the dominant Western culture. It was evident that the Language Reform Policy, regardless of its intentions, dramatically changed the Japanese philosophy incorporated in each Kanji character. As users of the new Kanji symbols, the collective identity of Japanese people was also affected by the Western power. Although

demonstrated from a different perspective, a similar adaptation process can be observed with the Japanese Americans in Seattle. The display of proper nouns exhibited the conflicting adaptation processes of acculturation and enculturation in quandary of opposing cultures.

In sum, this research adds to the conversation of adaptation processes that are not uniform or linear as it is often assumed. Prior research on cross-cultural psychology that examined adaptation processes were often based on African Americans, Chicanos, and Native Americans (Herskovits, 1937, p.261). Therefore, the concept of acculturation and enculturation processes for Asian Americans, and specifically for Japanese Americans are not yet well-established. My research ties the theoretical understanding of adaptation processes to the observation in Japanese-specific language use. It provides another perspective to its time/value-laden understanding and encourages us to adopt a holistic approach to understand the social context behind it. For further research, it may also be helpful to consider what the Social Science Research Council in 1954 emphasized. It stated that adaptation can be “reactive (triggering resistance to change in both groups), creative (stimulating new cultural forms, not found in either of the cultures in contact), and delayed (initiating changes that appear more fully years later).” This would contribute to understanding how cultures reciprocally influence each other which further deepens the understanding of adaptation processes.

Due to the limited time given for analyzing archival materials, my research was based on a limited amount of data concentrated on the late 1946 issues of the *Hokubei Hochi*. Since it is a regional immigrant newspaper, it is difficult to generalize the findings of acculturation and enculturation processes to all Japanese Americans. I also did not evaluate the language use in publications of other time frames which may be addressed in future research. Furthermore, the analysis, especially on the definitional change in Kanji characters incorporates my subjective

opinion. Yet, this paper provides concrete examples on how the loss in the intricacy of the Japanese language, and the language used in community communication was interrelated to the process of acculturation/enculturation.

Figure 3: Simplification of Kanji Characters

英語解釈 English Definition	旧漢字 Old	新漢字 New	部首 Radicals	部首の意味 Definition of Radicals	その他の構成 Other Components	構成部分の解釈 Definition of Components	変化 Parts Changed	変化した部分の意味 Interpretation of the Changed Parts
Consumed (Serve)	盡	盡	尸	corpse	筆 皿 筆+皿	Brush (noun) Plate, container to clear a plate with a brush= emptiness	Fully Abbreviated	The intricate meaning of "void" which is a central theme in Japanese philosophy is excluded in the new kanji
Line up	聯	連	耳	corpse	糸+糸	Strings (line up, connect)	Fully replaced but substituted with symbols of similar meanings	The overall meaning of "lining up" does not change. However, the old kanji is war-oriented, whereas the new one is associated with modernism.
Captivate	俘	虜	イ	Humans	孚 イ+孚	Car (illustrates how people used to walk in a line pulling cars/rickshaws)	Completely replaced	The meaning changed from "embrace" to "surround by force."
			虎	Tiger	田 虎+田	Hold an infant human + embrace = captivate field, farm, area mimesis of circulating power, enforce surround by force		
			虜		力 虜			

Figure 4: Additional Examples of Simplified Kanji Characters

英語解釈 English Definition	旧漢字 Old	新漢字 New	部首 Radicals	部首の意味 Definition of Radicals	その他の構成 Other Components	構成部分の解釈 Definition of Components	変化 Parts Changed	変化した部分の意味 Interpretation of the Changed Parts
Price	價	価	亻	Humans	貝	Buy and Sell Shell	貝 is omitted	貝 (shell) is a symbol for money due to its usage as a currency in the ancient times
Convey	傳	伝	亻	Humans	甫 寸 專	Start, Large in number, Fatherhood Small Universal, Throughout the land	專 is replaced by 云	云 (say) replaces the original meaning of dissemination
Thank	禮	礼	示	Worship of God	云 曲 = 丰 + 丰	Say Hieroglyph/pictography for thick growing grass "abundance"	豊 is replaced with 云	云 also written as 隱 which means hide or conceal
Truth	實	実	礼 宀	Worship of God Roof, Cover	豆 豊 シ	Beans, a representation for agriculture Abundance, Prosperity in agriculture Hide, Conceal	實 is replaced with an abbreviation	
Strokes	劃	画	刂 (刀)	Cut or shave with a knife (Sword)	丰 口 十 畫	Brush (noun) Framework (symbol for the act of drawing lines onto farmlands) Punctuate	Fully replaced	The meaning changed from punctuate (farmland) to a more general meaning to divide

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