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SHIFTING MEANINGS OF *WASEI EIGO* IN THE ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURE SECTIONS OF THE *YOMIURI SHINBUN* NEWS SITE 2026 EDITION

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Abstract: This study investigates the operational mechanisms and semantic shifts of *Wasei Eigo* (Japanese-made English) pseudo-loanwords within formal digital journalism, focusing on the Entertainment and Culture sections of *Yomiuri Shinbun* during the 2026 media cycle. Grounded in a qualitative descriptive approach and Wijana and Rohmadi's (2011) semantic shift framework, the research examines how authoritative media gatekeepers employ semantic specialization and generalization to optimize information density and public communication. Data were collected over a ten-day observation period (February 24 - March 5, 2026) and subjected to multi-stage exclusionary filtering alongside dual-dictionary verification using Oxford Dictionaries and Kotobank. Findings reveal that formal news discourse predominantly utilizes semantic specialization (e.g., *Konbi, Koorasu, Mukku, Kuria Fairu, Apuri, Sutoraiki*) to eliminate polysemy, reduce reader cognitive processing load, and maximize descriptive conciseness. Conversely, semantic generalization (*Bazuru*) is selectively deployed to absorb online cultural phenomena into formal press channels. Rather than representing linguistic degradation or translation errors, *Wasei Eigo* operates as a sophisticated tool for deliberate linguistic domestication. Theoretically, this study advances frameworks of language sustainability, media discourse, and cross-cultural sociolinguistics by illustrating how elite press organs adapt foreign borrowings to reinforce local communicative efficiency while preserving native structural integrity. Pedagogically, mapping these semantic shifts offers practical value for Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) instruction, aiding L2 learners in navigating negative transfer and cognitive friction caused by semantic divergence from donor language roots.
Keywords: *Wasei Eigo; semantics; meaning shift; specialization; generalization; Yomiuri Shinbun.*

INTRODUCTION

The Japanese lexicon has long developed through an interplay of historical language contact and socio-cultural adaptation, absorbing foreign material to meet new social realities while preserving its structural core (Elmer, 2019; Zhang, 2019). Standard foreign loanwords (*Gairaigo*) undergo phonological and morphological adaptation but generally retain the semantic core of their donor languages (Al Faridzi & Hariri, 2025; Erlina et al., 2022). *Wasei Eigo* (Japanese-made English), by contrast, recombines English morphemes into pseudo-loanwords whose meanings diverge substantially from their sources (Ariefandi & Hariri, 2024; Astariani et al., 2024). In Wijana and Rohmadi's (2011) semantic shift framework, such changes occur mainly through two mechanisms. *Specialization* narrows a word's meaning to a specific domain and enhances contextual clarity (Mizuki & Okazaki, 2023). *Generalization* extends a meaning beyond its original boundaries to cover new phenomena. Both are key drivers of vocabulary expansion (Beknazarova, 2026).

Lexical borrowing and re-semanticization are universal processes through which languages fill functional gaps and reflect intercultural contact (Ahmadova, 2025; Aliyeva, 2025; Kizi & Zafarovna, 2025; Qizi & Isomiddinovna, 2026; Xabitovich & O'g'li, 2026; Zhan, 2023). Documented cases include Spanish loanwords in Wayuunaiki (Yacomelo et al., 2023), foreign

concepts in Tshivenda (Sebola, 2025), English loans in Omani Arabic (Algryani, 2026) and French media (Ashrafova, 2025), the secularization of Arabic loanwords in Indonesian (Hasbi et al., 2026; Muttakin et al., 2026), and English loans in digital Mandarin on Weibo (Arista & Dina, 2026). Such adaptation is central to language sustainability, allowing a speech community to integrate external features without altering its structural essence (Airas & Holden, 2025), while mass media personalize foreign lexemes to preserve local cultural identity (Adli & Guy, 2022; Ulrich, 2025).

Within Japanese linguistics, Wasei Eigo has been studied mainly in informal and creative contexts. Digital spaces act as incubators for slang and youth-driven semantic change (Aisya & Jayanti, 2026; Fajrin & Masrokhah, 2022; Firayani, 2025; Juwita, 2026; Zhao & Cui, 2026). Pseudo-loanwords emerge frequently on blogging platforms such as Ameba Blog (Fauzi et al., 2024) and learning applications such as Todai Easy Japanese News (Ramadhan & Putri, 2023). In advertising, business writing, and television drama, they serve as gap-fillers, stylistic devices, and puns (Gama, 2023; Kawabata, 2024; Pratiwi & Leliana, 2023; Scherling, 2016). Parallel work in computational linguistics shows that fine-tuned large language models can differentiate Katakana semantics, polysemy, and frequency (Kodaki & Sasaki, 2025, 2026). Cognitive research, meanwhile, links the processing of foreign phonology to sound symbolism and cross-modal integration (Iida & Akita, 2024). For learners of Japanese and English as foreign languages, however, pseudo-loanwords remain a persistent source of misinterpretation (Alharaki et al., 2023; Arianingsih & Musyaafa, 2023; Bai, 2025; Sperlich, 2024).

Formal journalism, however, operates under different conditions. Informal channels tolerate ambiguity and fluid innovation, but authoritative news outlets act as institutional gatekeepers that regulate loanword use in line with national language norms (Jappy, 2026; Nambu, 2025). Research on Japanese news has so far focused largely on structural abbreviations such as *Ryakugo* and *Toujigo* used to condense headlines (Sari et al., 2019). How a high-status outlet such as *Yomiuri Shinbun* uses semantic specialization and generalization in Wasei Eigo remains largely unexamined. Synchronic research suggests that media institutions rapidly stabilize emerging semantic shifts (Firayani, 2025; Juwita, 2026), which makes the formal press a revealing site for observing this process.

Addressing this gap, and following Mahsun's (2017) premise that texts must be analyzed as socially situated tools of public communication, this study examines Wasei Eigo in the entertainment and culture sections of *Yomiuri Shinbun* during the 2026 media cycle. It addresses two questions: (1) What types of semantic shift characterize the Wasei Eigo terms used? (2) How does the outlet employ specialization and generalization to optimize information density and public communication?

The study offers three contributions. First, it provides empirical evidence from an authoritative press organ rather than informal subcultures. Second, it reconceptualizes Wasei Eigo not as a corruption of English or as slang, but as a deliberate technique through which media gatekeepers achieve conciseness and contextual precision. Third, it proposes a taxonomy contrasting specialized semantic narrowing with generalized metaphorical extension in formal journalism. Theoretically, it extends work on language sustainability, media discourse, and cross-cultural sociolinguistics (Bolton, 2026; Jenks, 2025; Oliveira, 2024). Practically, it informs the teaching of Japanese and English as foreign languages, as well as pedagogical translation and cross-cultural instrument validation (Cruchinho et al., 2024).

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology to examine the synchronic semantics of *Wasei Eigo* in formal digital news discourse, drawing on the descriptive linguistic paradigm outlined by Mahsun (2017). Unlike purely quantitative approaches that focus strictly on lexical frequency, a qualitative design enables a nuanced investigation of how linguistic units function within specific socio-communicative contexts (Elmer, 2019; Zhang, 2019). Examining localized lexical adaptations in high-status digital news offers valuable insights into language sustainability, communicative efficiency, and institutional gatekeeping in a globalized era (Adli & Guy, 2022; Airas & Holden, 2025; Jappy, 2026; Nambu, 2025; Ulrich, 2025). Furthermore, it illuminates how foreign expressions are filtered by elite media institutions to facilitate cross-cultural communication (Bolton, 2026; Jenks, 2025; Oliveira, 2024). Within this analytical setup, Wijana and Rohmadi's (2011) semantic shift framework is applied, focusing on semantic

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specialization (narrowing) and semantic generalization (broadening) (Beknazarova, 2026; Mizuki & Okazaki, 2023).

The empirical data corpus consists of textual fragments extracted from the digital news portal *Yomiuri Shinbun* (2026 edition). The corpus was bounded specifically to two major sections: "Entertainment" (Entame) and "Culture" (Bunka), collected over a ten-day observation window from February 24 to March 5, 2026. These sections were selected because they represent dynamic zones of cultural interaction where foreign lexical borrowings frequently appear in journalistic reporting. Data collection encompassed all news articles published on the platform within the designated period accessible via the Ippan Kaiin membership program. This approach aligns with established cross-linguistic methodologies for analyzing loanword integration, lexical borrowing trends, and digital news discourse (Ahmadova, 2025; Aliyeva, 2025; Arista & Dina, 2026; Ashrafova, 2025; Kizi & Zafarovna, 2025; Qizi & Isomiddinovna, 2026; Sebola, 2025; Xabitovich & O'g'li, 2026; Yacomelo et al., 2023; Zhan, 2023; Zhao & Cui, 2026). To provide structural context regarding the digital environment from which this corpus was drawn, the functional layout of the news page is depicted in Figure 1.



Figure 1. *Appearance of the Yomiuri Shinbun news page*

Data collection followed a multi-stage scanning procedure applied across all sampled news articles. In the initial stage, all *Katakana*-rendered lexical items appearing in headlines, sub-headlines, and body texts were identified. To ensure empirical precision, an exclusionary filter was applied to separate *Wasei Eigo* terms from standard foreign loanwords (*Gairaigo*). Only lexemes that underwent semantic modification or structural re-compounding relative to their Western source definitions were retained. Standard *Gairaigo* terms that preserved their original Western meanings and grammatical functions were excluded (Al Faridzi & Hariri, 2025; Algryani, 2026; Ariefandi & Hariri, 2024; Astariani et al., 2024; Erlina et al., 2022). This exclusionary protocol ensured a clear demarcation between institutional press usage and the informal loanword usage typical of youth slang, social media, mobile apps, advertising, and creative fiction (Aisya & Jayanti, 2026; Fajrin & Masrokhah, 2022; Fauzi et al., 2024; Firayani, 2025; Gama, 2023; Juwita, 2026; Kawabata, 2024; Pratiwi & Leliana, 2023; Ramadhan & Putri, 2023; Sari et al., 2019; Scherling, 2016).

To verify the precise semantic trajectories of the filtered lexemes, a dual-dictionary verification procedure was conducted. First, the donor meanings of the constituent English morphemes were established using the Oxford Dictionaries as a baseline for Western usage. Second, the contextual meanings and institutional definitions of the terms were verified using authoritative Japanese lexicographical resources available on *Kotobank* (kotobank.jp), including digital editions of *Daijisen* and *Seisenban Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*. Comparative analysis between donor definitions and institutional Japanese definitions allowed researchers to determine whether a term underwent semantic narrowing or broadening. This comparative method mirrors established

frameworks used in loanword research, semantic secularization, and cross-cultural conceptual tracking (Hasbi et al., 2026; Muttakin et al., 2026). Moreover, aligning lexicographical entries with actual news contexts aligns with computational and cognitive approaches to *Katakana* analysis, word sense disambiguation, and loanword processing (Alharaki et al., 2023; Arianingsih & Musyaafa, 2023; Bai, 2025; Iida & Akita, 2024; Kodaki & Sasaki, 2025, 2026; Sperlich, 2024).

In qualitative linguistic research, the primary researcher serves as the central analytical instrument, observing, categorizing, and interpreting data through theoretical sensitivity (Mahsun, 2017). To maintain analytical reliability and minimize subjective bias, standardized coding protocols were strictly applied (Cruchinho et al., 2024). Each identified *Wasei Eigo* token was independently coded and cross-evaluated against operational definitions of semantic specialization and generalization derived from Wijana and Rohmadi (2011). Coding consistency was reinforced through iterative contextual reviews of surrounding sentences in *Yomiuri Shinbun* articles, confirming that each classification accurately reflected the term's pragmatic function in formal digital journalism. By combining multi-stage filtering, authoritative dual-dictionary verification, and standardized semantic taxonomy, this methodology provides a reliable and replicable analysis of *Wasei Eigo* transformations in contemporary press discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identification and classification procedure

English-derived vocabulary in the Entertainment and Culture sections of the 2026 edition of *Yomiuri Shinbun* was identified through an exclusionary filtering method (Cruchinho et al., 2024; Mahsun, 2017). Each candidate term was checked against English lexicographic standards (*Oxford English Dictionary*) and authoritative Japanese resources (Kotobank, which incorporates *Digital Daijisen* and *Seisenban Nihon Kokugo Daijiten*). This comparison made it possible to distinguish Japanese-coined pseudo-English (*Wasei Eigo*), standard loanwords (*Gairaigo*), abbreviations (*Ryakugo*), and hybrid formations (Algryani, 2026; Astariani et al., 2024; Erlina et al., 2022). Each term was then classified according to Wijana and Rohmadi's (2011) semantic shift model, based on whether its contextual use in news texts showed specialization (narrowing) or generalization (broadening). Figure 1 summarizes the procedure.

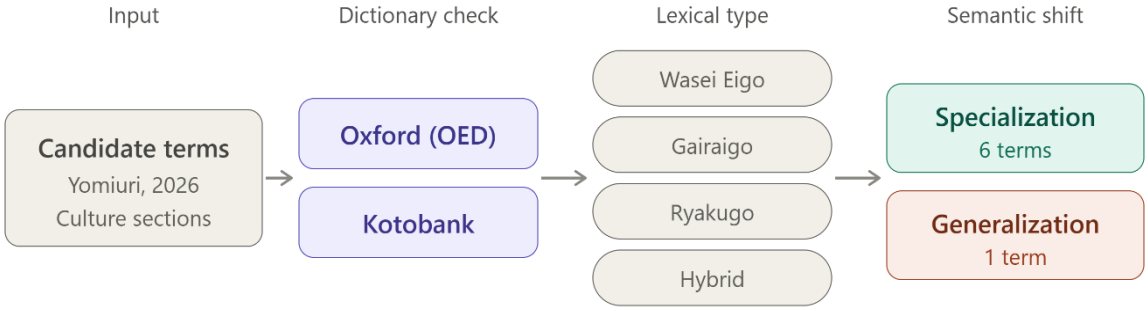


Figure 1. *Identification and classification procedure*

Overview of the findings

Table 1 lists the seven items analyzed, with their donor terms, contextual meanings in news reporting, lexical types, and semantic shift categories. Six of the seven items show specialization, and only one, *Bazuru*, shows generalization.

Table 1. *Classification of meaning changes in English-derived vocabulary*

Vocabulary	Original term	Lexical type	Contextual meaning in news	Category of meaning change
コンビ (*Konbi*)	combination	Ryakugo (clipping)	Professional duo partners (musicians, comedians)	Specialization
コーラス (*Koorasu*)	chorus	Gairaigo	Backing vocalists	Specialization
ムック (*Mukku*)	magazine + book	Wasei Eigo (blend)	Visual book format; special collection edition	Specialization
クリアファイル (*Kuria Fairu*)	clear + file	Wasei Eigo (compound)	A4-sized transparent plastic folder	Specialization
アプリ (*Apuri*)	application	Ryakugo (clipping)	Software for smartphones (mobile app)	Specialization

ストライキ (*Sutoraiki*)	strike	Gairaigo	Labor or employee strike action	Specialization
バズる (*Bazuru*)	buzz	Hybrid (English root + Japanese *-ru*)	Viral popularity on social media	Generalization

Semantic specialization in pseudo-loanwords

The three items in the pseudo-loanword group show how Japanese recombines and clips English morphemes to create narrow, purpose-specific meanings.

Konbi (コンビ) is a clipped form of *konbineeshon* (コンビネーション), from English *combination*. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *combination* covers a broad range of abstract and concrete associations, from mathematical sets to chemical mixtures. In Kotobank and in *Yomiuri Shinbun* reporting, however, *Konbi* is reserved for human partnerships such as *manzai* comedy duos, musical duets, and close creative or corporate teams (Ariefandi & Hariri, 2024; Gama, 2023). By removing the non-human and technical senses of the root, the term gives readers an immediately interpretable referent (Wijana & Rohmadi, 2011).

Mukku (ムック) blends *magazine* and *book* to name a specific publishing category (Elmer, 2019; Qizi & Isomiddinovna, 2026). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a magazine as a softcover periodical and a book as a bound volume, whereas Kotobank identifies *mukku* as a distinct hybrid genre. It combines the visual layout of a magazine with the durable spine and content density of a book.

Kuria Fairu (クリアファイル) shows pseudo-English compounding. In English, *clear* and *file* do not combine into a standard stationery term; native speakers say *plastic sleeve*, *clear folder*, or *document pocket*. In Japanese media and commercial contexts, *kuria fairu* denotes a specific object: an A4-sized, semi-rigid transparent sleeve used for documents and promotional graphics (Kawabata, 2024; Scherling, 2016).

Semantic specialization in standard loanwords and abbreviations

Specialization is not limited to pseudo-loanwords. It also affects standard *Gairaigo* and *Ryakugo* in news reporting (Nambu, 2025; Sari et al., 2019).

Apuri (アプリ) is clipped from *apurikeeshon* (アプリケーション), from English *application*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists sense clusters ranging from formal requests to computer programs. *Yomiuri Shinbun* restricts *apuri* to mobile software installed on smartphones or tablets. This mirrors computational findings on polysemy reduction in Katakana usage (Kodaki & Sasaki, 2026).

Sutoraiki (ストライキ) shows the same domain restriction, illustrated in Figure 2. English *strike* covers military attacks, baseball pitches, clock chimes, physical blows, and industrial disputes. Kotobank restricts *sutoraiki* to organized labor walkouts and student boycotts. In 2026 reports on artist union negotiations and theater staff disputes, the term is therefore used without any risk of ambiguity (Adli & Guy, 2022; Xabitovich & O'g'li, 2026).

Koorasu (コーラス) follows the same pattern. English *chorus* is highly polysemous: it can refer to ensembles in ancient Greek theater, collective vocalizations, natural sounds (a dawn chorus), song refrains, and choirs. In Kotobank and *Yomiuri Shinbun*, the non-musical and natural senses are discarded, and *koorasu* refers only to choral performance (*gasshou*) or backing vocals (Ahmadova, 2025; Mizuki & Okazaki, 2023).

Semantic generalization: the case of Bazuru

Bazuru (バズる) runs against the dominant pattern of narrowing, as shown on the right of Figure 2. English *buzz* refers mainly to mechanical hums, insect sounds, or signaling devices. Kotobank notes that Japanese *bazu* first referred to collective chatter or word-of-mouth marketing (*buzz marketing*). With the native verbalizing suffix *-ru* (る), *bazuru* becomes a fully conjugable verb. In *Yomiuri Shinbun* it no longer names a specific sound or marketing technique. Instead, it describes a general phenomenon: the explosive spread of content, memes, or news across social networks (Aisya & Jayanti, 2026; Firayani, 2025; Juwita, 2026).

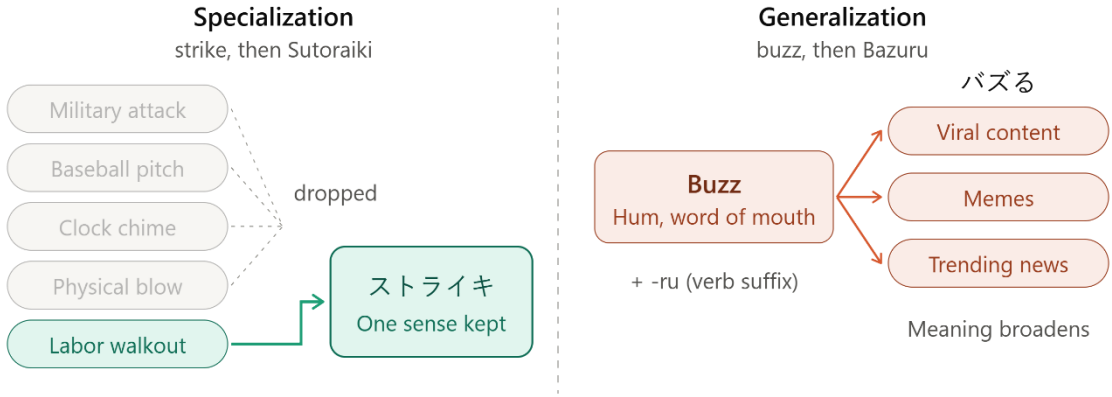


Figure 2. *Semantic specialization (Sutoraiki) versus semantic generalization (Bazuru)*

The absorption of *bazuru* shows how formal media take in online cultural trends in order to remain communicatively relevant (Zhao & Cui, 2026).

The press as an institutional filter

Taken together, the findings suggest that high-status outlets such as *Yomiuri Shinbun* act as institutional filters that standardize loanword semantics (Ashrafova, 2025; Jappy, 2026). Informal platforms, personal blogs, and youth subcultures foster fluid and idiosyncratic uses of Wasei Eigo (Fajrin & Masrokhah, 2022; Fauzi et al., 2024; Ramadhan & Putri, 2023). Formal journalism, by contrast, requires high information density and immediate disambiguation (Mizuki & Okazaki, 2023). Creative media often use Wasei Eigo for humor or characterization (Pratiwi & Leliana, 2023), whereas news platforms prioritize functional clarity. This explains why specialization dominates the data, and it is consistent with earlier findings on news reporting standards (Al Faridzi & Hariri, 2025; Sari et al., 2019). The single case of generalization, *bazuru*, suggests that the filter is selective rather than closed: it admits digital innovations once they have become stable enough to serve public communication.

Adaptive language sustainability

The deliberate semantic shaping of English loanwords is evidence of the recipient language's adaptive capacity rather than of language degradation (Ulrich, 2025; Zhang, 2019). By assigning specialized functions to foreign morphemes, Japanese expands its lexical inventory while keeping its native syntactic and grammatical structures intact (Airas & Holden, 2025; Arista & Dina, 2026). This reflects the principle of adaptive language sustainability (Hasbi et al., 2026; Muttakin et al., 2026; Sebola, 2025): speech communities continuously reshape global English borrowings to meet local pragmatic and cognitive needs (Bolton, 2026; Jenks, 2025; Oliveira, 2024). Wasei Eigo is therefore best understood as a functional product of cross-cultural contact, not as a translation error (Yacomelo et al., 2023).

Pedagogical implications

Specialization improves reading efficiency for native speakers, but it poses real challenges for learners of Japanese as a second language (Alharaki et al., 2023; Arianingsih & Musyaafa, 2023; Bai, 2025). Learners who know English are prone to negative transfer when they meet terms such as *konbi*, *apuri*, *sutoraiki*, and *kuria fairu*. They expect the broad English meaning and miss the narrow Japanese one (Sperlich, 2024). Decoding Katakana modifications also requires targeted perceptual and semantic instruction (Iida & Akita, 2024). Japanese language teaching should therefore address the semantic specialization of Wasei Eigo in news contexts explicitly. Contrasting donor meanings with Japanese meanings, as in Table 1 and Figure 2, would help learners bridge the gap between English roots and domesticated Japanese usage.

CONCLUSION

The systematic analysis of *Wasei Eigo* within the entertainment and culture sections of *Yomiuri Shinbun* (February 24 - March 5, 2026) demonstrates that pseudo-loanwords in formal digital journalism operate as sophisticated instruments of deliberate linguistic domestication rather than accidental mistranslations or language degradation. Semantically, formal news discourse predominantly employs semantic specialization (*Konbi, Koorasu, Mukku, Kuria Fairu, Apuri, Sutoraiki*) to eliminate polysemy, reduce reader cognitive processing load, and maximize information density, while selectively utilizing semantic generalization (*Bazuru*) to absorb modern digital culture into authoritative press channels. Theoretically, these findings contribute to

frameworks of language sustainability and cross-cultural sociolinguistics by showing how elite press gatekeepers adapt foreign borrowings to reinforce local communicative efficiency without altering native structural essence. Pedagogically, mapping these semantic shifts offers crucial practical value for Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL), aiding L2 learners in navigating negative transfer and cognitive friction caused by semantic divergence from donor language roots. Although this study is bounded by a ten-day observation window and a focus on entertainment and culture reporting within a single news platform, it lays a solid foundation for future research. Subsequent scholarship should expand data collection to hard news sectors such as politics and economics across diverse press agencies, or utilize computational NLP methods to evaluate how specialized loanwords stabilize public discourse and facilitate cross-cultural communication.

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