



Roles of Japanese scripts in Western fashion: Fusion and New Orientalism

Os papéis de escritos em japonês na moda ocidental: fusão e Novo Orientalismo

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[abstract] This paper examines the use of Japanese scripts on fashion items. The use of English on fashion items (e.g. t-shirts) has been observed across the globe and examined in the field of sociolinguistics. In recent years, fashion brands such as Gucci, Coach, Adidas, and Nike have printed Japanese scripts on their clothes alongside their original brand names. A UK fashion brand, Superdry, employ Japanese in their brand name and logos. However, the use of languages other than English has not yet been analysed in the fields of sociolinguistics or fashion. The adoption of different cultural norms is often discussed as a form of cultural appropriation. This paper challenges that view by comparing the use of English and Japanese as well as by discussing possible explanations and the roles of Japanese scripts in fashion. It emerges that Japanese scripts are used due to the symbolic, cultural, and linguistic capital that they hold, as well as with a view to enabling brands to express uniqueness. The paper argues that printing Japanese scripts on fashion items is not a simple representation of *Japonisme*, but rather a form of cultural and linguistic appreciation. It also asserts that the New Orientalism that has been observed in the adaptation of Japanese scripts to fashion has no connotation of otherness. Instead, it represents an active acceptance of the East and the generation of new cultures. Transcultural flows are observed in the field of fashion in the era of globalisation. This paper presents a new perspective on studies on Orientalism and the use of languages and scripts.

[keywords] Japanese scripts. New Orientalism. Cultural appreciation. Japonisme.

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[resumo] O presente artigo examina o uso de escritos em japonês em itens de moda. O uso do inglês em itens de moda, tais como camisetas, tem sido observado ao redor do globo e examinado pelo campo da sociolinguística. Em anos recentes, marcas como Gucci, Coach, Adidas e Nike vêm estampando escritas em japonês em suas roupas junto com seus nomes originais. Uma marca de moda britânica, Superdry, até mesmo usa o japonês no seu nome de marca e em seus logos. Contudo, o uso de outras línguas além do inglês ainda não foi analisado nem no campo da sociolinguística nem no da moda. A adoção de normas culturais diferentes é por vezes discutida como uma forma de apropriação cultural. Esse artigo desafia essa visão ao comparar o uso do inglês e do japonês assim como ao discutir possíveis explicações para isso junto aos papéis das escritas em japonês na moda. Parece que os escritos em japonês são usados por causa do capital simbólico, cultural e linguístico que detém assim como uma visão de permitir as marcas expressarem singularidade. Argumentamos que estampar escritas em japonês em itens de moda não é apenas uma simples representação de japonismo, mas uma forma de apreciação cultural e linguística. Também afirmamos que o Novo Orientalismo que tem sido observado na adaptação dessas escritas para a moda não tem uma conotação de alteridade ou diferença. Ao invés disso, ele representa uma aceitação ativa do Oriente como gerador de novas culturas. Fluxos transculturais são observados no campo da moda na era da globalização. Esse artigo apresenta uma nova perspectiva nos estudos sobre o Orientalismo e os usos das línguas e escritas.

[palavras-chave] **Escritas em japonês. Novo Orientalismo. Apreciação cultural. Japonismo.**

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1. Introduction: fashion and written languages

The use of English words and phrases transcribed in the Latin alphabet on fashion items (e.g. clothes) has been widely observed. The slogans and messages printed on products such as t-shirts express the wearers' identities and ideologies. The use of English has expanded and is observed not only in English-speaking countries, but also in regions where English is used as a second, additional, or foreign language. The global spread of English has been studied in the field of sociolinguistics. In particular, the use of English for commercial purposes (e.g. in television advertisements, commercial copy, and shop signs in various parts of the world) has been examined in relation to World Englishes, advertising, and linguistic landscapes. While the use of written English has been extensively analysed, few studies on the use of English on fashion items have been conducted thus far (e.g. printed t-shirts by CALDWELL, 2017).

Global corporations, including fashion businesses, generally write their names in English or in other languages and scripts, such as French and Italian. In recent years, fashion brands have begun to use Japanese scripts. For example, global brands such as Gucci, Coach, Adidas, and Nike print their names in Japanese *katakana* scripts alongside their original languages on their products (グッチ, コーチ, アディダス, and ナイキ, respectively). A British fashion brand, Superdry, use Japanese *kanji* and *hiragana* along with English in their brand name and logos (i.e. Superdry 極度乾燥(しなさい) and SUPERDRY®冒険魂). However, the use of languages other than English has not yet been examined in detail in the fields of sociolinguistics or fashion (PILLER, 2003).

Previous studies on the use of English on commercial items have asserted that English is chosen over other languages due to its status, image, eye-catching effect, and people's widespread familiarity with it (BHATIA, 2009; COLUZZI, 2016; HSU, 2008; KRISHNASAMY, 2007; MARTINEZ, 2015; TAN and TAN, 2015; VETTOREL, 2013). Although some of these reasons could also apply to the motivation behind using Japanese because the scripts stand out from the Latin alphabet, especially in the eyes of non-native Japanese readers, few non-Japanese individuals possess the reading skills necessary to comprehend Japanese texts. This paper therefore compares the use of English and Japanese in advertising and fashion and discusses possible explanations and roles of Japanese scripts in fashion.

Adopting fashion ideas and norms from different cultures is often discussed as a form of cultural appropriation (GREEN, 2017; HOGANS and MCANDREWS, 2022; KAWAMURA and JONG, 2022; PARK and CHUN, 2020). This paper challenges this view and examines it from several sociolinguistic perspectives. The paper argues that printing Japanese scripts on fashion items is not a simple representation of *Japonisme* but a form of cultural and linguistic appreciation. It also asserts that the New Orientalism that has been observed in the adaptation of Japanese scripts to fashion has no connotation of otherness. Instead, it reflects active acceptance of the East and the generation of new cultures. Transcultural flows are observed in the field of fashion in the era of globalisation. This paper presents a new perspective on studies that concern Orientalism and the use of languages and scripts.

2. Use of English

English, which originated in Britain in the fifth century, was brought to other countries through colonial expansion (OSTLER, 2010). In addition to the settlement of the United States in the seventeenth century, English began to spread to regions such as India and Hong Kong (OSTLER, 2010). Although many former colonies of Western countries became independent after World War II, English was retained as a dominant first language in countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia (OSTLER, 2010). English is now used in many countries; 59 sovereign and non-sovereign entities list it as an official language (CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 2017). In 16 nations, including the United Kingdom and the United States, although English is not an official language, it serves as one in practice (CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 2017). The number of native English speakers is estimated at approximately 372 million, which makes English the third most widely spoken language in the world after Chinese and Spanish (SIMONS and FENNIG, 2017). The global expansion of English sets it apart from other major languages. English is used not only as a first language, but also as a second, third, or additional language in countries where it has not historically been used in daily life. Crystal (2006) estimates that approximately 400 million individuals globally speak English as a second language. The economic and political prosperity of the United States, which has driven Americanisation and globalisation since the twentieth century, has precipitated the spread and dominance of English in the modern world (GRADDOL, 1997). English has become a *lingua franca* (BRUMFIT, 1982), and “there is overwhelming acceptance of the global dominance of English” (BAMGBOE, 2001, p. 357).

English has been used as a *lingua franca* in various fields, such as international relations, media, international travel, international safety, education, and communications (CRYSTAL, 2012). It is also utilised in the fashion industry (SAMSON and KARTHIGA, 2020). English has served not only as a working language but also as a commodity. It features in global brand names and in advertisements, and its use has expanded locally (LANZA and WOLDEMARIAM, 2014). Piller (2003) identified that English is the most frequently used foreign, second, or additional language in advertisements in non-English-speaking countries. Previous studies on language use and advertising have found that English is commonly used alongside local languages. The use of English with local languages has been observed in various parts of the world, including India (BHATIA, 2000; KATHPALIA and WEE ONG, 2015), China (GAO, 2005), Taiwan (CHEN, 2006), Hong Kong (LEUNG, 2010), South Korea (LEE, 2006), Mexico (BAUMGARDNER, 2008), Brazil (FRIEDRICH, 2019), Colombia (MARTINEZ, 2015), North Macedonia (DIMOVA, 2012), the Netherlands (GERRITSEN et al., 2000), France (MARTIN, 2002, 2007, 2008), Germany (HAMDAN and HATAB, 2009), Hungary (PÉTERY, 2011), Italy (VETTOREL, 2013), and Russia (USTINOVA, 2006). Some studies have discussed the nature of English usage across cultures (e.g. BHATIA, 1992, 2001, 2006, 2009; BHATIA and RITCHIE, 2006; COOK, 1992; GERRITSEN

et al., 2007a, 2007b). The mixing of English into local languages has emerged as a feature of advertising language. This tendency has been extensively observed in Asia, and mixing English with local languages, scripts, and accents is a common feature of Asian advertising (BHATIA, 2009). Bhatia (2009, p. 156) claims that the use of English and the Latin alphabet is “the overwhelming choice” in global marketing. Although linguistic elements from European languages are occasionally adopted into advertisements in English-speaking countries, “high-level mixing” of English is a tendency in Asian advertising (BHATIA, 2009, p. 159).

Few studies on the attitudes of audiences or consumers towards English usage in advertising have been conducted thus far. The use of English in television and local newspaper advertisements is received positively by the Taiwanese (HSU, 2013). Hsu (2013) found that mixing English into local languages is more acceptable than the monolingual use of English. Conversely, the Dutch perceive the use of code-mixed English in television advertisements negatively (GERRITSEN et al., 2000). Leung’s (2010) survey of residents’ attitudes towards the mixing of Chinese and English in print advertising in Hong Kong found that the young and the educated preferred code-mixed texts. Moreover, Hsu (2008) posited that acceptance of localised English and English proficiency are correlated.

Bhatia (2009, p. 159) lists five motives for mixing English with other languages in advertising texts, such as its attention-grabbing nature. Furthermore, unlike other languages, English is used in advertising due to four factors: (1) its status, (2) its image, (3) its eye-catching effect, and (4) widespread familiarity with the language. The following sections examine these factors and present arguments that are relevant to the roles of English in advertising.

2.1 Status of English

One distinctive characteristic of English is that it has symbolic capital. Due to the globalisation and Americanisation of culture and society, English has spread worldwide, as explained previously, to become essential as a *lingua franca* in various human activities that unfold in international settings. These factors affect the ideological orientation of individuals and give English a higher status than other languages. The status of a language affects its value, which then gives the language symbolic capital. Bourdieu (1984, p. 291) maintained that symbolic capital is “the acquisition of a reputation for competence and an image of respectability and honourability”. The symbolic capital of English has been observed in various world regions. In Brunei, for instance, English is more prestigious than the local language and is regarded as indicative of “glamor and economic success” (COLUZZI, 2016, p. 497). English also has symbolic capital and economic value in South Korea (TAN and TAN, 2015), where its knowledge and use are associated with a linguistic expression of modernity (LEE, 2006).

2.2 Image of English

For any business, a positive image is a significant factor in market competition. Corporate image has various components. Seaton (SEATON, 2001) maintains that the use of

English in Japanese advertising serves to create fashionable images that are attributed to the United States and to the English language. Status-specific countries and their cultures may also assign a stereotypical image and symbolic capital to the languages they use. For example, English is used to express modernity in Tamil advertisements (KRISHNASAMY, 2007). Hsu (2008, p. 155) explains that English usage in advertising in Taiwan relates to “internationalism, premium quality, and the trendy taste of the younger generation”. Haarmann (1984) and Takashi (1992) argue that English has been associated with symbolic capital, which represents “high quality”, “internationalism”, “modernity”, and “sophistication” in Japan. Perez (1998) contends that Japanese advertisers use English names in advertising to make products appear “trendy”. The dominance of English over other languages in advertising is therefore related to positive perceptions of English-speaking countries and their cultures. Advertisers strategically exploit the positive image that is associated with English (KACHRU, 1988).

Specific languages and scripts are used for marketing purposes because they are valuable for particular purposes. Inoue (1997) argues that certain languages and scripts have a higher market value than others. Market value is affected by the status and image of languages. Both global businesses and local companies accept English. As a result, English appears often in advertising because it attracts customers due to its image and has a higher market value than other languages. The use of English in advertising is indicative of its commodification. English is marketable because it is “an economic and commercial commodity” (MANAN et al., 2017, p. 660).

2.3 The eye-catching effect of English

English is also used for decorative purposes in commerce. Takashi (1990, p. 45) identifies that English is used in Japanese advertising to “catch the audience’s attention”. Hsu (2008) claims that English is used to attract attention and in graphic design for certain types of advertising in Taiwan. Vettorel (2013) also argues that English is used to attract attention and as a marker of cosmopolitan and international values in Italian advertising. English has thus been used as a source of linguistic and cross-cultural creativity (VETTOREL, 2013).

English, which is written in the Latin alphabet, stands out and has an eye-catching effect, especially in language communities that normally use other types of scripts. When English is mixed with other languages and scripts, this eye-catching effect increases. Although mixing English with other languages in advertising has a decorative and symbolic function (MARTINEZ, 2015), Takashi (1990, p. 45) notes that the English-language elements in Japanese advertising serve the more important function of attracting the attention of the audience because English stands out in texts that are written in Japanese scripts. Bhatia (2009, p. 161–162) maintains that using English with other languages has to do with “cosmetic factors”, arguing that the mixing of English with other scripts is connected to “the precedence of attention-catching over intelligibility” and the “mock effects” of globalisation and Westernisation in Japanese advertising. English is therefore a vehicle for both creativity and communication.

2.4 Knowledge of English

Advertising slogans and copy in which English is mixed with other languages might appeal not only to international customers who understand English, but also to individuals with limited English competence. Knowledge of English is a source of linguistic capital in the contemporary globalised world. Daulton (2008, p. 30) notes the extensive use of English in Japan and argues that marketers “take advantage of the public’s superficial knowledge of basic English” when using English words or the Latin alphabet in advertising. It is not necessarily the case that all English words and phrases used for commercial purposes are fully comprehended, especially if the readers are non-native English speakers. However, individuals do not need to understand every word to grasp the meaning of advertisements since English is used alongside other devices, such as photographs and logos.

Since advertisers mainly use English due to its status, image, and eye-catching effect, some texts contain English that is regarded as non-standard or “broken” in English-speaking countries. However, Seaton (2001) and Dougill (2008) point to advertisements in Japan as examples and argue that the meaning, correctness, and appropriateness of English phrases are irrelevant in advertising because English (i.e. use of the Latin alphabet) serves to create a positive image. In my research on attitudes towards English on commercial signs in Japan, I found that Japanese audiences are aware that the English phrases in advertisements are not meant to be comprehended fully and that they typically do not pay close attention to English usages. Texts therefore contain non-standard English, and it is not necessary to consult a native English speaker to correct the English expressions, as the main function of English in advertising relates to design (DOUGILL, 2008; SEATON, 2001).

3. Use of Japanese

Since 2014, global fashion brands (e.g. Gucci, Coach, Guess, agnès b., Adidas, and Nike) have begun to print their names on their products in Japanese *katakana* script. The movement started with the Carven 2015 spring collection (SINGER, 2014), when Gucci presented Japanese *kimono*-motif jackets and dresses (PHELPS, 2014). Other brands followed the trend. Adidas launched a “Typo monogram” capsule collection in which they printed *katakana* on items in the autumn of 2014 (FASHION GONE ROGUE, 2014). A British fashion brand, Superdry, which now operate in 46 countries (excluding Japan due to copyright issues) printed Japanese text on their products (SUPERDRY, 2019a). Those products, which include clothes and bags, are designed in the United Kingdom and manufactured in Turkey, India, and China (SUPERDRY, 2019b). Not only are Japanese scripts printed on the products, but the company logos also include texts that look Japanese. However, none of the Japanese phrases make sense to native Japanese speakers, and some of the *kanji* that Superdry use are simplified Chinese characters that the Japanese do not use. According to Pham (PHAM, 2019), Western designers frequently confuse the origins of different Asian cultures and languages, which is disrespectful to the cultures in question. Still, Superdry’s “Japanese” phrases distinguish the brand from others. Although use of Japanese has begun to spread in high-end fashion in recent years, the roles of Japanese scripts such as *kanji*, *hiragana*, and

katakana in advertising and fashion have not yet been investigated. The use of both English and Japanese in advertising is related to business strategies, as is the use of Japanese. The following sections therefore analyse possible reasons for using Japanese scripts in advertising and on fashion items by comparing the roles of English and Japanese.

Before examining those reasons, it is necessary to briefly describe the types of scripts used in Japanese. The Japanese writing system employs four types of scripts: *kanji* (Chinese characters), *katakana*, *hiragana*, and *romaji* (literally, “Roman letters”). Two types of Chinese characters are used in Greater China, in Chinese diasporas, and in Korea, as well as in Japan. Simplified Chinese characters are mainly used in mainland China, while traditional Chinese characters are employed in regions such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. The *kanji* used in Japan are the same or similar to traditional Chinese characters, although some have fewer strokes than the traditional forms used in the aforementioned areas. *Romaji* is the romanisation of Japanese words, whereby the Latin alphabet is used to write in the Japanese language. The other two types of script, *katakana* and *hiragana*, are original Japanese scripts. In Japan, the scripts are mixed within clauses and sentences, where they discharge various grammatical functions. Western-based loanwords are conventionally transcribed in *katakana*. Consequently, spelling Western names in *katakana* is commonplace for the Japanese. However, the names of global fashion brands are typically written in the original Latin alphabet in advertisements and on products.

3.1 Status of Japan

Although the Japanese language does not yet enjoy the high status of English, Japan has a marked presence in the global economy, in world politics, and in culture, which has made the nation one of the great powers of the world. The country is ranked as the third-largest economy in the world in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), after the United States and China (INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND, 2022). It has been a member of the G7 since 1975 (LEBLANC, 2021). Japan has also hosted two Summer Olympics and two Winter Olympics (JAPANESE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, 2022). Furthermore, the number of Japanese restaurants in the West has risen (ARNAUD, 2009), and traditional Japanese food, *washoku*, was added to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2013 (UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION, 2013), which indicates the popularity of Japanese cuisine.

Owing to the Visit Japan campaign that was launched in 2003 by then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to boost the economy by attracting inbound tourism (JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION, 2003; JAPAN TOURISM AGENCY, 2018), the number of international visitors has steadily increased, reaching 24 million in 2016 (including those who entered the country multiple times). That figure tripled over the course of a decade (JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION, 2016). The rate at which the number of international travellers has increased worldwide is at its highest since 2010, and Japan was ranked as the twelfth most popular destination in the world (JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM

ORGANIZATION, 2018; TRAVEL VOICE, 2018). Although the Japanese language does not yet have symbolic capital, association with Japan is a source of symbolic capital on account of the status of the country.

3.2 *Image of Japanese culture*

Japanese culture has a positive image, and interest in Japanese art arose in the West as early as the nineteenth century. According to Ono (2013), the French critic and collector Philippe Burty coined the term “*Japonisme*” to describe “the study of the art and genius of Japan” in 1872. Jules de Goncourt introduced a similar term, “*Japonaiserie*”, to explain interest in the exotic or fantastic qualities of Japanese motifs or objects in 1885 (ONO, 2013). In recent years, sources of Japanese soft power (e.g. manga, anime, and cosplay) have come to be known as “cool Japan” and have gained popularity in many parts of the world (CHRISTENSEN, 2011). The Marubeni Research Institute labelled the spread of Japanese culture the “third wave of Japonism [sic]”. The first wave is associated with the nineteenth century, when Japanese art and designs were popularised in the West, and the second is associated with the 1950s and 1960s, when Japan achieved rapid economic growth (ARNAUD, 2009).

The image of Japanese culture and products, as well as the politico-economic status of Japan, may have resulted in symbolic value and cultural capital being attached to things that are related to Japan, including its language. Value and capital may have influenced the use of Japanese scripts in fashion because designers and creators deliberately apply the language as part of a business strategy. Another possible reason for using original scripts (i.e. *hiragana* and *katakana*) might be that brands differentiate between Chinese and Japanese scripts. In contrast to the Chinese language, in which only one type of script is used, it is common for phrases and sentences to be written in at least two scripts in Japanese. Japanese products have a reputation for high quality, while Chinese products are considered inexpensive and unreliable. A survey conducted in 15 Asian cities conveyed that approximately 71.3% of respondents had a positive image of Japanese products and saw them as being of excellent quality, whereas 64.9% of the respondents indicated that Chinese products have a low-cost image (HAKUHODO, 2016; JAPAN NATIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATION, 2018; JAPAN TOURISM AGENCY, 2018). I thus hypothesise that brands use Japanese scripts to exploit the positive image of Japanese products for their own purposes and to distinguish themselves from the brands of Chinese manufacturers.

3.3 *The eye-catching effect of Japanese*

Since *katakana* and *hiragana* are exclusive to the Japanese writing system, they are eye-catching to those who are not familiar with them (TAKASHI, 1990). Akin to how English is used for decorative purposes in Japan, the originality of Japanese scripts attracts attention in societies that do not use Japanese. Using any non-Latin alphabet would have the same effect, but printing in Japanese script generates “mock effects” of Japaneseness in the eyes of individuals who are interested in *Japonisme*.

The mixing of scripts in Japanese writing complements the uniqueness of the language. Although two or more types of scripts coexist in certain language communities, as in the case of Hindi, Urdu, Serbian, and Croatian (DICKINSON, 2015; RIVLINA, 2016), those communities do not customarily mix scripts within sentences. Accordingly, Japanese texts that are written in two or more scripts stand out. The use of Japanese-like sentences by the British fashion brand Superdry is a relevant example of this practice. The Japanese phrases that the brand use are written in either *hiragana*, *katakana*, or a mixture of two scripts (e.g. *kanji* and *hiragana* or *kanji* and *katakana*). The exclusivity of the writing system might also add value when used in design, where it may express uniqueness (COULMAS, 1991; STÖCKL, 2005).

3.4 Knowledge of Japanese

It is estimated that the number of Japanese speakers is 125.4 million, which makes it the thirteenth most widely spoken language in the world (ETHNOLOGUE, 2022). Japanese is not used only in Japan. It is also maintained as a heritage language in Japanese diasporas, such as the one in Brazil. The number of individuals who are learning Japanese has grown, reaching 3.9 million in 2018, which is 30 times higher than it was 40 years ago (THE JAPAN FOUNDATION, 2020). However, the number of Japanese speakers and readers is still minimal compared to that of English users. Unlike English, which has spread worldwide and is spoken as a first, second, additional, and foreign language, Japanese is mainly spoken by the Japanese (ETHNOLOGUE, 2022). However, the fact that Japanese is not widely used by non-Japanese is a source of linguistic capital. Those who can distinguish Japanese from other languages may feel privileged among individuals who are interested in Asian cultures.

Outside of Japan, the number of audiences whose members can comprehend Japanese texts is much lower than the number of audiences whose members can comprehend the English used in fashion. Still, languages and scripts can have market and symbolic value when they are used for commercial purposes, despite the audience's limited reading competence. Gucci, Coach, Adidas, and Nike print their names in both *katakana* and the Latin alphabet; Japanese comprehension skills are therefore not required to recognise the brands in question. The status and image of Japan and its culture are associated with Japanese values, and customers accept Japanese scripts on commercial products. Moreover, brands may differentiate themselves by printing their names in Japanese, and the distinctiveness of Japanese scripts is useful in fashion design.

4. Discussion: New Orientalism through cultural and linguistic appreciation

Globalisation has spread human activities and modes of thought widely. As a result, society has moved towards a more singular culture (e.g. Westernisation and Americanisation), and shops and products are similar everywhere. The effect of globalisation is evident in the fashion industry. From high-end to fast fashion, the same brands have spread worldwide. The use of English in fashion is another by-product of globalisation.

English has been used due to its status, image, eye-catching effect, and comprehensibility. English has symbolic capital and market value that have spread globally. It also functions as a vehicle for creativity and design. However, since English has been extensively used for commercial purposes, the use of the language has become the norm, causing it to lose its uniqueness. English hence does not stand out from other languages, especially those that are also written in the Latin alphabet.

Japanese scripts, conversely, are not yet widely used outside of Japan. Nonetheless, Japanese has symbolic and cultural capital because Japan has established its status as one of the leaders in political economy and as a producer of both traditional culture and subcultures. Fashion brands exploit positive perceptions of Japan, its cultures, and its products. In addition, Japanese is used almost exclusively by the native Japanese. Knowledge of the language and scripts is consequently a form of linguistic capital. Since the use of Japanese outside Japan is uncommon, Japanese scripts have attention-grabbing effects and express uniqueness, which is essential for fashion brands that seek to evince originality through their designs.

The printing of brand names on clothes is a form of advertising. Advertisements shape and create company and product image. Goldman (1992, p. 5) claims that advertisements produce “connections between the meanings of products and images”. Although images may be constructed by using multimodality (e.g. photographs, pictures, gestures, postures, and colours), language is as important as visual content for the delivery of messages in advertising. The brands that use Japanese on their products might expect to increase their value through the use of Japanese scripts.

Furthermore, the use of Japanese scripts on fashion items is a form of cultural and linguistic appreciation as well as a conceptualisation of ideology. The use of Japanese script in fashion is not a simple depiction or a type of *Japonisme* that romanticises Japanese culture. It also differs from traditional Orientalism; that is, the Orientalism that Edward Said identified in his 1978 book, *Orientalism: The East as an Invention of the West* (1978). The Orient was admired as exotic in the West. Said (1978) questioned the traditional view and exposed prejudice toward the East, which the West had produced through colonisation processes. The term “Orientalism”, in both of its senses, has a connotation of otherness. However, the fashion items on which the Japanese language is printed transcend Orientalism. The use of Japanese scripts in fashion differentiates Eastern language practises from those of the West, but it does not embody otherness and has no negative implications. The utilisation of Japanese with original languages enables the audience to embrace Japanese elements and highlights the acceptance of Japanese culture in the West. As Lehnert and Mentges (2013, p. 11) write, European fashion has adopted ““oriental” practices yet in different ways and with different goals”. The New Orientalism observed in the adaptation of Japanese scripts to fashion reflects a marriage between the East and the West. The practice of New Orientalism functions as an active agent that accepts the East in the West and creates new cultures. The oriental-occidental dichotomy must be transcended. It is time to overcome the history of colonisation. Breaking through colonial and postcolonial perceptions will lead to the final decolonisation of society.

While the hegemony of Western culture has stemmed from globalisation, cultures have begun to fuse. The question of whether adopting ideas about fashion from different cultures is a form of cultural appropriation is often debated. However, cultural appreciation, rather than cultural appropriation, should be recognised more and debated from a wider perspective. Examining the use of languages and scripts yields insights into the discussion, as both fashion and language play important roles in the expression of individual identity and group membership. It is too early to determine whether the use of Japanese scripts in fashion is a passing trend or whether it will expand widely, like that of English. Other languages and scripts may soon rise globally. Since various parts of the world have recognised South Korean cultural soft power (PINEDA-KIM, 2019), the next script to appear in fashion may be Korean *hangul*. It is anticipated that more varieties of languages and scripts will be used in fashion, thus enriching the debate about Orientalism.

5. Conclusion

Although Japanese scripts began to appear in global fashion brands in the 2010s, their usage and roles have not yet been sufficiently analysed. Accordingly, this paper examined the use of Japanese on fashion items by comparing its purposes with those of the use of English. It also discussed the role of Japanese scripts in fashion.

English texts appear not only in advertisements on television and in magazines but also on fashion items. For instance, brand names, logos, slogans, and catchphrases that are written in English on clothes (e.g. t-shirts) are commonplace across the globe. The use of English for commercial purposes has been studied widely, and researchers have argued that the values and capital that English possesses have facilitated its spread. English possesses symbolic capital and expresses modernity, and its market value can be commodified. Knowledge of English is a form of linguistic capital in the globalised world. English also functions as an ornament that attracts attention and serves a vehicle for creativity in some countries. The analysis found that the use of Japanese is also indicative of symbolic, cultural, and linguistic capital. Japanese scripts have value due to the status of Japan, the image of Japanese cultures, and the uniqueness of the writing system. Since the language is not commonly used outside of Japan, it functions as an eye-catching device in design.

The adoption of different cultural ideas and norms is often described as a form of cultural appropriation. However, this study found that the use of Japanese is instead a form of cultural appreciation. The paper maintains that the use of Japanese scripts on fashion items is not a simple manifestation of *Japonisme*. Instead, it is a powerful device of cultural and linguistic appreciation. Furthermore, the New Orientalism that this study described has no connotation of otherness. Rather, the practice of New Orientalism is an active agent that accepts the East and generates new fusion cultures. It is hoped that these findings will provide new insights into studies on Orientalism and New Orientalism.

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