A VIEW FROM TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN: LOANWORDS IN JAPANESE

Nafisa Norboeva

Master's student
Uzbekistan State World Languages University
Tashkent, Uzbekistan
nafisa2004@inbox.ru
ORCID ID: 0009-0005-3637-7023

Daiho Kitaoka

Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics (PhD), Assistant Professor
Mamun University
Khiva, Uzbekistan
daihokitaoka@gmail.com
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2224-2532
https://doi.org/10.36078/1767726136

Abstract. This study examines the interaction between general phonological repair mechanisms and non-linguistic socio-historical factors in Japanese loanword adaptation, with particular reference to two Uzbekproper names: Tashkent (Uzbek: *Toshkent*) and Uzbekistan (Uzbek: *O'zbekiston*). Building on established patterns of Japanese loanword adaptation, the analysis shows that most borrowings follow systematic phonological principles. However, the data for the two focused proper names present divergent adaptation outcomes. Namely, *Tashkent* exhibits variation (*tashikento* vs. *tashukento*), while *Uzbekistan* is uniformly rendered as *uzubekisutan*, a form that appears to disregard *o* in the final syllable. This paper argues that the variation in *Tashkent* is not strictly phonologically driven but stems from a conflict between two historical influences: a Russian-era adaptation, probably institutionalized by diplomatic conventions (leading to *tashikento*), and a more recent, purely phonologically predicted form based on the English source (leading to *tashukento*). Conversely, the uniform adaptation of *Uzbekistan* appears driven by an orthographic constraint beyond morphology and phonology, where the recognizable suffix -stan leads to a uniform final vowel /a/, overriding Uzbek-specific phonological faithfulness. Comparison with general adaptation patterns indicates that, for proper names — especially those associated with politically and historically complex regions — non-linguistic factors such as diplomatic convention and historical

transmission routes may take precedence over structure-preserving phonological principles in Japanese loanword adaptation.

Keywords: loanwords, loanword adaptation, proper names, Phonology, Uzbek, Japanese.

TOSHKENT, O'ZBEKISTONDAN NIGOH: YAPON TILIDAGI O'ZLASHMA SO'ZLAR

Nafisa Norboyeva

Magistratura bosqichi talabasi
O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti
Toshkent, O'zbekiston

Daiho Kitaoka

Filologiya fanlari bo'yicha falsafa doktori (PhD)
Mamun universiteti
Xiva, O'zbekiston

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada yapon tiliga kirib kelgan o'zlashma so'zlarning moslashuvi jarayonida umumiy fonologik tuzatish mexanizmlari hamda tashqi ijtimoiy-tarixiy omillarning o'zaro ta'siri tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot o'zbek tilidan o'zlashtirilgan ikki atoqli nom — Toshkent (o'zb. Toshkent) va O'zbekiston (o'zb. O'zbekiston) — misolida olib boriladi. Maqolada yapon tilida o'zlashma so'zlarni moslashtirishning umumiy qonuniyatlari ko'rib chiqilib, aksariyat o'zlashmalarning tizimli ravishda fonologik tamoyillarga muvofiq moslashishi ko'rsatiladi. Biroq tahlil qilinayotgan ikki atoqli nomda ayrim noodatiy (qoidaga mos kelmaydigan) holatlar kuzatiladi. Xususan, *Tashkent* nomida ikki xil variant mavjud: *tashikento* va *tashukento*; *O'zbekiston* esa yagona shaklda — uzubekisutan — tarzida qo'llaniladi va bu shaklda so'nggi bo'g'indagi /o/ tovushi hisobga olinmaydi. Maqolada ta'kidlanishicha, *Tashkent* nomidagi bunday farqlanish sof fonologik omillar bilan emas, balki ikki tarixiy ta'sir o'rtasidagi ziddiyat bilan izohlanadi: bir tomondan, rus davrida diplomatik konvensiyalar orqali rasmiylashgan shakl (tashikento), ikkinchi tomondan esa inglizcha manba asosida fonologik jihatdan kutiladigan shakl (tashukento). Aksincha, O'zbekiston nomining yagona shaklda — uzubekisutan — tarzida moslashuvi morfologiya va fonologiyadan tashqaridagi ortografik (yozuvga oid) omil bilan izohlanadi: bu yerda -stan qo'shimchasi tanilgan va barqaror element sifatida /a/ bilan tugallanadi hamda o'zbekcha fonologik moslikni aks ettirmaydi. Ikki atoqli nomni umumiy o'zlashma so'zlar moslashuvi qonuniyatlari bilan taqqoslash orqali maqola shuni ko'rsatadiki, atoqli nomlarda, ayniqsa, siyosiy va tarixiy omillar bilan bog'liq hududlarga oid nomlarda, diplomatik an'analar yoki manba tilining tarixiy konteksti (masalan, rus tili ta'siri) kabi nolingvistik omillar yapon tilining tuzilmani saqlovchi fonologik tamoyillaridan ustun kelishi mumkin.
Kalit so'zlar: o'zlashma so'zlar, o'zlashma so'zlarning moslashuvi, atoqli otlar, fonologiya, o'zbek tili, yapon tili

Introduction

One of the features that distinguishes Japanese from many other languages and makes it challenging for learners is its rich lexicon. The Japanese lexicon comprises three (or more) lexical strata [Ito & Mester, 1995; 1998; 1999; 2008; Vance, 2008]: Yamato Japanese (native Japanese vocabulary), Sino-Japanese (words of Chinese origin), and loanwords. As comprehensively detailed in N.Norboeva [Norboeva, 2025], these strata, particularly the layer of loanwords, have been incorporated into Japanese through distinct historical waves of cultural and linguistic contact, each leaving a unique imprint on the modern language. In prior research, as well as in Japanese-language pedagogy for non-native learners, loanwords are commonly further classified into entrenched loanwords and recent loanwords. What makes learning Japanese more challenging is that these lexical strata obey different rules [Ito & Mester 1995; Kitaoka, 2017]. For example, sequential voicing, aka rendaku, is primarily applied only to Yamato Japanese [Kawahara, 2015a; 2015b; 2018; Rice, 2005; Vance, 2008; 2015].

While the Japanese language historically developed through contact with diverse varieties of Chinese across different periods and regions, modern Japanese is actively evolving under the influence of globalization, particularly through interaction with English-speaking populations. Having become an integral part of everyday speech, business communication, and contemporary cultural contexts, English-derived loanwords now play and probably will continue playing a key role in shaping Present-Day Japanese, contributing to ongoing lexical expansion and stylistic diversification.

Loanwords from English include terms related to IT, sports, fashion, and other domains of modern life. For instance, when I write this paper, I use *rapputoppu* 'laptop,' *mausu* 'mouse,' *sukuriin* 'screen,' *pen* 'pen,' and *nooto* 'notebook,' to *taipu* 'type' a *peepaa* 'paper' while being shokku 'shocked' by a *suupaa gooru* 'super goal' by a great *pureiyaa* 'player' from *aruzenchin* 'Argentine,' who lead his *chiimu* 'team' to win the *waarudo kappu* 'World Cup' a few years ago.

The Japanese language has been able to accommodate a massive flood of loanwords, primarily from Chinese in the ancient and medieval periods, and from English in modern times. This development was possible because the language possesses relatively rigid phonotactic rules (e.g., a mora-based structure and the predominance of consonant–vowel sequences) and well-established mechanisms for adapting borrowed vocabulary to its phonological constraints.

Consequently, Japanese loanword phonology has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate concerning its properties, varieties, and rules [Kawahara 2011; Kubozono 2006; Ito & Mester 2008; Shinohara 1997; Katayama 1998; Smith 2006, to name a few].

Nevertheless, loanword phonology of Japanese is not free of exceptions. For instance, non-linguistic factors can influence loanword formation. This paper examines two such cases, including loanwords referring to *Tashkent* (*Toshkent* in Uzbek) and *Uzbekistan* (*O'zbekiston* in Uzbek), and compares them with loanword adaptations of common nouns and proper names from other languages, particularly English.

The data show that Japanese loanwords derived from Tashkent (or *Toshkent* in Uzbek) exhibit several variants, such as *tashukento* and *tashikento*, whereas Uzbekistan (or *O'zbekiston* in Uzbek) yields only a single form, *uzubekisutan*. It is argued that these adaptations do not conform to the general principles of Japanese loanword phonology, nor do they align with recent common practices in the treatment of proper names, particularly place and personal names.

By examining how these two forms diverge from both established phonological patterns and contemporary conventions for adapting proper nouns, this paper highlights a set of previously underexplored factors, both linguistic and non-linguistic, that influence loanword adaptation.

Method

This paper presents descriptive study examining the phonological mechanisms of loanword adaptation in Japanese. Specifically, it investigates particular loanwords originating from Uzbek- namely, the Japanese equivalents of *Tashkent* and *Uzbekistan* – in order to identify properties that are not typically observed in loanwords from more frequently studied source languages, such as English. In particular, this research sheds light on particular loanwords from the Uzbek language, i.e., Japanese equivalents of *Tashkent* and *Uzbekistan*, in order to reveal properties that cannot be drawn from other common source languages, e.g., English.

The study reviews the general strategies of loanword adaptation in Japanese and contrasts them with the irregular adaptations observed in the two loanwords discussed above. The general patterns of Japanese loanword adaptation are examined through a careful analysis of prior scholarship, while the target loanwords were investigated through elicitation with native speakers. The comparison aims to uncover distinctive strategies of loanword

adaptation in Japanese. In doing so, the analysis also considers non-linguistic factors that influence how loanwords are integrated into the language. The goal of this comparison is to clarify non-standard adaptation patterns observed in the Japanese treatment of selected proper names. Accordingly, the discussion integrates both linguistic and extra-linguistic considerations relevant to loanword adaptation.

The study follows standard data practices in Generative Grammar [Chomsky 1957, 1965, 1981, 1995], relying on native-speaker judgments and existing literature, in which cited examples are assumed to have undergone native-speaker evaluation. Japanese data were primarily provided by the author, with acceptability verified by at least one additional native speaker when items were infrequent or unfamiliar in everyday usage. Source words in Uzbek were elicited from native-speaker informants. Typically, two informants were consulted, but in cases of disagreement, additional speakers (up to four in total including the first two informants) were asked to ensure reliability.

It should be noted, however, that data collection was informal. Elicitation sessions were not systematically controlled, and demographic variables such as age, region, or social background were not strictly monitored. While native-speaker judgments were used consistently, large-scale experimental methods and corpus-based approaches were not employed.

Some notes on the descriptions are as follows. An asterisk, i.e., *, is added to a phrase when it is ungrammatical or severely unnatural. Phonetic description is presented with the symbols made by International Phonetic Alphabets [International Phonetic Association, 2018]. Phonetic descriptions are presented with square brackets, i.e., [ ]. Phonemic descriptions are presented with slashes, i.e., / /. Actual words are presented in Romanized italics forms, rather than in their original orthographies (Japanese characters, Cyrillic characters). Actual words are accompanied with their English translations, bracketed with single quotation marks, i.e., '_', if those are not English words. Phonetic and/or phonemic transcriptions are added when necessary.

For instance, a Japanese word for *France* in English is presented as either *furansu* 'France' for just with its English translation, *furansu* [huransu] 'France' for its phonetic transcription and English translation, or *furansu* /huransu/ 'France' for its phonemic transcription and its English translation. Japanese phonetic and phonemic descriptions follow H. Kubozono [Kubozono2015a], However, whereas [ʃ] is used for /si/, [ɕ] is used in this paper to emphasize a subtle difference between Japanese and Uzbek.

Romanization in Japanese in this paper follows the Hepburn style. Uzbek descriptions follow S.Ido [Ido 2025].

Background

Overview of Phonology of Japanese

Japanese has five vowels, including /a, e, i, o, u/. These vowels are not treated equally in phonological processes. For example, /e/ and /i/ are frequently devoiced. In contrast, /u/ appears to function as a default vowel. D.Kitaoka and S.Mackenzie [Kitaoka & Mackenzie 2021] point out that /u/ is inserted as a placeholder in language game when the game-derived form would otherwise violate Japanese phonotactic constraints. In addition, as discussed below, /u/ (and /o/ in a lesser degree) is frequently inserted in loanwords.

All five vowels also contrast in length, with short and long forms, as in /aa, ee, ii, oo, uu/. Minimal pairs contrasting short and long vowels are easily found, as in *teki* 'enemy' vs. *teeki* 'periodic'. Japanese also has diphthongs (e.g., /ai, oi, ui/), although their existence and phonological status remain debated.

The Japanese phonemic inventory includes 14 consonants. [Kubozono, 2015a: 6]. Although this size of consonant inventory is relatively small cross-linguistically, a number of allophones are attested. For instance, /s/ surfaces as either [s] or [ɕ]. Before the vowels /a, u, e, o/, /s/ is realized with [s], as in [sa, su, se, so] for /sa, su, se, so/, respectively, whereas, before the vowel /i/, /s/ is realized with [ɕ], as in [ɕi] for /si/.

	labial	dental-alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
plosive	p	t		k	
	b	d		g	
fricative		s			h
		z			
nasal	m	n			
liquid			r		
glide	w		j		

Japanese employs moras as the basic prosodic unit [Kitaoka & Mackenzie 2021; Kubozono 1989; Labrune 2012; McCawley 1968; Vance 2008], while syllables also play specific roles in the phonological system [Kubozono 1999; Kawahara 2012]. Phonotactic rules regarding moras and prosodic structure in Japanese are. highly restrictive. A mora contains one vowel. When a syllable contains a diphthong, e.g., /ai/ (although, as noted above,

the existence and properties of diphthongs are a matter of debate), the second vowel in the diphthong, i.e., /i/ in /ai/, forms its own mora.

In prevocalic position, zero to two consonants may precede a vowel. A vowel alone can constitute a mora (and even a word), as in *I* 'stomach.' A typical mora consists of a consonant and a vowel, as in *ka* 'mosquito.' Japanese, in its regular register, allows only one pattern of consonant cluster, with a small number of exceptions [Labrune 2012]. This consonant cluster must occur before the vowel, include /j/ as the second element, and may combine with /a, u, o/, as in /kja, kju, kjo, gja, gju, gjo/.

Postvocalic elements in a syllable each form their own mora: the second vowel in a diphthong (e.g., /a.i/), the second vowel in a long-vowel sequence (e.g., /a.a/), a geminate consonant (i.e., the first /t/ in /ka.t.ta/), and a moraic nasal, as in /N/ in /ka.N.sa/ [kansa], where a period "." Indicates a mora boundary. Thus, mora structures include V, CV, CjV, N, and the second elements of diphthongs or long-vowel sequences, where C = consonant and V = vowel.

Such limited mora patterning is particularly important in loanword adaptation. When Japanese borrows from languages that allow complex consonant clusters (e.g., English), repair operations are required, as outlined in the next section.

Results and Discussion

General rules of loanword adaptation in Japanese

Loanword adaptation in Japanese is primarily regulated by three main rules. The first rule states that sounds in source words that do not exist in the Japanese phoneme inventory are replaced with similar, available sounds.

For example, since the phoneme /v/ that exists in other language is not among the phonemes of Japanese, it is replaced with /b/, the closest available sound. The English word *video* /video/ exemplifies this rule, as it is introduced as *bideo* into Japanese. Similarly, since Japanese does not have the lateral sound equivalent to /l/ in English, it is introduced as /r/ in Japanese, as exemplified *raito* "light."

Second, because Japanese is a mora-timed language with relatively simple syllable structure, loanwords generally require vowel insertion (i.e., epenthesis) [Shinohara 2000; Smith 2006]. This adaptation is especially common when the source language permits complex consonant clusters or codas, as in English. Broadly, two epenthesis patterns are observed. First,

when /t/ or /d/ occurs in a consonant cluster or syllable-final position, the vowel /o/ is typically inserted. For instance, English *try* is borrowed as *torai*, with /o/ inserted after /t/. Likewise, *card* /kard/ becomes *kaado*, with /o/ inserted after /d/. Second, when a consonant cluster or coda contains consonants other than /t, d/ (and /r/ in some cases), the vowel /u/ is generally inserted. Thus, *queen* /kwiːn/ becomes *kuiin*, with /u/ inserted after /k/, and *bus* becomes *basu* with final /u/. Importantly, vowel insertion is not limited to word-final position. For example, *street* is borrowed as *sutoriito*, where /u/ appears after the initial /s/ in the pre-vocalic cluster and /o/ surfaces after /t/ and again word-finally.

Third, loanword adaptation also involves segment-specific operations. One prominent example concerns /r/ in non-vocalic environments in English, which typically surfaces as a long vowel in Japanese [Kuzbozono 2001; Nishimura 2003]. For instance, *card* is adapted as *kaado*, where the English /r/ triggers vowel lengthening. This pattern, however, is not fully general across source languages. For instance, in borrowings from Uzbek, /r/ tends to be resolved via epenthesis rather than lengthening: *Samir* is adapted as *samiru*, where /u/ is inserted after /r/ as in the general rule outlined in the previous section, rather than producing a long vowel (i.e., *samii*) [Norboeva 2025].

Another segment-specific process is gemination [Katayama, 1989]. For example, *staff* becomes *sutaffu* in Japanese, with gemination triggered by the final voiceless fricative, whereas *tough* becomes *tafu* without gemination. The conditions that license gemination in loanword phonology are complex, influenced by multiple factors (segmental identity, syllable structure, and lexical strata), and a detailed treatment falls beyond the scope of this paper. For more discussions on this aspect, see N. Norboeva [Norboeva 2025: 24].

A non-linguistic factor

Beyond the phonological rules outlined above, additional factors may influence loanword adaptation in Japanese. One particularly salient factor is the tendency to approximate the perceived or actual pronunciation in the source language. There are two cases in this regard. In the first case, the word itself is replaced with another. For instance, a city in India *Kolkata* was historically adapted as *karukatta* in Japanese following its English version, *Calcutta*. Nowadays, however, it is called *korukata* in Japanese following the current official name faithful to Bengali pronunciation, *Kolkata*.

In the second case, a loanword can be revised to more accurately reflect the source word. For example, the English surname *Roosevelt* was historically pronounced in Japanese as *ruuzuberuto*, where the English diphthong /oʊ/ in

the first syllable was mapped to /uu/. This earlier adaptation likely reflects a spelling-based strategy, namely, the spelling *oo* in English is frequently associated with /uː/, as in *goose, tooth,* and *loose*. In contemporary Japanese, however, the same name is typically realized as *roozuberuto*, reflecting a more accurate treatment of the English diphthong /oʊ/, which is now adapted as a long mid vowel /oo/. This pattern aligns with broader tendencies in Japanese loanword phonology, where English /oʊ/ is regularly mapped to /oo/, as seen in *home → hoomu*, *go → goo*, and *bone → boon*.

A case study of *Tashkent*

In Japanese, the capital city of Uzbekistan is referred to as either *tashikent* or *tashukento*. An article published in 1974 used *tashikent* for *Tashkent* [Suenaga 1974]. During that period, the region corresponding to present-day Uzbekistan was typically discussed within the broader framework of the USSR or Eastern Europe. Consequently, place names from Central Asia were often borrowed via Russian rather than directly from local languages (e.g., Uzbek, Kazakh).

In loanwords originating from Russian, the Cyrillic letter **ш** is generally adapted as *shi* when followed by another consonant in the source word. This pattern can be seen in *matoryoo**shi**ka* for *matryoshka*, the well-known Russian nesting doll.

After Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, and following the opening of the Embassy of Japan in the Republic of Uzbekistan in 1993, the *Act on Names and Locations of Overseas Diplomatic Establishments and Salary of Diplomats Serving Overseas Diplomatic Establishments* (Act No. 93 of 1952) designated the official Japanese name of the location (city) of the Embassy as *tashikent*. This designation reflected the continued use of the earlier, Russian-based form, even as the Uzbek language itself was undergoing reforms in spelling and pronunciation, including Romanization and Westernization.

Thus, *tashikent* in Japanese represents not only a linguistic adaptation but also a historical trace of how geographical names were transmitted through Russian during the USSR era.

However, Japanese adaptations of place names from the former USSR countries are not entirely uniform. For example, *Bishkek* (the capital city of the Kyrgyz Republic) is rendered in Japanese as *bishukeku* rather than *bishikeku, and *Ashgabat* (the capital of Turkmenistan) appears as *ashigabatto* rather than *ashugabatto. These differences indicate that

loanword adaptation practices in Japanese have not always been governed by a single phonological principle but instead have reflected diverse influences, including variations in Russian pronunciation and orthographic conventions.

At the same time, some scholars have preferred alternative forms that deviate from these official or conventional spellings. Notably, Hisao Komatsu, one of Japan's most prominent specialists in Central Asian studies, has consistently used *tashukento* since at least 1985 [Komatsu 1985, 1986, 1993, 1999, 2008, 2014, 2022]. Similarly, C. Obitani (ed.) [Obitani (ed.) 2018] and T.Ueyama (ed.) [Ueyama (ed.) 2010], which provide extensive Japanese-language coverage of Uzbekistan and Central Asia, also adopt the form *tashukento*.

The coexistence of *tashikent* and *tashukento* reflects both linguistic and historical variation: one form preserving the older, Russian-based tradition, and the other seeking greater phonological faithfulness to the Uzbek source.

Linguistically, the emergence of the two Japanese forms, i.e., *tashikento* and *tashukento*, is not unexpected given the general principles of loanword adaptation and socio-historic factors. Both can be predicted based on how Japanese typically integrates foreign words such as *Tashkent* (Uzbek *Toshkent*, Russian *Ташкент*). As mentioned above, Japanese loanword formation follows a set of established phonological and morphological rules, one of which involves vowel insertion to resolve impermissible consonant clusters or final consonants. The vowels /o/ and /u/ are the most frequently inserted to satisfy Japanese phonotactic requirements [Norboeva 2025: 56]. At the same time, non-linguistic factors, such as historical convention or orthographic influence, may also shape the adapted form.

In the case of *tashikento,* the vowel /o/ is inserted word -finally in order to avoid an illicit word-final consonant since Japanese phonotactics generally prohibit lexical items from ending in/t/. However, the insertion of /i/ after /sh/ is less straightforward. According to the general adaptation patterns, the vowel /u/ should be inserted in this position, not /i/.

Twohypotheses can be proposed. First, the use of /i/ may reflect the influence of USSR-era conventions, as noted above. In Russian-based loanwords, the Cyrillic character ш is often represented as /shi/ [ɕi] in Japanese, which would naturally yield *tashikento*. However, this explanation is not fully convincing because adaptation patterns involving ш are not entirely consistent across different Russian-derived words. As pointed out above, for instance, *Bishkek* becomes *bishukeku* and *Ashgabat* becomes *ashigabatto*,

suggesting that multiple strategies have coexisted rather than a single, uniform convention.

Second, it is also possible to argue that the insertion of /i/ was motivated by a preference to make the Japanese form more faithful to the source word, following the non-linguistic adaptation principle discussed previously. From this perspective, /sh/ may have been borrowed into Japanese as /si/ [ɕi] because such a pattern is familiar to Uzbek native speakers. This is partially attested by Uzbek native speakers who are learning or using Japanese. When Uzbek speakers transcribe names or Uzbek words into Japanese, they often insert /i/ after obstruent consonants that would otherwise appear in coda position, producing forms such as *uzubeki* for *Uzbek*, *mashihura* for *Mashxura*, and *sebinti* [sebintɕi] for *Sevinch*. This pattern suggests that Uzbek employs /i/ as a kind of "default" vowel, one that can fill in to prevent phonotactic violations, especially when illegitimate consonant clusters or codas would otherwise arise.

However, this does not mean that the consonants *sh* or *ch* in Uzbek inherently carry an implied or silent /i/. In Uzbek phonology, a syllable-final *sh* is realized simply as [ʃ], as the end of a closed syllable without a following vowel. Thus, while the use of /i/ in *tashikento* may reflect an attempt at phonological faithfulness, it ultimately introduces a sound not present in the original Uzbek pronunciation.

As such, at first look, it seems reasonable to suggest that the insertion of /i/ in *tashikento* resulted either from Russian influence or from an attempt to make the Japanese form appear closer to the original source. This interpretation also helps explain the use of /a/ in the first syllable (*tashikento*) instead of /o/, which would have been more faithful to the Uzbek form *Toshkent*. It is noteworthy that in contemporary Uzbek, the written letter *o* is frequently pronounced as /a/ in casual speech – a tendency that likely reflects the residual influence of Russian pronunciation habits during the USSR period. This observation is further supported by contrastive examples. When an Uzbek word has a Russian-derived equivalent, *o* tends to be pronounced as a true /o/. For example, *osh* (also known as *plov*, whose Russian equivalent is *плов*) is consistently pronounced as /oʃ/. In other words, the retention or shift of /o/ in Uzbek pronunciation often depends on whether the word's Russian counterpart is still active or recognized.

If this explanation is correct, however, the adaptation *tashikento* does not fully achieve its apparent goal of faithfulness to the source. As discussed above, *sh* in Uzbek is pronounced [ʃ], not [ʃi]; therefore, inserting /i/ rather than /u/ does not necessarily create a form that is closer to the original Uzbek pronunciation. Furthermore, if genuine phonological faithfulness were the

guiding principle, the source should have been *Toshkent*, not *Tashkent*. This would yield *toshikento* in Japanese, rather than *tashikento*. Although the use of /a/ in place of /o/ is widespread in colloquial Uzbek, it remains a sociolinguistic convention rather than a reflection of the language's underlying formal phonology, and ultimately stems from Russian influence.

A comparable case can be seen in another former USSR country, i.e., *Georgia*. In Japanese, the traditional Russian-based form *gurujia* has been replaced by *joojia*, which aligns more closely with the English pronunciation. This shift illustrates a broader trend in Japanese toward adopting forms that reflect direct source pronunciations, bypassing Russian mediation, a process that *Tashkent/Toshkent* may eventually undergo as well.

On the other hand, the case of *tashukent*, in which /u/ is inserted after /sh/, is relatively straightforward when considering standard Japanese loanword adaptation rules. According to these rules, the vowel /u/ is typically inserted after /sh/ to satisfy moraic constraints, and the vowel /o/ is inserted after /t/ when it appears in word-final position. Thus, *tashukento* represents a regular and predictable outcome of established phonological repair processes in Japanese.

However, this form seems to have been derived without direct reference to the actual Uzbek source *Toshkent*. If *Toshkent* had been used as the basis, the resulting Japanese form would have been *toshukento*, not *tashukento*. This discrepancy suggests that the adaptation was shaped more by the perceived international (or Russian-influenced) form *Tashkent* than by the native Uzbek pronunciation. (See the next section for further discussion.)

In summary, the Japanese loanwords referring to *Tashkent/Toshkent* have evolved under the influence of multiple factors, including phonological rules, historical influences, and sociolinguistic perceptions. Although the purpose of this paper is not to prescribe which form should be considered "correct" or officially adopted, it is worth emphasizing that adaptations driven by non-linguistic motivations, such as orthographic habit or political convention, must be treated with caution. While historically understandable, such influences can obscure the linguistic properties of the source language and introduce inconsistencies into Japanese loanword phonology.

A case study of *Uzbekistan*

In contrast to *Tashkent*, the name *Uzbekistan* exhibits no attested variation in Japanese usage. Only one form, *uzubekisutan*, is attested, while the theoretically possible form *uzubekisuton*, which would be expected if the Uzbek source *O'zbekiston* were used directly, does not occur. The established form *uzubekisutan* conforms closely to the general principles of

Japanese loanword adaptation. Specifically, the vowels /u/ are inserted after /z/ and /s/ to resolve disallowed consonant clusters in Japanese, and the initial /o'/ is replaced by its closest phonetic counterpart available in Japanese, namely /u/.

This adaptation appears to have originated not from Uzbek or Russian, but from the English form *Uzbekistan*, as indicated by the use of /u/ instead of /o/. In this respect, it parallels the case of *Tashkent*, where the English or Russian variant is preferred over the Uzbek *Toshkent* as the source word. However, there is an important difference between these two cases. Informal consultations with native Uzbek speakers conducted for this study revealed that *O'zbekiston* is more frequently and even colloquially pronounced as /o'zbekiston/ than as /o'zbekistan/. In contrast, *Toshkent* is pronounced as either /116oshkent/ or /116oshkent/ in daily speech. This suggests that the English-influenced pattern plays a lesser role in the adaptation of *Uzbekistan* than it does for *Tashkent*.

The uniform adoption of *uzubekisutan* may also be influenced by another factor, namely, the morphological regularity of the suffix *-stan*. This ending is shared by many country or regional names in the area. In Japanese, the *-stan* component is consistently rendered as *-sutan*, regardless of its local pronunciation in each language: *afuganisutan* for Afghanistan, *karakarupakusutan* for Karakalpakstan, *kazafusutan* for Kazakhstan, *pakisutan* for Pakistan, *tajikisutan* for Tajikistan, *tatarusutan* for Tatarstan, and *torukumenisutan* for Turkmenistan. This cross-linguistic uniformity may have reinforced the choice of *uzubekisutan* over alternative forms like *uzubekisuton*, aligning *Uzbekistan* with other established place-name adaptations in Japanese.

Conclusion & Further Directions

This study demonstrates how the Japanese adaptation of two Uzbek place names, i.e., *Tashkent* (*Toshkent*) and *Uzbekistan* (*O'zbekiston*), emerges from the interaction of phonological and non-linguistic influences.. By comparing these cases to standard adaptation patterns derived primarily from English and Russian, the study highlights how phonological rules alone cannot fully account for the resulting forms.

The analysis demonstrates that Japanese loanword phonology operates under a complex system of regularities shaped by moraic structure, segmental inventory, and well-established repair strategies such as vowel epenthesis. These rules predict the general shape of borrowings like *tashukento* and *uzubekisutan*, which conform to the CV-based moraic rhythm of Japanese.

However, the presence of competing variants, particularly *tashikento*, underscores the influence of non-linguistic factors, including historical, orthographic, and sociolinguistic ones, on the process of adaptation. The persistence of *tashikento* in official usage reflects earlier Russian mediation, while *tashukento* represents a more phonologically consistent and possibly more source-faithful pattern.

In contrast, *uzubekisutan* shows a high degree of regularity and stability. The absence of alternative forms suggests that certain loanwords, especially those with morphologically transparent or globally recognizable components (e.g., -*stan*), resist variation.

More broadly, the findings suggest that Japanese loanword adaptation cannot be analyzed solely as a phonological phenomenon. Instead, it reflects a multilayered interaction of phonological constraints, historical pathways of contact, orthographic conventions, and perceptions of linguistic authenticity.

Future research should extend this inquiry in several directions. First, a corpus-based approach could systematically track both synchronic and diachronic changes in the representation of Central Asian place names in Japanese print and digital media. Such study would reveal how public usage evolves relative to official standards. Second, perceptual experiments could help determine how native speakers of Japanese interpret and reproduce unfamiliar foreign clusters, providing psycholinguistic evidence for the choice between /i/ and /u/ epenthesis. Finally, comparative work with other languages that borrow from Uzbek, such as Korean or Mandarin Chinese, could situate the Japanese data within a broader cross-linguistic typology of cross-linguistic adaptation.

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