TOKYO, Oct. 18 -- With the forces of globalization gaining ground every day, perhaps it is not surprising that 15-year-old Japanese girls like Kaori Hasegawa use English expressions like "chekaraccho."

English?

Well, a version of English spoken by Japanese teen-agers. Chekaraccho is a corruption of "Check it out, Joe," and is a casual greeting, a bit like "Hi, there."

Japan has always been quick to absorb foreign words along with foreign technology, and in the 19th century there was even serious discussion about whether the country should switch to English. This month, The Japan Times -- one of Tokyo's four daily English-language general-interest papers -- noted the pressures of globalization and suggested that it might once again be time to consider a switch to English.

Already Japanese is a mishmash of Chinese, English, Dutch and German influences. But what is new this time is the way young people are seizing English words and manipulating them to create their own hip dialect, known as "ko-gyaru-go."

The "gyaru" derives from the English word gal, and ko-gyaru-go roughly translates as "high school gal-talk." It is used mostly among teen-agers, as a secret code by which they can bond and evade surveillance by hostile forces, like parents.

"If I phone a friend, then I can't say openly that I haven't studied for a test, because then my parents will get upset," explained Rie Nishimura, a 17-year-old girl with the trademark "roozu sokusu" (loose socks) of any cool Japanese teen-ager. "So I say the test will be very 'denjarasu' " -- or dangerous.

The popularity of ko-gyaru-go underscores the magnetic attraction of American pop culture around the globe and its ability to define what is hot even in breathtakingly different contexts. Some young people here seem to use English in the way a peacock spreads his tail feathers, to demonstrate their own magnificence and lure the opposite sex.

In this vein, two popular words are "wonchu" (I want you) and "gechu" (I get you).

"If a guy came up and used some English words, we'd think, 'Wow, what a cool guy,' " mused Yoko Tago, 18, on a street in the fashionable neighborhood of Shibuya. "I'd want to learn his English words."

One result is that ko-gyaru-go is not always a means of communication, and English words are thrown in simply as ornaments, without any attention to their meaning.

"What does 'rai-a' mean in English?" asked 16-year-old Rie Naoi, giggly and willowy in a school uniform. Told what a liar was, she gasped.

"Oh, no!" she moaned. "I called my English teacher a 'rai-a' the other day. I said, 'Rai-a, rai-a.' "

Japanese grown-ups are almost completely lost when they encounter ko-gyaru-go. When a leading television commentator, Tetsuya Chikushi, described the phenomenon on his program, he began by knitting his brows and displaying a panel with the word "cho beri ba."

"You're probably wondering which country the word I've written on the panel comes from," he said.

In fact, as Mr. Chikushi noted, it is a ko-gyaru-go expression. The "beri" is very, while "ba" is short for bad. Since "cho" is a Japanese word meaning super, cho beri ba means ultrabad.

There are variations, such as "cho beri gu" (ultragood) and "cho beri bu," which can mean ultrablue, or depressing, or ultra-ugly.

Japanese grammar is particularly well suited to adopting foreign words and making them into verbs. For example, in ko-gyaru-go, "deniru" means to go to a Denny's restaurant, and "hageru" means to go to a Haagen-Dazs ice cream outlet.
Some of the new words are conjugated with remarkable sophistication. Ko-gyaru-go has adopted the expression "disu," to diss, or show disrespect, which has a form, disareru, meaning "to be dissed," and even a form meaning "should be dissed," namely disarerubeki.

The enthusiasm for the new words seems partly based on the dominance of English in popular music and partly on the notion that it is more mellifluous than other languages.

"Japanese seems very rigid," scoffed Sato Yu, 16, who was strolling with her friend at dusk. "We don't have much vocabulary in Japanese, so it's just neater to use English."

Jimmy, a 20-something television personality who says his Japanese name is a secret, is about as cool as anybody in Japan, and he says that an essential element of this is his repertory of English. He throws lots of English words into his Japanese conversation, even though he cannot actually speak English.

"Japanese and Korean are not fashionable in their sounds," he explained in Japanese as he wore sunglasses the other night on a street, surrounded by adoring young women. "English is cool, it's fashionable. I like the sound of it."

Just then Jimmy spotted a teenybopper friend, somehow visible through his sunglasses. "Chekeraccho!" he shouted, and she melted.

"Jimmy!" she gushed. "He's so cool in every way!"

Some middle-aged Japanese are bothered by the profusion of English entering their language, but they seem less upset by ko-gyaru-go expressions than by those used in the workplace. Workers learning how to use computers, for example, are overwhelmed when told that to open the "ai-kon" (icon) they must "daburu-kurikku" (double-click) the "mausu" (mouse).

The Health and Welfare Ministry has just banned excessive use of English in its documents, but Japanese newspapers noted that it is unclear whether there will be much "foro-uppu" (follow-up).

The fascination with English is a bit odd in that Japan is probably the worst major country at picking up foreign languages -- after the United States. Japanese students study English for about six years, and English is an important component of Japanese college entrance exams, but almost no young Japanese speak it.

Still, they do acquire nifty vocabulary to add to their ko-gyaru-go.

"Now that I'm studying for my college entrance exams, I collect some words from the lists that I'm studying," said Yuki Yutsudo, a high school girl who speaks fluent ko-gyaru-go. "Then I memorize them for use later when I'm chatting with my friends."

04:33 EDT October 19, 1997

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Photo: Ko-gyaru-go, or "high school gal-talk," is an English-laced Japanese slang derived from "gyaru," the Japanese pronunciation of gal. Rie Nishimura, 17, left, and her friend Yoko Tago, 18, are fluent speakers. (Nicholas D. Kristof/The New York Times)

Document nytf000020011008dtaj00uds

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