

Code Switching by Three Native Japanese Speakers

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(1) Introduction

While I was studying psycholinguistics, I became greatly interested in code switching because I do it very often myself. Code switching is the switching of languages, dialects, or styles of discourse during a conversation.

In *Psychology of Language* (1986), edited by David Carroll, J.P. Blom and J.J. Gumperz state that there are two distinct types of code switching (page 289, *passim*). One is metaphorical switching, which is the shift which results from a topic change in the conversation. Another is situational switching, which occurs when a change in the social situation occurs, one that influences the rights and obligations of the speakers (page 289). François Grosjean states in *Life with Two Languages* (1982), that people switch when they cannot find an appropriate word or expression or when the language being used does not have the items or appropriate translation for the vocabulary needed (page 150). Grosjean also states that people switch when they quote what someone has said (*Life with Two Languages*, page 150). S. Gal states in *Life with Two Languages* (1982), edited by François Grosjean, that switching can help to amplify or emphasize a point (page 153). M. Clyne and Valdes Fallis state in *Life with Two Languages* (1982), edited by François Grosjean, that a single word switch often triggered a continuation in language of the switch (page 151).

The purpose of this paper is to examine three native Japanese speakers' code switching. They have been living in California, U.S.A.. I will examine if their code switching causes difficulty in communication when they interact with others. I also would like to find out if the length of their stay in the U.S.A. affects their code switching and if there is coherence even though there is code switching.

(2) Informants

I used three native Japanese speakers. The first informant is Mrs. Ishibashi. She is 72 years old and she came to the U.S.A. 50 years ago. She is a farmer's wife and she sells flowers and vegetables beside the road in Rancho Palos Verdes, California. She graduated from a girls' high school in Japan, but she did not have any formal education in the U.S.A. During World War II, she and her family were kept in a detention camp. She uses both English and Japanese with her husband and her three children. Her husband and all her three children can speak English and Japanese. She learned how to translate English into Japanese while she was in the girls' high school.

The second informant is Mrs. Jansen. She is 56 years old and she came to the U.S.A. 30 years ago. When she was 11 years old, she started taking English classes in Japan. She

majored in English at a Japanese college. She also took English classes at another college in Japan for two years. After she graduated from college, she worked for an American military base as an interpreter. While she was working, she took English conversation lessons at several conversation schools. When she was 26 years old, she married an American and came to the U.S.A. While her husband was a medical student, Mrs. Jansen worked as a translator to support her husband and her children. As soon as her husband became a medical doctor and after she gave birth to her fourth child, she was divorced. After her divorce, she worked as an office manager to support her four children. She told me that she did not use Japanese at home; therefore, her husband and her four children speak only English.

The third informant is Michiko. She is 41 years old and she came to the U.S.A. 18 years ago. When she was 13 years old, she started taking English classes. She majored in education at college and she became a teacher at a kindergarten. She married a second-generation Japanese-American. She used to live with her parents-in-law, who could speak only Japanese. She is employed as an office manager at a Japanese company. She is now taking English speech classes at a college. She uses English and Japanese in her home and at the office.

(3) Hypotheses

I set up three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The occurrence of code switching will depend on the speakers' ability to use the English language and not on their length of stay in the U.S.A..

Hypothesis 2: The occurrence of code switching will depend on the speakers' language environment.

Hypothesis 3: When the informants are addressed in Japanese, they will use Japanese and when they are addressed in English, they will use English.

(4) Materials

(a) Conversation with Mrs. Ishibashi at her vegetable stand. "K" stands for Kyoko (me) and "I" stands for Mrs. Ishibashi.

K1: どうもありがとうございました。

(Thank you very much.)

I2: 次の Saturday こられるの。

(Will you be able to come next Saturday?)

K3: 次の Saturday....ああ来られますよ。

(Next Saturday? Yes, I'll be able to come.)

I4: ソーメン作って持って来るから。

(I will cook noodles and will bring them here.)

K5: いい。そんなに気を使わないで。

(No, please don't pay any extra attention to me.)

- I6: No, いつかあんたうちに食べに来ないかと思って。食べに来る機会ないでしょう weekday.
(I wish you would come to my home for lunch but you don't have time during the week, do you?)
- K7: 当分忙しい。(I'll be busy for a while.)
- I8: うちに来てくれる。いつかね。私 Saturday, Sunday だったらうちにいないでしょう。いつか。
(Would you come to my home, someday? I don't stay at home on Saturday and Sunday.)
- K9: でも今 final の事で頭がいっぱいで term paper の事があるでしょう。だからよけいな事を考えたくない。
(Now, my mind is occupied with the final examinations and a term paper; therefore, I don't want to think about anything extra.)
- I10: 頭がいっぱいだ。じゃあ、じゃましない。
(Your mind is full. I will not bother you.)
- K11: 小西さん、いつ来られます。
(When will Mrs. Konishi come?)
- I12: 小西さん。この Saturday. Next Saturday.
(Mrs. Konishi will come this Saturday. Next Saturday.)
- K13: Next ということは。
(What does next mean?)
- I14: 今日から one week from today.
(From today. One week from today.)
- K15: 来週の土曜日に来られるの。
(Will Mrs. Konishi come next week's Saturday?)
- I16: おとついの晩, telephone きたの。27 日にワシントンに着いたからと。
(Two days ago, I received a telephone call from her. She told me that she had arrived in Washington on 27th.)
- I17: 今までグレースも help に来てたの。とっても喜んでたよ。
(Grace came and helped me. She was very glad.)

(Analysis of Mrs. Ishibashi's conversation)

From my conversation with Mrs. Ishibashi, I could see that code switching can involve single words and phrases in her Japanese sentences: for example, she put in English words "Saturday" in I2, "No," and "weekday" in I6, "Saturday" and "Sunday" in I8, "Saturday" in I12, "telephone" in I16, and "help" in I17. She also put English phrases in her Japanese sentence: for example, "next Saturday" in I12 and "one week from today" in I14.

By putting English lexical items or English phrases in Japanese sentences, Mrs. Ishibashi emphasized her points. Even though Mrs. Ishibashi put English words and phrases in her Japanese sentences, she and I could communicate with each other because we know the words in both English and Japanese. When Mrs. Ishibashi expressed dates, in particular, she

used English words in her Japanese sentences for emphasis. Even though Mrs. Ishibashi used code switching, there was coherence in her speech.

Materials

(4)(b) Interview with Mrs. Jansen in her home. “K” stands for Kyoko and “J” stands for Mrs. Jansen.

K1: What did you see in Mexico?

J1: 何を見て来たからと言ってもね、ほうほうに行ったから。

(Even though I saw many things, I went to many places.)

J2: I went to — let’s see — Ensenada, Estral Beach and let’s see — we went to Rosarito.

We went to Xtapa. Xtapa we went to by airplane and let’s see — then just the other day, we went to San Felipe.

J3: Manufacture I on the newspaper.

J4: My name is on the newspaper.

J5: I’ll show you.

J6: Let’s close the door, ok?

J7: I’ll show you my article on the newspaper, ok?

J8: This is Xtapa. This is a friend of mine. He is a newspaperman.

J9: And this is all this and that.

J10: Here is continue ね。

J11: My name is in here four times.

J12: どこだったかな。ここらへんからね。

(Where is it? Maybe, it is around here.)

J13: ここらへんに 4 回出ています。

(My name appears four times around here.)

J14: また、サンフェリペにも行ったの。

(I went to San Felipe again.)

J15: 今度も 2 度。この裏の方にも出ています。

(There is my name twice here. There is my name behind this page.)

K2: What did you do in Mexico?

J16: Mexico? Well, what did I do?

J17: We went to swimming, went to snorkeling and let’s see —.

J18: What else we did?

J19: Shopping. Shopping is a fun part, too.

K3: What did you buy?

J20: What did I buy?

J21: I bought a beautiful white curtain dresses.

(Analysis of Mrs. Jansen's interview)

From my interview with Mrs. Jansen, I could see that code switching appears in her speech. She put the Japanese word “ね” in J10. She used the Japanese word “ね” in an English sentence to emphasize her point. When she started speaking, she spoke two sentences in Japanese: (J1 “何を見て来たからと言ってもね、ほうぼうに行ったから。”). The sentences showed that she was trying to recall something. Then she switched from Japanese to English. When she brought me the English newspapers in which her name appeared and tried to find her name in the newspapers, she switched from English to Japanese: (J12 “どこだったかな。こちらへんからね。”). When she showed me her name in the newspaper, she used Japanese sentences: (J13 “こちらへんに4回出ています。” J14 “またサンフェリペにも行ったの。” J15 “こんども2度この裏の方にも出ています。”). These examples show that when she changed topics she used code switching. When she was asked a question in English she switched from Japanese to English to answer my question. The question in English triggered her to do code switching from Japanese to English. Mrs. Jansen used code switching smoothly without causing any communication difficulties with me, and even though she used code switching, there was coherence in her speech.

Materials

(4)(c) Conversation with Michiko, Michiko's husband and Kyoko at Michiko's home. “M” stands for Michiko, “H” stands for Michiko's husband and “K” stands for Kyoko.

K1: ソルトレークシティで何を見れば良いのですか。

(What should I see in Salt Lake City?)

M2: How about church?

K3: We can't enter inside the church.

H4: Sure, you can.

M5: Yeah, they, even though Japanese. Then they あのなんて言うの。連れて行ってくれる。
(What can I say? They take us inside the church.)

H6: One place is Mormon only.

M7: あそこきれいな所。And オルガンね、オルガンの大きいのが church の前にあって even そこ
でピンを落としても後ろで聞こえるって言うくらい。

(That's beautiful place. If I say about an organ, there is a huge organ in front of the church and even if someone dropped a pin, we could hear the sound of the pin at the back of the church.)

K8: Salt Lake.

M9: Lake と言ってもね。海みたいな、川みたいな、何だかわからないも。ぜんぜん edge が見えないから。

(Even though it is a lake, it looks like a sea or a river. I don't know what it is. We couldn't see the edge at all.)

K10: これは塩でしょう。かなりの塩分を含んでいるでしょう。

(It must be salt. The lake must contain a lot of salt.)

M11: It's say so. ソルトレークだから塩があるでしょう。

(It is Salt Lake that is why it has salt.)

H12: We didn't go Kings Canyon because we came up here, around Fresno.

M13: Yeah, かがいっぱいいた。(There were many mosquitoes.) Big mosquito.

K14: ここで病気。チャールストンであれを食べて。

(I was sick here. I ate that in Charleston.)

M15: かきを食べた。きつとかきね。

(You ate oysters. It must be oysters.)

K16: その時ね, イタリアンドレッシングでサラダを食べたの。それ以来, イタリアンドレッシングを見るのもいや。

(That time, I ate salad with Italian dressing. Since then, I don't want to see Italian dressing again.)

M17: Maybe オリーブオイル。だってオリーブオイルは, 私達にとってちがうよ。

(It is olive oil because olive oil is different from ours.)

K18: 今年はどこに行くの。

(Where are you going this year?)

M19: ハワイ島。(Hawaii) Because Mike attends the judo tournament. National Judo Tournament.

K20: すごいね。(That's wonderful.)

M21: No, すごいじゃないの。(It isn't wonderful.) He wants to go because Hawaii. You know.

K22: When I look at your children, I realize that you are success in raising your children.

H23: We are lucky so far. We are lucky so far. They are very good.

M24: If compare Japan and American children, Japanese-American children, maybe Japanese children is the more widely と言うか。(What can I say?) They didn't listen to their parents. They didn't listen adults.

H25: They push too much.

M26: でもふしぎなのはこうなの。(I feel that it is strange.) But in Japan, parents maybe push kids studying.

M27: ひとつは疑問に思うのにはね, この人達ね, (I wonder one thing, these people) American Japanese ね who has the Japanese parents who もっと (more) childish. The same age の (of) Japanese kids と (and) American kids, American-Japanese kids, if compare them, they are childish.

K28: Do you remember, I had my purse stolen in a classroom?

M29: That's こっちの人の特色と言おうか (I wonder if I can say it is a special characteristic of Americans.). We can't trust people but they are nice when we conversation together but we can't trust them.

H30: I don't trust anybody.

M31: まあね (well) depend what person ask me but 25, 50 I don't care. My friend はまもとさん (Ms. Hamamoto) she walked this way. She felt so sorry that why she gave five dollar. Then she said, “始めは弱々しい声で ‘change もっていないか’ ときいたから, か

わいそうに思って。身体障害者だったの。かわいそうに five dollar あげたらねさっさと、歩いて行った。”と言ったからね。“Gosh, she trick me”でもやっぱりかわいそうに思ってしまおうよ。

(“At the beginning, she asked me if I had some change in a weak voice, I felt sorry for her because she was a handicapped person. As soon as I gave her five dollars, she walked away quickly” she told me that. But I felt sorry for her.)

K32: 特に子供なんかいて、お腹が大きくて、「この子供は、お腹がすいている。」などと言われるとね。(Especially, if a person has a child and is pregnant. When she tells me “this child is hungry.”)

M33: あれもいやね。かわいそうに思うけれど。(I don't like that. Even I feel sorry for her.)
Oh, she is using a baby.

H34: That's right.

M35: Oh. I hate it.

(Analysis of Michiko's conversation)

From my conversation with Michiko, I could see that she uses code switching very often. The code switching can involve words, phrases, or several sentences; she put English words in Japanese sentences in M7 (“And オルガンね、オルガンの大きいのが church の前にあって even そこでピンを落としても後ろで聞こえるって言うくらい。”), in M9 (“Lake と言ってもね。海みたいな、川みたいな、何だかわからないも。ぜんぜん edge がみえないから。”), in M13 (“yeah,かがいっぱいいた。”), and in M17 (“Maybe, オリーブオイル.”). She also put Japanese words in English sentences: for example, “ね”, “もっと (more)”, “の(of)”, and “と (and)” in M27 (“American-Japanese ね who has the Japanese parents who もっと childish. The same age の Japanese kids と American kids, American-Japanese kids, if compare them, they are childish.”). To emphasize her points, she put English words in Japanese sentences or put Japanese words in English sentences. She also switched from a Japanese sentence to an English sentence or from an English sentence to a Japanese sentence to emphasize her points: for example, in M11 [“It's say so. ソルトレークだから塩があるでしょう。(It is Salt Lake that is why it has salt)”], in M13 [“yeah, かがいっぱいいた。(There were many mosquitoes.) Big mosquito.”], and in M21 [“No, すごいじゃないの。(It isn't wonderful.) He wants to go because Hawaii.”]. Michiko switched from English to Japanese in the middle of the English sentence: for example, in M5 [“Then they あのなんて言うの。連れて行ってくれる。” (What can I say? They take us inside the church.)], in M24 [“If compare Japan and American children, Japanese-American children, maybe Japanese children is the more widely と言うか。(What can I say?) They didn't listen to their parents.”], and M29 [“That's こっちの人の特色と言おうか。(I wonder if I can say it is a special characteristic of Americans.) We can't trust people but they are nice when we conversation together but we can't trust them.”]. These examples showed that when she couldn't find appropriate words or expressions, she used code switching. She switched, moreover, from English to Japanese in the middle of the English sentences, when she quoted what someone had said: for example, in M31 (“Then she

said, ‘始めは弱々しい声で change もっていないかときいたから,’). Michiko, on the other hand, switched from Japanese to English in the middle of the Japanese sentence: for example, in M26 [“ふしぎなのはこうなの。(I feel that it is strange.) But in Japan,—”], and in M27 [“ひとつ疑問に思うのにはね, この人達ね。(I wonder one thing. These people) American-Japanese ね who has the Japanese parents ——.”]. She gave us more details and amplified her points in English. Michiko started to use an English sentence or a Japanese sentence and then switched to Japanese or English: for example, in M11 [“It’s say so.ソルトレークだから塩があるでしょう。(It is Salt Lake that is why it has salt.)”] and in M33 [“あれもいやね。かわいそうに思うけれど。(I don’t like that. Even I feel sorry for her.) Oh, she is using a baby.”]. By using both English and Japanese sentences, she emphasized her points.

Even though I could understand both English and Japanese, it was very uncomfortable for me to listen to Michiko’s speech, especially when she used code switching in the middle of English sentences or in the middle of Japanese sentences. It takes a lot of mental processing to translate English to Japanese and Japanese to English in the same sentence.

Even though she used code switching very often, there was coherence in her speech.

(5) The results of my hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. That the occurrence of code switching will depend on the speakers’ ability to use the English language and not on their length of stay in the U.S.A. was not supported. All three native Japanese speakers used code switching independent of the speakers’ ability to use the English language or of their length of stay in the U.S.A.: however, their ability to make themselves understood was not affected.

Hypothesis 2. That the occurrence of code switching will depend on the speakers’ language environment was not supported. Even though Mrs. Jansen uses only English in her home and at the office, she used code switching when she thought or talked to herself.

Hypothesis 3. That when the informants are addressed in Japanese, they will use Japanese and when they are addressed in English, they will use English was supported weakly. Although all three informants usually replied in the language in which they were addressed, sometimes they didn’t. Even though I asked Mrs. Jansen in English, she answered in Japanese: for example, in K1 (“What did you see in Mexico?”) J1 (“何を見て来たからと言ってもね, ほうほうに行ったから。”) On the other hand, when I asked Michiko in Japanese in K1 (“ソルトレークで何を見れば良いのですか。”), she answered it in English in M2 (“How about the church.”) Mrs. Jansen, in fact, answered my English question in Japanese once in J1. Michiko answered my Japanese question in English three times in M2 [(How about church?)], M11 [(It’s say so.)], M17 [(Maybe)], and in M21 [(No)]. She used, however, a short sentence or only one English word to answer the Japanese questions.

(6) Conclusion

From this study it is clear that code switching occurred in the speech of all three native Japanese speakers, however, the frequency with which they used code switching and their coherence did not depend on their English language ability. Mrs. Jansen, for example, had a lot of English language education in Japan and has been in the U.S.A. for 30 years, because she speaks English as if she were a native English speaker, she used code switching smoothly; therefore, I understood her perfectly. Mrs. Ishibashi, who has been in the U.S.A. for 50 years, on the other hand, couldn't communicate well in English because she didn't have a basic knowledge of English. She only put an English word or phrase in Japanese sentences once in a while, however, there was coherence in her speech.

Michiko's way of code switching was very uncomfortable and irritating to me because she switched without any pause from English to Japanese or Japanese to English within sentences.

Even though all three native Japanese speakers used code switching often, they did have coherence in their speech.

Blom and Gumperz state in *Psychology of Language* (1986), edited by David Carroll, that there are two types of code switching: One is metaphorical switching, which is the shift which results from a topic change in the conversation (page 289). Michiko, for example, used metaphorical switching when she said in M31 (“まあね depend what person ask me but 25, 50 I don't care. My friend はまもとさん she walked this way. She felt sorry that why she gave five dollar —,.”). The other type, which is described by Blom and Gumperz in *Psychology of Language* (1986), edited by David Carroll, is situational switching, which occurs when a change in the social situation takes place (page 289). Michiko: for example, said in M26 (“でもふしぎなのはこうなの。But in Japan, parents maybe push kids studying.”) and in M27 (“ひとつは疑問に思うのにはね, この人. 違ね, American Japanese ね who has the Japanese parents who もっと childish. The same age の Japanese kids と American kids, American-Japanese kids, if compare them, they are childish.”)

Grosjean states in *Life with Two Languages* (1982), that people switch when they cannot find an appropriate word or expression, or when the language being used does not have the items or appropriate translations for the vocabulary needed (page 150). Mrs. Jansen and Michiko used “ね” instead of using a tag question in English and Michiko used “— と言うか” instead of using an English sentence “What can I say?” Grosjean also states in *Life with Two Languages* (1982), that people switch when they use quotations of what someone has said before (page 155). Michiko, for example, said in M31 “‘始めは弱々しい声で ‘change もっていないか’ ときいたから, かわいそうに思って。身体障害者だったの, かわいそうに five dollar あげたら, さっさと歩いて行った’ と言ったからね。 ‘Gosh, she trick me.’” Gal, moreover, states in *Life with Two Language* (1982), edited by François Grosjean, that switching can help to amplify or emphasize a point (page 153): for example, all three Japanese native speakers used code switching for amplifying or emphasizing. Mrs. Ishibashi said in I 14 “今日から one week from today”, and both Mrs. Jansen and Michiko used “ね” for

emphasis. These reasons for switching were evident in all three native Japanese speakers when they used code switching.

I was puzzled by the fact that Michiko, even though she can't speak English fluently, switched from Japanese to English when she gave us more details. Blom and Gumperz state in *Psychology of Language* (1986), edited by David Carroll, that "Bilingual speakers may be more proficient in one language than another and so may switch to the more fluent language when their abilities in the other language are taxed (page 289)." From what Blom and Gumperz state in *Psychology of Language* (1986), edited by David Carroll, page 289, I would have expected that Michiko would give us more details in Japanese because she is more fluent in Japanese than English.

For further study, I am interested in learning how they — Mrs. Ishibashi, Mrs. Jansen and Michiko — communicate with people who speak only English or only Japanese. Do they also use code switching with these people?

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