



Investigating team-teaching relationships through code-switching

Kyoko Miyazato
Hakuoh University

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The main purpose of this study is to examine team teaching (TT) relationships between a JTE (Japanese Teacher of English) and AET (Assistant English Teacher) concerning power-sharing by focusing on the feature of code-switching. A TT class in a high school of the Kanto District was observed and the transcribed data were analyzed through code switching.

The results revealed the realities of AET-centered TT and the JTE's demanding roles for bridging the linguistic and cultural gaps between the students and the AET. The role-sharing of the AET as a lead teacher and JTE as his assistant implies power inequality between NS and non-NS (NNS) teachers. However, the variety of the JTE's code-switching patterns showed her hidden power in the local culture as a cultural/language/psychological mediator.

本論は、ティームティーチング(TT)における力配分に関する、日本人英語教師(JTE)と英語指導助手(AET)の関係を、code-switchingの側面から考察することを目的とする。関東地区のある高校のTTの授業観察が実施され、code-switchingの観点から文字に起こされたデータを分析した。

その結果、AET中心のTT授業、並びに、学生とAET間の言語的・文化的ギャップを埋めるためのJTEの過酷な役割の実態が明らかにされた。AETが主たる教師で、JTEがその補佐役という役割分担は、ネイティブとノンネイティブ間の力の不均衡を示す一方、多様なJTEのcode-switchingは、文化的・言語的・心理的仲介者としての母語文化における隠れた力を示唆している。

Team Teaching (TT) under the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Program has become one of the major characteristics of EFL education in secondary schools in Japan since its establishment in 1987. However, TT has become one of the most controversial aspects of the JET Program (McConnell, 2000) and many of the problems are centered on the relationships between team teachers (Tajino & Walker, 1998).

Giving up autonomy to engage in TT must be enormously difficult for teachers who are used to their status as the sole authority in the classroom. Autonomy is such an important factor that Deci and Ryan (1985) have identified it as one of the basic needs that bring about intrinsically motivated teacher behavior. TT, especially in the JET Program, may bring about tremendous difficulties and conflicts, because teachers have a team partner from a different cultural and linguistic background.

Role-sharing in TT

The initial standpoint of TT assigned JTEs as lead teachers to guide AETs, who are uncertified with little teaching experience. In recent years, however, JTEs have tended to take a more passive role (Mahoney, 2004; Tajino & Walker, 1998). Miyazato (2006) also reported that JTEs' identities, which are influenced by language power inequality, resulted in their peripheral participation in TT.

Furthermore, students' expectations toward team teachers also affect role-sharing in TT. Although Japanese students tend to admire the "authenticity" of NS English and the people themselves with their "exotic" appearance (Miyazato, 2003; Sugino, 2002), researchers have reported various types of anxiety of Japanese EFL learners, which include language anxiety in English-only environments (Ellis, 1993) and learners' psychological and cultural distance from NSs (Miyazato, 2003). Therefore, TT can be regarded as a popular teaching approach among Japanese students because it provides the linguistic and psychological security offered by a JTE (Miyazato, 2000). This creates the additional role of JTEs as language, cultural, and psychological mediators to fill the various gaps between Japanese students and AETs.

Code Switching and Discourse in TT Classes

The phenomenon where speakers switch from one language to another in multi-lingual situations is known as code switching. Code switching is one of the signaling mechanisms of contextualization cues defined by Gumperz (1977). He stated that speakers shift social relationships with hearers through code switching. Sridhar (1996, p. 56) explained that code switching is not a random phenomenon but a motivated intent by the speaker. Thus, speakers' choice of codes implies contextualized social message.

A TT situation presents an interaction where JTEs speak a foreign language (English) with their NS assistants (AETs) in Japanese high school classrooms. Here, instructions and explanation are sometimes given in Japanese by team teachers, mainly JTEs for the sake of Japanese students. In addition, English is used for the sake of AETs, who do not share the language and cultural backgrounds with Japanese students.

Thus, interlocutors' speech in a TT classroom conveys relational messages between teachers and students as well as team teachers themselves. It is assumed that investigating code-switching patterns in the triadic structure of the TT classroom interaction reveals contextualized message in terms of relational and intercultural contexts.

Method

The participants in this study were a female JTE in her 40s, a white male AET from Australia in his late 30s, and 41 freshman students of a boys' high school in a small city in the North Kanto District. The AET had taught at the school for two years and worked with the JTE for a year. The JTE's

“Give me English” instead of ‘*Eigo de onegaishimasu.*’ This request was accepted by Student 9, and his English answer “circle” made the AET respond with “yup” with a rising tone, which indicates his satisfaction.

Analysis of AET’s code-switching functions

AET as linguistically and culturally powerless in the local culture

Although the AET’s Japanese level was low, he tried to use easy Japanese words and expressions such as “*Nan desuka*” [“What is it?”] and “*kaitekudasai*” [Please write] in order to increase the students’ understanding. He also used code-mixing, such as “*Dooshite No?*” [“Why no?”] and “*Totemo good*” [“Very good”], which implied that he was making the best use of his limited Japanese knowledge. The AET also used Japanese when he wanted to send his messages directly without the JTE’s translation. For example, he used Japanese to praise students who answered the AET’s questions voluntarily and to reduce the Japanese students’ fear of making mistakes in class by encouraging them to work with neighbors. Thus, the AET tried to shorten the distance from the students by using Japanese.

The Japanese was also used to transmit the AET’s strong request. The fact that everyone except the AET understood Student 8’s Japanese answer and its humorous air might have irritated him and induced his incorrect Japanese utterance, “*Eigo kudasai.*” In Miyazato’s (2006) study, AETs’ language barrier made it difficult to understand Japanese humor and create a strong bond or deeper contact with Japanese students, which brought about AETs’ isolation and solitude.

In summary, the results revealed that the AET was linguistically and culturally powerless in the local culture because of his limited Japanese language skills and cultural knowledge and that his code-switching was primarily for filling in the gaps.

JTE’s code-switching functions from English to Japanese

1. Translation for confirming students’ understanding

Translating the AET’s utterances from English to Japanese by the JTE is a typical code-switching pattern in TT.

[Extract 5]

AET: Religious thinking. †That’s †good. Yeah.
I like that. Religious thinking. That’s a
good idea, too. [Religious thinking]
→ JTE: Religious. *Shuukyō teki.*

2. Roles as mediators

[Extract 6]

→JTE: You can use dictionary. *Soodan shitemo iiyo.*
‘You may talk with each
Saa yarimasho Hai yaro. You can use dictionary.
other. Now let’s do that. Yes, let’s.’
Sa yaroo. Hai yaroo
‘Now, let’s do that. Yes, let’s do that.’

In extract 6, the JTE often used “let’s” form “*yaroo*” rather than a regular command form “*yatte.*” The next extract represents the JTE’s utterance of repetitious solicitation seeking students’ answer, which is different from the AET’s request. The AET repeated the question about twice, whereas the JTE repeated it about 10 times in order to urge the students to say something.

[Extract 7]

AET: Please work at the first 2 sentences of the story.
The first 2 sentences. And find the adjective.
Please find the adjective for it.

JTE: *Saishono nigyou*, Look at the first 2 sentences.
'The first two lines,
Ajekutibu wo sagasu. Ajekutibu, ajekutibutte
Find an adjective what is an adjective?
nandakke? Ajekutibuw sagasette dareka
Remember? Find an adjective, he says 'Anyone?'
dodesuka? What is an adjective? Ajectibu
Adjective
Ajectibu Ajectibu Ajectibu nandakke? Ajectibu
adjective adjective What is an adjective? Adjective'

3. Encouragement

In the following scene, Student 12 and 13 happened to answer the AET's question simultaneously, and student 13 refrained from continuing his utterance when he noticed Student 12 answering at the same time. Since the AET did not notice the event, the JTE informed him of it in English. Later, she encouraged Student 13 to say it again by saying "seeno," an equivalent English expression "1, 2, 3 together." The JTE's Japanese encouragement worked effectively, so that Student 13 said the answer clearly.

[Extract 8]

AET: Out of the way. Out of the way. 5 4 3
(Two students raised their hand)
Yes, sir.

S12: [*Jamani*] *naranai*
'Not bothering'

S13: [*Jamani*]
(Students laugh)

→ JTE: You said that, too *Seeno!*
'Together?'

S13: *Jamaninaranai.*
'Not bothering.'

4. Personal comments

As the arrow indicates, the JTE translated the AET's previous utterance and added her personal comment of girls at the neighboring girls' high school. The shared knowledge brought about students' laughter.

[Extract 9]

AET: Did you know in the West, school boys think Japanese school girls loose socks very sexy. Very sexy. Very sexy. Japanese girls loose socks, western school boys think very sexy.

→ JTE: Oh. *Yooroppa no wakai otokonokotachiha*
'European young men think that
ashijyoseitachiga yatteru luuzu sokusuha
loose sox which Ashijo girls wear sexy.
sexy nandatte. Toiuwakedesu.
This is what he said.'
(students laugh)

[Extract 10]

JTE: Spare buttons.
AET: [Spare buttons?] =Yes, OK. Yeah, it's good thinking.

→ JTE: *Sugo::i. Demo ookisaga chigau*
'Great. But the size is different.'

This scene started with the AETs' response to the student's answer of "Spare buttons" for his question, "Why are there buttons on the sleeves?" The JTE praised the student's answer and she quickly gave a comment in Japanese. It is assumed that the JTE thought her personal comment was too trivial to be shared with the AET, so she quickly expressed in her own language without translating it and shared it with the students only.

5. Keeping distance from the AET

[Extract 11]

AET: =Plastic ↑buttons (3.2) ↓I:vory.

JTE: aiborii.=

AET: =I-V-O-R-Y. Ivory.

→ JTE: =Kookanaa. (5.9)

'I wonder this is OK'

In Extract 11, the JTE was writing the spelling of the word 'ivory' on the blackboard, but she was less confident about the spelling. Her Japanese comment revealed her uneasiness even after the AET informed her of the correct spelling, which can be viewed as a desire to hide her embarrassment from the AET.

[Extract 12]

AET: Yes. Good. B. Students. Plural. Many,
many, many. Students. *Wakarimasuka?*

'Understand?'

((pointing at a student))

S21: ((nodded))

→ JTE: OK. OK. haha. *Wakarisugirune.*

'You understand too well, huh?'

In Extract 12, the AET explained about the very basic grammatical concepts of singular and plural forms, which were too easy for the high school students. He probably underestimated the students' grammatical knowledge due to the lack of knowledge about Japanese EFL learners' learning history. In order to protect students' pride, the JTE secretly revealed her sympathetic comment in Japanese.

JTE's code-switching functions from Japanese to English

1. Translating for the AET

One of the JTE's major roles was to translate the students' Japanese utterances into English for the AET.

[Extract 13]

S8: *Nihonsanno kurumaha hidari handorude,**Gaikokusanno kurumaha migihandoru.*

((Whole class laugh))

→ JTE: Japanese cars' wheels are just.... Wheels of Japanese cars are attached to the right side.

2. Increasing English exposure

[Extract 14]

S23: *Jitsuyoutekina*

'Practical'

→ JTE: *Jitsuyoutekina* good

'Practical.'

[Extract 15]

JTE: =*Ja nokori umeawase shichatte kudasai. dozo.*

'Please work. Fill in the blank. Please.'

Hai Now please fill in the rest. Go ahead.

'Yes.'

[Extract 16]

JTE =*henka sareta toka kakobunshiga good.*

'Past participle such as being changed is good'

As seen in Extract 15 and 16, the JTE used English for praise and easy classroom instructions, all of which seemed familiar to students. In extract 17, the JTE shifted Japanese into English within the sentence, which is a code-mixing

phenomenon. All can be interpreted as the JTE's endeavor of increasing English exposure to the students in class.

3. Showing a cooperative attitude

[Extract 17]

AET: =The very first buttons=
 → JTE: =*Kiitekudasai. Hai Kiite. Listen to him.=*
 'Listen, please. Look. Listen'

In this scene, the JTE almost interrupted in the middle of the AET's utterance to get students to pay attention to his talk. However, since the AET had little Japanese comprehension, he could have interpreted the JTE's act as rude. Therefore, it is assumed that the JTE added the equivalent expression in English and confirmed that she was doing the right thing for him.

4. Restating the AET's utterance for students' better understanding

Although the following utterance of the JTE was not really code switching, the JTE repeated key words or phrases in a familiar Japanese accent after the AET's utterance. English spoken by NSs is sometimes difficult for EFL learners to understand even if they speak slowly in a short simple sentence.

[Extract 18]

AET: Plural. Decorations. Nn::n. OK. Let me
 †test †you.
 → JTE: Testo †you.

Analysis of JTE's code-switching functions

JTE as a language mediator

Due to the fact that the AET has limited Japanese language skills and the students' English levels were not high, naturally, the JET had to take a role as an interpreter between the two parties. In other words, the JTE switched two languages for both the students and the AET; she switched English to Japanese for the Japanese students and Japanese to English for the AET.

In spite of the heavy duties as a language mediator, the merit of the JTE's bilingual abilities was observed in her decision-making concerning whether or not Japanese utterances of the students and herself should be translated into English for the AET. For example, when she gave her personal comment on the student's answer, she regarded it as trivial and did not translate in English. This indicates that JTEs have power to some extent in terms of class management because of their bilingual abilities and that AETs are excluded in the decision-making about what to be taught unless they have high-leveled Japanese.

JTE as a psychological/cultural mediator

The JTE tried to pursue her role as a motherly psychological supporter for students in stressful foreign language learning environment. She repeated "yaroo" or "Let's do it" in the less authoritative tone to encourage their learning. On another occasion, she tried to fill the silence and urge the students to answer voluntarily by repetitive solicitation. Miyahara (2004, p. 132) explained that JTEs show a "disciplined" teacher image on one hand and closeness and

intimacy with students on the other as Japanese cultural and foreign language practices.

The JTE also played the role as a cultural mediator. She noticed that one of the two students refrained from saying his answer out of the *enryo*, or reserve, toward another student. The JTE's recognition and understanding of the student's cultural behavior and feelings ultimately encouraged the student.

JTE's cultural bond with students

The JTE's Japanese joke about the loose sock was personalized between the students and the JTE, which seemed to create closeness or intimacy with students. Because the humor involved knowledge of the local culture, the JTE might have regarded it as something trivial which did not need to be translated. However, this resulted in the unintentional exclusion of the AET from enjoying the humor.

Japanese was also used to keep the distance from the AET on purpose. When the AET explained the very basic grammatical issue, the JTE gave her secret criticism of the AET's teaching in Japanese to save the pride of the students. This face-saving act of the JTE, who had a better grasp of Japanese students' study history, might have created a bond between the students and JTE.

JTE's consideration toward AET

The JTE's consideration of the AET as a cooperative TT partner was observed on several occasions. For instance, the JTE urged the students to speak up in class through repetitious solicitation. This can be NNS teachers' empathy

to learners' difficulties and problems (Medgyes, 1992) as was discussed above, or the gender differing approach of a female teacher as a mother-figure to students (Tobin et al., 1989).

However, her keen attitude for seeking students' answers could be due to consideration and devotion for the AET in order to prevent any disappointment to the AET and activate the class atmosphere. According to McConnell (2000), AETs' typical frustration is the lack of responsiveness or shyness of Japanese students, who seldom volunteered for answering teachers' questions.

In fact, this assumption can be supported by the scene when the JTE added the English expression "Listen to him" after giving the equivalent order in Japanese in order to show the AET that she was helping but not interrupting him. Thus, the JTE tried to preserve harmonious TT relationships with the AET.

JTE's pressure of English exposure

Not only in the AET's utterances but also in the JTE's praise and instructions, code-mixing phenomenon, in which two languages are mixed in a single utterance, was observed. According to Miyahara (2004), JTEs actively use code-mixing in their utterances in TT in order to communicate relational messages with their limited English competence.

Actually, the JTE's code switching and code mixing can be interpreted as her effort or device of exposing as much English as possible to students in class. In recent years, JTEs have experienced increased pressure to conduct class in English (Butler, 2005; Miyazato, 2006). Although the JTE's major role in this TT class was language assisting

as an interpreter, she could have tried to pursue her role as an English teacher once in a while, not simply as a passive interpreter.

Concluding remarks

The results showed that both team teachers code-switched mainly for the students' sake in order to increase students' understanding, encourage their participation in class, and reduce their anxiety in foreign language learning. However, the variety of the JTE's code-switching functions revealed her heavy duties to bridge the linguistic and cultural gaps between the Japanese students and the AET. The JTE pursued various roles as an interpreter, cultural mediator, motherly psychological supporter, and cooperative colleague, all of which support the idea that she took assisting roles, not leading ones in TT. Thus, the results in this study show the recent tendency of AET-centered TT, in which the leadership of the TT class is taken by AETs.

However, looking at other functions of the JTE's code-switching patterns implies their hidden power in the local culture by being a cultural/language/psychological mediator. The JTE had decision-making power concerning what was to be translated, cultural connections with the students, and better understanding about the students' psychological states and classroom culture. In contrast, the AET was culturally and linguistically powerless in the local culture in spite of the fact that he, as an NS of the target language, was a main teacher in the TT. Thus, examining code-switching patterns implied the fact that different kinds of power existed between the two parties, which affected their role-sharing in TT.

As for implications, I believe it is necessary to preserve more autonomy for JTEs as English teachers to maintain their work motivation in TT. I assume that JTEs' heavy tasks as language and cultural mediators would result in their passive involvement in TT as only assistants to AETs, which may lead to their dissatisfaction in the end. It is important for team teachers to realize that JTEs after all are English teachers: If they cannot pursue their duty of teaching English, they cannot attain occupational accomplishment and are deprived of their professional pride as English teachers.

In order to induce more equal power-sharing in TT, I have several suggestions. First of all, it is strongly recommended that JTEs be provided opportunities in which they can establish self-confidence in their language abilities such as an extensive overseas English training. Second, we need to establish JTEs' teacher identity by recognizing the significance of NNS teachers in EFL settings, who play the crucial role of filling cultural and linguistic gaps between students and NSs. Also, it is suggested to encourage AETs to work on their linguistic and cultural skills in order to lessen JTEs' heavy mediation responsibilities.

I hope that this preliminary study, which dealt with the particular TT relationship in a small part of the professional worlds of JTEs and AETs, will be further developed to handle other cases in the future and encourage smoother TT relationships.

Kyoko Miyazato is an associate professor of TESOL and EFL at Hakuoh University and holds an EdD from Temple University. Her research interests include team teaching, NS-NNS issues, language policy, and intercultural communication.

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Appendix

Transcription conventions

- ‘ ’ English translation of Japanese
- ? rising intonation
- . falling intonation
- , continuing intonation
- ! an animated tone
- ↑↓ rising and falling shifts in intonation
- () transcriptionist doubt
- (()) Comments enclosed in double parentheses
- [] simultaneous utterances
- = contiguous utterances
- (0.0) intervals within and between utterances
- :, :: an extension of the sound or syllable
- x applause