

Code-Mixing in Japanese Language Beginner Level Classroom

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to describe the types and the function of code-mixing in Japanese language teaching. The participants of this study were a native Japanese teacher who has Japanese teaching experience of approximately 12 years and 16 international students of the graduate medical program at a national university in Japan who took beginner level of Japanese class. This study used a qualitative design to describe clearly the types and functions of code-mixing from the data that were collected by recording the basic Japanese learning activities. The total observation time for the three classes was approximately 270 minutes. By using Musyken's (2000) code mixing concept and Jiang, Garcia, and Willis' (2014) code mixing functions in a pedagogy setting, the findings showed that the type of code-mixing the teacher used was insertion. The insertion includes English words and phrases, but no clause insertion was found from the data. Meanwhile, three functions of code-mixing were found in this study, which are; 1) to facilitate the cross-language transfer; 2) to facilitate comprehension of the language being taught, and 3) to encourage the students to give a response or to answer. These results suggested that the use of code-mixing of English in teaching Japanese, particularly at the beginner level, is needed to help the process of language acquisition.

Keywords: Code-mixing, insertion, Japanese, language acquisition

1. INTRODUCTION

One crucial factor in language acquisition is the input of the language itself, particularly the language input that can be understood (Krashen, 1982). In the classroom setting, as Krashen (1982) mentioned, using the target language in teaching activities provide a great deal of comprehension input. Using target language as the language of instruction, known as direct method or natural method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), is also crucial because it provides learners' principal such as scaffolded input (Crawford, 2004). However, using the target language entirely in teaching has a drawback because it is dependent on the teacher's skill rather than on a textbook (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In the target language-based classroom, sometimes teachers may have difficulty explaining the metalinguistic terms using the target language or presenting new vocabulary that has not been taught before or the vocabulary that does not exist in the textbook. Considering the difficulty of conveying the lesson, it is reasonable for teachers to alternate or mix between L1 and target language while explaining. Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that using students'

L1 in brief explanation can be a more efficient rote to comprehension. Furthermore, Cummins (2007) also asserts that students' L1 is not an enemy in promoting a high level of L2 proficiency and it can function as a steppingstone to scaffold more skilled performance in the L2. The mixed-use of first language and second language in the classroom is often defined as code-switching or code-mixing (Jiang, García, & Willis, 2014). More specifically, Lin (2016) explains that alternation at the inter-clausal or sentential level is called code-switching. Meanwhile, alternation that occurred at inter-clausal or sentential alternation is called code-mixing. Some researchers used code-switching and code-mixing interchangeably (Jiang, García, & Willis, 2014; Lin, 2016). Yet, in this study, we only use the term code-mixing which refers to alternation at inter-clausal.

Moreover, Muysken (2000) uses the term code-mixing to refer to lexical items and grammatical features of two languages that appear in one sentence. More specifically, Ritchie and Bhatia (2004) define code-mixing as the union or mixing of various linguistic units such as morphemes, affixes, words, phrases, and clauses of two systems of order language or from language to

language in sentences and events in the same language. Mixing language elements only occur in one sentence, so mixing this code is also called intra-sentential change.

There are three types of code-mixing, namely, insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization (Muysken, 2000). The concept of insertion is defined as the insertion of lexical items or all constituents from one language into the structure of another language (Deuchar, 2005; Kim, 2006; Muysken, 2000). Muysken (2000) adds that the mixing process with insertion was similar to borrowing, namely the insertion of lexical categories and foreign phrases into a particular structure.

Alternation is a common strategy in which the two languages in the clause remain relatively separate (Muysken, 2000). These changes are usually in the form of phrases or clauses that occur in one sentence. Another type of code-mixing is congruent lexicalization. Muysken (2000) asserts that congruent lexicalization refers to situations where both languages have grammatical structures that can be lexically filled with elements from both languages. Moreover, Lipski (2009) states that congruent lexicalization occurs in two languages that have similar or even approximately the same presence. As Lipski mentioned, a mixture of congruent lexicalization often occurs in languages that have a close language structure.

About previous studies, Zaharuddin (2019) investigated the attitudes of Malaysian students toward the teacher using L1 in the Japanese classroom. He found that most students disagreeing with the use of L1 in classrooms. Yet, students desired the use of L1 while explaining grammar. Meanwhile, Hobbs, Matsuo, and Payne (2010) investigated the language used by three Japanese teachers in a Japanese language class in England. One of the teachers was British, while two others were Japanese. Their findings included that the native teachers used significantly less target language (Japanese) than the non-native teacher. Besides, teachers' code-switching practice can and often differ substantially and is influenced by the teachers' culture of learning.

Besides, Celik (2003) examined the effectiveness of using L1 (Turkish) in English in speaking, listening, and writing assignments. He stated that mixing codes would be effective and efficient for the introduction of new vocabulary to students. However, different results were shown in Zarei and Zarnani (2012). They investigated the effects of two code-mixing conventions on L2 vocabulary recognition in an English class of 87 intermediate level English students. They claimed that there was no significant effect on student's vocabulary recognition using code-mixing.

Jiang, García, and Willis (2014) examined the practical use of code-mixing in Chinese language arts classes in America. In their study, five functions of code-mixing were found, namely (1) to improve bilingualism

and bilingual learning of students, (2) to review and consolidate the content being taught, (3) to facilitate cross-language transfers, (4) to increase cultural understanding, and (5) to foster understanding of cross-cultural differences. Furthermore, they explained that the strategic use of mixing L1 and L2 bilingual codes in teaching can improve student's bilingual development and maximize learner learning outcomes.

Meanwhile, Marlan and Xiting (2016) focus their study on the perspective of teachers and students on the use of mixed codes. In their study, they concluded that from the perspective of students, the use of code-mixing helps a better understanding of learning. Meanwhile, from the teacher's perspective, the use of code-mixing helps convey difficult or complicated material. Also, it was mentioned that code-mixing does not only affect language skills but also the cognitive and social aspects of the learner. However, the study on the practicing code-mixing by the teacher in Japanese based classrooms are still limited. Therefore, this present study aims to fill the gap by (1) finding out the types of English code-mixing used by Japanese teachers in Japanese-based classrooms; (2) describing the function of the use of code-mixing during the lesson.

2. METHODS

2.1. Participants

Participants in this study were Japanese native teacher who taught basic Japanese and sixteen foreign medical graduate students who took the Japanese class. The teacher has 12 years' experience teaching Japanese. Students were Indonesian (n=4), Chinese (n=4), Nepalese (n=2), Vietnamese (n=2), Mongolian (n=2), Syrian (n=1), and Swiss (n=1). Students were international students who used English both for lectures and research. So, it can be said that in this class English was the lingua franca. The main book used in this class was the second printed *Minna no Nihongo I* with grammatical explanations and vocabulary lists in the English version.

2.2. Data Collection

The data in this study were collected by recording the basic Japanese learning activities. The recording was carried out from June 18th to June 25th, 2018. The observation was conducted three times. Each learning activity was held for 90 minutes.

The total observation time for three classes was approximately 270 minutes or 4.5 hours in total.

2.3. Data Analysis

All recorded lessons were manually transcribed verbatim. This transcription activity involved native

speakers of Japanese and English to reduce transcription errors. Then, the teachers' speech containing mixed English language was categorized and counted. The types of code-mixing were analyzed according to Muysken (2000) code-mixing concept. After analyzing types of code-mixing, the next step was analyzing the function of code-mixing according to code-mixing functions in the pedagogy setting that were developed by Jiang, Garcia, and Willis (2014).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Types of Code-mixing

The findings of the study showed that there were 139 data code-mixing of English used by Japanese native language teachers for 4.5 hours of learning activities. From the 139 data, the insertion was the only code-mixing type that the teacher used in the classroom. That insertion was in the form of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and phrases. Other types of code-mixing, such as alternation and congruent lexicalization were not found. The examples of insertion code-mixing are presented in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 1

T : *Ni juu gofun desu. Mou sugu desu ne. ato chotto desu mou sugu. e, eeto tsugi **greeting** de iimasu. Okagesamade =*

Twenty five minutes. Soon right. It is a little bit, soon. Uhh, next we say "okagesama de (thanks to you) as a **greeting**".

SS : = *okagesamade*

= 'Thanks to you'

In Excerpt 1, the teacher inserted the noun 'greeting' into Japanese sentences, so this is an insertion in noun form. In Japanese, there is a word '*aisatsu*' which has the equivalent meaning with the word 'greeting' in English, but the teacher did not use it. For beginner level, the word '*aisatsu*' was too difficult because this word did not exist in the chapter taught. Consequently, teacher decided to use the word 'greeting' rather than '*aisatsu*' which might be easier for the students to understand.

Excerpt 2

T : *Haitta, haitta small 'tsu', [haitta, haitta]*

Entered, entered, **small** 'tsu', [entered, entered]

SS : *[haitta, haitta]*

[entered, entered]

In Excerpt 2, the use of the word 'small' between the words '*haitta*' and '*tsu*' in one sentence showed that this code-mixing type also is an insertion. The word 'small' is

an adjective which in Japanese has an equivalent to the word '*chiisai*' so this insertion is adjective insertion form.

Excerpt 3

T : *Eto ne, watashi mo ano-, **confuse** wo shimasu kedo, faku ni futatsu, yama ni noborimasu to yama wo noborimasu.*

Well, I also uhh do **confuse**, there are two kinds of sentences, '*yama ni nobori masu* (climbing the montain)' and '*yama wo noborimasu* (climbing the montain)'.

SS : *Aa*

Oh

As can be seen in Excerpt 3, insertion is not only in the form of nouns and adjectives but also in the form of verb. The word 'confuse' is a verb that in Japanese has the equivalent meaning to word '*mayou*'. It is interesting to see that the teacher combined the words 'confusing' and '*o shimasu*'. This is unique because both are verbs. In Japanese, combining '*o shimasu*' which is a verb, with verb is ungrammatical. The word '*shimasu*' is a verb that requires an object in the form of a noun that is marked with an auxiliary word or particle '*o*'. Even though this is ungrammatical, the word 'confuse' is a verb that is inserted into a Japanese sentence, so this insertion is verb insertion form.

Excerpt 4

T : *Ano, Takasaki eki arimasu. Takasaki eki desu, kocchi ni yamada denki desu. Koko ni aru, L13 san ga ikimashita, atarashii depa-to ga arimasu ga, Koko no, yama ni ano, **Big Statue**.*

Uhh, there is Takasaki station. Takasaki station, over here is Yamada denki. Here, uhh, student 13 went, there is a new supermarket, uhh there is a **big statue** in this mountain.

S : *Aa...*

Oh

In Excerpt 4, the teacher inserted English adjective phrase 'big statue' in the sentence. If this phrase is translated into Japanese, it will be '*ookina zoo*'. The word '*zoo*' does not exist in the chapter that was already taught, so the teacher used the phrase 'big statue' to make clear the information. Since the teacher used the phrase that was inserted to sentences, so this is called phrase insertion.

3.2. The Function of Code-mixing

In this study, it was found that there are three functions of code-mixing in the Japanese language class. The detail of each function is described in the following excerpts.

Function 1: To Facilitate Cross-language Transfer

Excerpt 5

T : *Ima wa go gatsu, nan nichi desu ka, juu yon nichi desu ne. kyou wa atsui desu ne. mata roku gatsu shichi gatsu gu-tto dandan, atsui desu. Atsui to omoimasu. dandan, slowly slowly slowly desu ne, dandan. Hai, mou sugu=*

This month is May, what date is it? It is 14th, right? Today is hot, right? Then June and July must gradually be hot. I think it is hot. Slowly slowly slowly, right? Gradually. Alright, soon.

SS : *Mou sugu =*

Soon =

Excerpt 6

T : *Hai, desu ne. mou sugu natsuyasumi desu ne. mou sugu. soon.*

Yes, alright. It is almost summer vacation, right? Very soon. Soon.

SS : *Soon.*

In Excerpt 5 when the teacher used the adverb '*dandan*' the teacher also used the word 'slowly' which both roughly have the same meaning. Similarly, in excerpt 6, the teacher also used the word "soon" which means "*mousugu*" in Japanese. In other words, the teacher translated the word '*dandan*' and '*mousugu*' into English. After listening to the teacher explains about the meaning of the word, student repeated that word in the next turn. It can be seen that the student tried to understand the meaning of that word. The use of English words, in this case, is intended to connect meanings in L1 dan L2. It can be assumed that the use of English words is to facilitate the language transfer which is in line with Crawford's (2004) and Cummin's (2007) statement about the scaffolded input.

Function 2: To Facilitate an Understanding of The Content of The Language Being Taught

When the teacher presented the subject, sometimes the teacher used terms related to grammar, context, and how to use the language.

Excerpt 7

T : *...shimasen, shimasen deshita, to iu verb no fo-mu ga arimasu ne. ...de, kocchi ga dictionary form dekimashita, suru, negative, negative de, Shinai. Past form deshita. De, e-to, negative past form de, shinakatta. Daijoubu desu ka.*

...There are verbs form such as *shimasen, shimasen deshita*. Then, here is dictionary form, *suru*, with negative, negative, *shinai*. That was past form. So, the negative past form of that verb is *shinakatta*. Is that okay?

SS : *(Unazukimasu)*

(nod)

Excerpt 8

T : *Hai, demo, ganbarimasu. Hai, demo but desu ne, conversation style de, but desu demo.*

Yes, but, try hard. Yes, *demo* is but. In conversation style, but is *demo*.

SS : *Demo*

But

The use of metalinguistic terms such as 'verb', 'dictionary form', and others in Excerpt 7 is a teacher's effort to facilitate learners to understand the concepts in the grammar. When recording this lesson, the lesson was chapter 20 of the basic Japanese language book *Minna no Nihongo 1*, where these terms did not appear in the vocabulary list. For example, the word 'verb' in Japanese is '*doushi*', and the term 'dictionary form' in Japanese is '*jishokei*'. In other words, terms like these are still entirely unfamiliar to the students. Therefore, teacher cannot force the use of Japanese, which would not be understood by the learners. Likewise, in Excerpt 8, the use of the word 'conversation style' is intended to explain the use of the word '*demo*' in a conversation style (not writing style). To make it easier to understand the concept, the teacher used the English words while explaining the use of the word '*demo*'.

By inserting metalinguistic terms in English like these, understanding the concepts taught will be easier. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that using L1 in explanation can be more efficient rote to comprehension. This can be seen in the next turn, that students nodded their head after listening to the teacher's explanation. It is assumed that nodding the head means understanding what teacher explained.

Function 3: To Encourage Students to Give Response or Answer

For elementary level learners, giving a response to teacher instruction sometimes becomes quite difficult.

Excerpt 9

T : *= aratta, araimasu, aratta. (e o misemasu) play.*

= washed, wash, washed. (pointing the picture) play.

SS : *Hi-/hikimasu/hiita/*

Played

Excerpt 10

T : *Un, kuru. Ashita mata kuru. Arigatou gozaimasu. S9 san, ni ban Onegai shimasu. Kyou wa nani mo kaimasen.*

Yes, come (*kuru*). Will come again tomorrow.
Thank you. Student 9, please number 2. 'Today, I do not buy anything'.

S9 : *Kyou wa nani mo kai...*

Today, i do not bu.... (not finish)

T : *Masen, negative.*

S9 : *Kawanai =*

Do not buy =

T : = do not buy.

The use of the word 'play' in Excerpt 9 which was followed by showing a picture was encouraging the learners to respond to what the teacher wanted. It seems that the teacher realized that the picture shown would not be enough to encourage the students to respond, so the teacher used the word 'play' even though in the end not all students gave the correct responses. In the excerpt 10, the teacher also used the word 'negative'. At first, students had difficulty giving responses or changing to the correct form of the plain of the word '*kaimasen*'. Then, the teacher used the word 'negative' to make the students understand what form that they had to use. Acknowledging what the teacher instructed, the students were eventually able to respond to the plain form of the word '*kaimasen*' to '*kawanai*' correctly.

The insertion was the only code-mixing types found in this study. When viewed from the pattern of English insertion performed by the teacher, most insertions used were only words and phrases. None of them were clause insertions. This indicates that the teacher only used code-mixing at the time when mixing was deemed necessary to assist in explaining or conveying the contents of the learning material. This can be seen by the large number of uses of code-mixing that use linguistic terms or terms that are often used in grammatical explanations. By using these terms, presenting material is considered faster, and, the result can be seen from the learner's responses. Thus, it can be said that the use of code-mixing can help better understanding the material being taught (Marlan & Xiting, 2016). Moreover, it also makes it easier for students to understand the content being taught so that it can help the process of acquiring the language being studied.

In some of the excerpts, it can also be seen that the use of English was intended to help understanding the meaning of the words. In other words, the use of English was intended to translate Japanese vocabularies that might be considered difficult by the teacher. Translations like this will be a comprehensive input. This means that the learners can understand the input in meaning that will help the process of language acquisition (Long, 1983). The use of mixed codes in teaching like this can make it easier for the students to understand the meaning of the vocabularies used, whether they were previously

introduced or not in Japanese. This will facilitate language transfer, especially for new vocabularies taught (Jiang, Garcia, & Willis, 2014). The use of language that can be understood by all students (in this case the use of English as a lingua franca) in teaching vocabulary items will have a positive influence on the acquisition of a second language. It will also not inhibit production and fluency in the second language. In other words, the language production process will still run well and has no negative effect on pronunciation (Celik, 2003).

In interaction, the teacher also used English when he asked for a response from the students. In this case, the use of English is assumed to be an instruction tool that can help learners understand the teacher's intention. By understanding the instructions, it will help students give the responses desired by the instructor so that the learning process runs better. Therefore, by the response or output from the learners, the teacher can provide an assessment of the output produced by the learners. Besides, with the response or output, learners can also check whether the language produced is true or false. Thus, learners will get feedback from the teacher. A trial process like this is fundamental in the process of developing interlanguage (Oozeki, Nabei, Mori, Tanaka, & Harata, 2015). It also suggested that the use of mixed codes in learning Japanese in particular, and foreign languages in general, is required to assist the process of language acquisition.

4. CONCLUSION

In teaching Japanese at a beginner level, the native speaker Japanese teacher used mixed English codes while interacting or explaining learning material in the classroom. From the data, it was found that insertion was the only type of code-mixing that the teacher used in the sentence when giving instructions. Other types of code-mixing, such as alternation and congruent lexicalization, were not found in this study. The insertion form that was found in this study is in the form of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and phrases. However, insertion in clause form was not found. This indicates that the teacher only mixed English when it was deemed necessary to assist in explaining or conveying the contents of the language being taught.

The use of mixed English codes in Japanese teaching has three functions; 1) to facilitate cross-language transfer; 2) to facilitate an understanding of the content of the language being taught, and 3) to encourage the students to give responses or answer to the question. From the three functions found, it can be suggested that the use of English (as lingua franca) code-mixing in teaching Japanese is needed to help the process of language development and acquisition better. As Cummins (2007) asserted that using L1 in teaching L2 is not the enemy and it can function as a steppingstone to scaffold more skilled performance.

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