Research Note

Motivating Factors for Insertional Code-Switching of Japanese into English by L1 English-Speakers and Student Feedback on the Results

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This paper initially defines code-switching and more specifically insertional code-switching before describing a study carried out with a small foreign community in Japan that realizes the linguistic behavior and its motivating factors. Following this, university students are asked to provide attitudinal responses to the results of the research.

1. Introduction

In the early nineties a number of educational reforms were implemented by MEXT (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). For the first time in a post-war Japan, English became a compulsory subject for both junior high and senior high school students, and a focus on communicating in English rather than solely grammar-based study came into effect (Kubota, 2002). Also, private *eikaiwa* schools which specialize in small group foreign language instruction where students "attend to supplement their school studies, to study a second language, to improve their business skills, as a hobby, to help socialize, or to prepare for travel or marriage" (Ninnes 2004, p. 118) were as of 2004, a 670 billion yen worth industry (Otake, 2004). In

affluent Japan, these factors lead to an increase in the demand for L1 English-speakers who could not only teach English but also provide understanding of the "linear logic" that differed from the Japanese "circular logic", as well as offer "cross-cultural understanding" that fostered a more globalized view (Kubota, 2002, p. 18).

As higher numbers of L1 English-speakers came to Japan armed with their university degrees (not necessarily having any relation to language or education), a *gaijin* (foreigner, usually referring to an English-speaker Caucasian (Befu, 2001)) community has developed where short-term and long-term residents interact both socially and professionally. Naturally, these individuals also interact with L1 Japanese-speakers including their students in part to understand their unfamiliar surroundings. As De Mente (2004, p. 13) states "the best and fastest way to an understanding of the emotional and traditional side of Japanese attitudes and behavior" is through the code words that have no direct translation into the English language. Phrases such as *otsukaresama deshita* (used to show appreciation for someone's hard work at the end of the working day) may permeate the L1 use of the L1 English-speaker in Japan showing evidence of code-switching.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Defining Code-switching
Reading Matras (2009, p. 101) who defines code switching as "the term that is normally applied to the alternation of languages within a conversation" seems to be a simple concept. However, in the field there appears to be a lack of agreement in terms of defining code switching. I considered the fact that from my own experiences of living in Japan that 'code mixing' may be a better expression to use as these were single-word or short phrase insertions that were being used within English spoken discourse. Indeed, as Myers-Scotton (2006)

highlights, many researchers believe that these single words are in fact a type of borrowing different from established borrowings and not classic code switching. The examples given by Myers-Scotton (2006, p. 254) analyzing temporary borrowings into Swahili from English that have equally applicable words in the recipient language, to some extent prove "there is every reason to consider the English words as instances of code switching."

However, due to the academic prevalence of the use of the term 'code switching' within the field, and also similarly to Matras, due to the "lack of general consensus" (2009, p101), I will use the term 'insertional code switching' to refer to the "insertion of a word or phrase into an utterance or sentence" (Matras, 2009, p. 101). Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language-Frame sees the matrix language, which in the case of this research will be English having Japanese inserted as the embedded language. The framework will benefit this research as it is solely concerned with L1 speakers of English who are using Japanese sporadically or as Poplack (1980) calls these words nonce borrowings as in words that are not established borrowings in the matrix language.

I am also aware that 'borrowing', as it could occur between two monolinguals does not necessarily mean 'code switching' as this is a bilingual/multilingual practice. I will however use the verb 'to borrow' and the noun 'a borrowing' when referring to Japanese words that are being used when the matrix language is English. That is to say, L1 speakers of English in Japan who have Japanese ability 'borrow' words and expressions when they are engaged in code switching.

2.2 Motivating Factors for Insertional Code-switching
<u>Gap</u>
De Mente has written a book called *Japan's Cultural Code Words* (2004) that takes 233 key terms that explain untranslatable Japanese concepts and ideas,

that need up to a full page of English explanation for the non-Japanese speaker to be able to understand. However, residents in Japan may have contact with many of these expressions and use them due to the gap in the recipient language. Matras (2009, p. 150) remarks that "speakers attempt to avail themselves of their full inventory of linguistic resources." The incredibly complex sociolinguistic features of the Japanese language have numerous examples, and some of these will be seen in the results section of this paper. Matras refers to these as cultural loans (2009) that do not necessarily represent a gap in the recipient language but refer to a cultural aspect that is so profoundly tied to the donor language, that it is not a question of whether one language is better equipped than the other, but that it is essentially different.

Prestige

Prestige borrowings often have equivalents in the recipient language yet due to the "socially more powerful, dominant community" (Matras, 2009, p. 150) from where the linguistic matter comes from the borrowing is preferred. Therefore, it is not that the borrowing is being used out of necessity due to a gap in the recipient language but that the borrowing is preferred whether this be to show sophistication for example, or other conversational affects.

Myers-Scotton also mentions in regards to prestige, the concept of reverse core borrowing (2006) where the speaker chooses a language from the less prestigious language. Myers-Scotton gives the example of English-speaking expatriates living in China. Two reasons are outlined here, firstly that the use of these borrowings "adds a dimension to the persona" in that the speaker seems more connected to the local culture. The second reason Myers-Scotton gives is that words from a different culture "smack of the exotic" and have a "magic quality." (2006, p. 217).

3. Investigative Aims

The initial investigation aims to establish the practice of insertional code-switching by speakers of English who are long term residents in Japan and establish the motivating factors. Following this, the investigation seeks to gauge student feedback following exposure to the results.

4. Context of Initial Study

This section seeks to outline the existence and extent of a foreign L1 English speaking community in Toyohashi, Japan. It is necessary to establish the existence of this community before studying its behaviour in relation to insertional code-switching.

The L1 English Speaking Community in Toyohashi, Japan
(Reference: Toyohashi City Official Website translated from Japanese as of July 31st 2017)

Toyohashi is located on the south coast of Japan roughly half way between Tokyo and Osaka. The city has a population of 377,000 according to the city's official website with a foreign-born population of 15,273. The city has a large South American population due to past migration to Brazil and Peru from Japan and the establishing of the *nikkeijin* community (Japanese descendants born and raised outside of Japan) who began to return to Japan in the late 1980s (Tsuda, 1997) who make up the slight majority of this number (6725 Brazil, 692 Peru).

Aware that nationality does not necessarily reflect the L1 of the speaker, in that a Canadian's first language may very well be French and a Brit's first language could be Bengali, the figures from the city's official website however do give some indication if we look at nations where the national language is, or at least includes English.

Nationality	Number of citizens
Australia	18
Canada	14
Kenya	1
New Zealand	6
Singapore	1
South Africa	1
The U.K	29
The U.S.A	63
Total	**133**

Another way the figures are possibly flawed is due to the fact that the citizens of Toyohashi are of course free to travel to neighbouring cities for work or pleasure; however I do feel the numbers reflect a significant group in excess of a hundred with which to continue the study.

5. Methodology

5.1 Teacher Participants

The questionnaire was administered to 20 teachers of English who have lived in Japan for two or more years in total, and are currently resident in Toyohashi, Japan. All of the participants work in the public school system, teach at a university or teach at a private language school. They all identify themselves as native-English speakers.

5.2 Student Participants

27 second-year French majors studying English at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies were asked to provide feedback on the results of the study.

5.3 The Teacher Questionnaire

The written questionnaire was created based upon the theoretical context seeking to find evidence and motivating factors of insertional code-switching among

the research subjects. I wanted to be able to create a questionnaire that would yield the rich data (Dornyei, 2003) that qualitative research could not; therefore, I used the Likert Scale to first establish its prevalence. I did however want to find specific examples in order to provide further evidence of insertional code-switching and the motivation for its use. I also sought to find trends to see if L1 speakers of English in Japan were using the same words and phrases perhaps with similar motivating factors. I had the participants label these examples with the following based upon the earlier discussed theoretical context.

| GAP | I use Japanese language while speaking English to other L1 speakers because there is a gap in the English language i.e I cannot find an English equivalent. |
| PRESTIGE | I use Japanese language while speaking English to other L1 speakers because I prefer the Japanese word even though there is an English equivalent. |

I also wanted to make sure the subjects avoided any "fatigue effect" (Dornyei, 2003, p. 14) by making it long enough to be of value but easy enough to avoid the negative influences of tedium therefore, I limited the maximum number of examples to just five, with twenty participants and five examples from each. This would give me an easy figure to work with (100) to provide quantitative data.

The questionnaire was sent by individual email to the participants in a Microsoft Word document which was then edited and returned via email. The participants were assured that their contributions would be used anonymously with pseud-onyms given, and would only be accessed by the researcher and only for the purposes of this paper.

5.4 The Student Feedback

Students were asked to give feedback through writing within a 15-minute period of class after a presentation on L1 English-speakers insertionally code-switching

with Japanese. The students were asked to provide their reflections freely on the practice of insertional code-switching to encourage free thought and give unbiased, anonymous feedback.

6. Results

6.1 Quantitative Results Plus Additional Comments

Nationality, L1, Length of Time in Japan and Japanese Proficiency of Participants

Nationality	L1	CEFR Scale	Length of Time in Japan Average
USA (8)		B1 (5)	13.8 years
U.K (5)		B2 (9)	
Australia (4)	English (20)	C1 (6)	
Canada (2)			
New Zealand (1)			

The participants all identified themselves to be from one of Kachru's inner circle (Kachru, 1992) of world Englishes, and the number of North Americans does reflect to some extent the predominance in terms of population that the area has both globally and locally in terms of L1 English speakers in Toyohashi. Also, all 20 of the participants recognize their first language to be English.

The participants had been in Japan for a mean average of 13.8 years, the shortest period of stay being 3 years and the longest being 31 years. Therefore, they have all been exposed to the Japanese language for considerable amounts of time. In fact, using the CEFR scale which the participants are familiar with due to their professions, they all rated themselves between the rankings of B1 to C1 in reference to their Japanese ability.

Use of L1 by L1 English Speakers in Toyohashi

18 out of the 20 participants use English with other L1 speakers of the language

at work, all do socially and also every participant believed Toyohashi to have an L1 English 'community.' However, only 3 of the 20 converse in L1 at home as most cohabit or are indeed married to Japanese citizens, others live alone.

How often do you use Japanese or words that are derivative of Japanese when speaking with other L1 speakers of English?			
Often 12	**Occasionally 6**	**Seldom 2**	**Never 0**

The above shows strong evidence of code switching with 18 out of the 20 at least occasionally using Japanese with their L1.

Gap and Prestige

The following sections of results will seek to establish the motivating factors for the practice.

I use Japanese language while speaking English to other L1 speakers because there is a gap in the English language i.e I cannot find an English equivalent.

12	4	4	0
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree

The above result is a strong indication that Matras' "cultural loans" (2009) are in effect. Participant DD commented that "in some situations only Japanese will suffice." Also, Participant SS stated that "the Japanese word is connected to the Japanese concept, it is untranslatable into English as it's tied to Japanese culture."

I use Japanese words or phrases while speaking English to other L1 speakers because I prefer the Japanese word even though there is an English equivalent.

10	5	4	1
Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly Disagree

With 15 out of 20 at least occasionally preferring Japanese over English, we can see evidence of Matras' concept of "prestige" (2009, p. 150). Interesting input in regards to the additional comments on this section were provided by a number of participants. Participant SH spoke of the Japanese being "richer and more meaningful" than the English equivalent which draws parallels with Myer-Scotton's idea of the "magic quality" (2006, p. 217) that exists in the reverse-core borrowing of language. Motivation for choosing from the donor language was explained by Participant MB to be "caused by economy, the Japanese is just easier to say than the long-winded English version." This was also touched upon by Participant NM who mentioned that "the Japanese is shorter and sweeter." A further interesting factor suggested by two of the participants was that the lexical differences between L1s led them to use the Japanese as a "lingua-franca." Participant MC (British national) commented that "I don't want to be using American English words like 'garbage' to make myself understood to American friends because it doesn't feel right, but they might not get the British English 'rubbish' so I'll go with the Japanese 'gomi.'" Participant DD (Canadian) also mentioned a "cultural minefield" where sometimes the Japanese is "the safer option" that avoids "annoying anyone with word choice."

6.2 Examples and their Selection – Gap and Prestige (see Appendix A)

All 20 of the participants offered 5 examples of borrowings from the Japanese language. They had been asked to categorize into GAP and PRESTIGE as described in the earlier section (see statements in italics). 64 of the 100 examples were thought to be motivated by a gap in the English language and 36 were seen to be caused by the Japanese being preferred.

Mixed Research Results: Examples from Participants

Adjectives as Exclamations

There is plenty of research suggesting that nouns are the most common form of insertional code switching (McClure, 1977). However the examples given by the participants lead one to believe that adjectives used as single exclamations are the most common grouping. In English it would be rather odd to exclaim loudly "painful!" upon hurting oneself, or "hot!" when sweating on a summer's day. However this is perfectly normal in Japanese and 36 of the examples given were of this form.

Japanese	English Translation*	Number of Examples
Natsukashi	Nostalgic	12
Mendokusai	Annoying/Pain in the ass	10
Atsui	Hot	6
Itai	Ouch	2
Samui	Cold	2
Yopparai	Drunk	2
Umai	Yummy	2

* Translation by the researcher (Peter Lyons)

These single word exclamations that are all adjectives were seen to be "advantageous in their simplicity" (Participant DT) and while many of them could be expressed through an English alternative, there does seem to be a gap due to the unfamiliarity of English with this concept. Indeed, Participant VW mentioned that the top example here of "natsukashi" could be explained as "something reminds me of something else" but that "just doesn't cut it."

Japanese Concepts – Cultural Loans

The second largest grouping of words or phrases was that of untranslatable cultural loans (Matras 2009). The following are the three most commonly given

examples by the participants, and each requires an individual explanation. A total of 30 out of the 100 examples given fall into this category.

Otsukare-sama desu (12 examples)

This expression as opposed to being a single word, can be loosely and confusingly translated to "you are a tired person." It is generally used in the work place and reflects appreciation for a co-workers' effort or toil. It can be used as a greeting or in the past tense at the end of a hard day's work. Participant IM states that "I like it, because it says something I can't say in English, and it sounds cool."

Genki (6 examples)

This word is both a noun and an adjective, and literally means energetic, lively or healthy, perhaps "full of beans" would be a good idiomatic translation. It is often used to enquire about a person's well being similarly to "how are you?" but as an interrogative question – are you *genki*? Participant SH comments that "once you've seen a Japanese person being *genki*, it's indescribable without using that word."

Yoroshiku onegaishimasu (4 examples)

Participant TH describes this as a "future thank you" expressing gratitude for something that is going to be done before it actually takes place. It also is used upon greeting and can be literally translated in another way as meaning "please consider me favourably" which is a cumbersome and unnatural expression.

Monetary Terms used for Convenience

10 of the 20 participants mentioned that they will use Japanese to refer to prices in Japanese yen when conversing with L1 English speakers in Japan. Participant CC stated that he found it easier to say "*ichi-man-en*" as opposed to 'ten thousand yen.' Japanese has a counter for tens of thousands which is *man*, a shorter and

convenient way of communicating the same message.

6.3 Student Responses to the Research (see Appendix B)

Student written responses are generally unfavourable to the practice of L1 English-speakers inserting Japanese into their everyday English especially within the classroom by the teacher.

Students highlight how the practice is aligned with the situation in its appropriacy. In more formal situations or with monolingual speakers of English the practice could at best lead to confusion, and at worst, annoyance. Student C is able to give an example from their own family to emphasize this.

While some students see the practice as being fun (Student D) and convenient when abbreviating longer English terms (Student F), the majority of students did not want their teacher to insertionally code-switch in the classroom again due to the formality of the situation, and also because of not wanting to be exposed to a pseudo-English differing from the standard L1 of the instructor.

7. Conclusion

In regards to there being a 'gap' in English that L1 speakers of the language are filling with Japanese due to the deficiency in the matrix language, there is strong evidence indicated by this research. These cultural loans (De Mente, 2004, Matras 2009) are describing the indescribable or at least the difficult to describe.

The wording of the term 'prestige' was perhaps unfortunate as Participants PM and DD both mentioned that the 'superiority' (PM) suggests an 'arrogance' (DD) of the long-term resident in Japan "showing off" (DD) their L2 knowledge. The "socially more powerful, dominant community" (Matras, 2009, p150) if seen as being local to Japan and therefore the Japanese language, may very well be more

prestigious but seen in the global context the ambiguity of prestige makes the term seem inept. Participants often preferred the Japanese because of its convenience/economy as opposed to seeing it to be better than the English alternative, as seen with the use of Japanese for monetary terms. Also, of interest was where Japanese was being used as a lingua-franca working between Englishes such as British and American.

The short, predominantly single word and occasional short phrase code switching occurring in the L1 English speaking community is evident of insertional code switching. Its motivations have been investigated by this research with mixed results, yet its existence cannot be denied and further investigation would be beneficial to highlight the morphology of English when exposed to another language.

The post-research study with university students while extremely limited, also calls for further study to investigate the pedagogical consequence of insertional code-switching by teachers. The largely negative feedback could equate with the practice being avoided by the teacher. However, in my classroom, I hope a deeper understanding of this bilingual behavior will help students have a stronger grasp of their linguistical ability and see languages as being fluid and non-prescribed.

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Appendix A – Selected L1 English-speaker Responses

Participant DD

In some situations only Japanese will suffice.

There is a cultural minefield where sometimes the Japanese is the safer option that avoids annoying anyone with word choice.

I have an occasional tendency to use Japanese English but only when Japanese English has an abbreviation that is more convenient such as 'combini' for convenience store' that 'just rolls off the tongue better.

'Prestige' implies arrogance, I know what you mean though, I've heard wankers

showing off when they use it (Japanese in L1 English conversation.

Participant SS

In Japan, often the Japanese word is connected to the Japanese concept, it is untranslatable into English as it's tied to Japanese culture.

Participant SH

Japanese is just richer and more meaningful in many ways.

Once you've seen a Japanese person being 'genki' it's indescribable without using that word.

Participant MB

It's caused by economy, the Japanese is just easier to say than the long-winded English version.

Participant NM

The Japanese is shorter and sweeter.

Participant MC

I don't want to be using American English words like 'garbage' to make myself understood to American friends because it doesn't feel right, but they might not get the British English 'rubbish' so I'll go with the Japanese 'gomi.'

Participant DT

The day I can't decipher between Japanese English and English is the day I need to go back to Canada.

Single word adjective exclamations are advantageous in their simplicity.

Participant VW

'Natsukashi' could be explained as something reminds me of something else but that just doesn't cut it.

Participant IM

I like it, (Japanese) because it says something I can't say in English, and it sounds cool.

Participant TH

'Yoroshiku' kind of means a future thank you.

Participant CC

It's a hell of a lot easier to say 'ichi-man-en' instead of ten thousand yen.

Participant PM

I'd be careful with the word 'prestige' as it suggests superiority.

Appendix B– Selected Student Responses

Code-switching is not OK in formal situations. – Student A

Code-switching is OK for bilingual situation, but not when person doesn't speak native language. – Student B

I don't think code-switching is suitable when talking to someone who doesn't speak the two languages. My dad often code-switches when he goes back to the U.S and talks to his parents. – Student C

I think it (code-switching) is fun and easy. I mix languages with my French buddy all the times. We speak French, English and Japanese. – Student D

I think code-switching is annoying, I don't want people to do it thinking it's cool, because it's not. – Student E

I think to make words shorter like 'conbini' makes sense but others not. – Student F

I want to learn native English not strange English. – Student G

If teacher code-switches I get confused. – Student H

Teacher shouldn't code-switch in class because it is formal situation. – Student I