

Code-switching in the Anglophone community in Japan

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The purpose of this study is to investigate code-switching in native speakers of English (NSsE) who live in an Anglophone community in Japan in relation to their social networks. The study observes the use of Japanese words and phrases during conversations in English between NSsE and examines the impact of the speakers' social networks on their use of code-switching in a language contact situation.

The members of this Anglophone community start forming new social networks as soon as they arrive in Japan. The influence of speakers' social networks on their linguistic behaviour has been studied by researchers including Labov (1972) and Milroy (1980). The current study explores the impact of the NSsE social networks formed in Japan on their use of code-switching. Each informant was interviewed to collect information about people with whom he/she has a close relationship and regular contact in order to define his/her social networks.

The informants consist of NSsE living in Japan as English teachers. Sets of natural, spontaneous conversations in English between two NSsE from the same country were collected from the same informants on two separate occasions a year apart. The linguistic variable focused upon is Japanese words and phrases (except proper nouns) that could easily and naturally be expressed in English. The frequency of the use of Japanese vocabulary and the genres present is examined.

More than 1200 Japanese words and phrases were observed in the linguistic data collected on two occasions from 39 informants. Statistical analyses revealed that there was a significant correlation between the speaker's use of Japanese and his/her social networks with English teachers (both Japanese and NSsE). The analysis of social networks with linguistic behaviour suggests that a sense of solidarity is likely to encourage high frequency in the use of code-switching among the NSsE in Japan.