

Bilingual children's use of contact-induced Japanese with 'South Asian' features indexing their social context

Category: discourse/pragmatics/sociolinguistics

Providing examples from recorded natural discourse classroom conversations in a mosque community in Tokyo suburbs where English, Japanese, Urdu and written Arabic are used, this paper discusses the use of a particular contact-induced variety of Japanese by Japanese-Urdu bilingual children (aged 5 to 14) who are able to speak standard Japanese fluently. The variety, which will be called SAJ from here on, primarily resembles the second language variety of Japanese spoken by the first generation adult male immigrants, i.e., typically of pupils' fathers and the teachers at the mosque. SAJ was occasionally used in teacher-pupil interactions but not in peer interactions. Close analysis of occasions where the Japanese-Urdu bilingual pupils used the variety showed that (1)the variety was used when the pupils need to position themselves close to 'equal' to the adults than subordinates to them (2)the uses can be described as *crossing* (Rampton 1995), where the pupils' do not consider the variety their own but someone else's – here, the South Asian adults'.

SAJ shows differences in phonetic, phonological, lexical, syntactical, pragmatic and paralinguistic features from the standard Japanese used by the pupils. Phonological and phonetic features include differences from standard Japanese in phonemes (retroflex t), pitch accent, sentence intonation, and moraic structure. Differences in morphosyntax were seen in omitted particles and changed word orders. Pragmatic features involves some calque-like use of the verb *yomu* (to read), influenced by *paR'naa* (to read/to study) in Urdu.

The following (a) is an example of the occasions where the variety was used:

(a)Teacher A: うるさいだめだよ, ちゃんと勉強やってよ
Jamila: うるさくない, 私しゃんとやってる:↓

(keys to transcription

Underline highlighting South Asian features

: used for prolonged syllable

↓ falling pitch intonation)

Here, while the pupils are about to begin the English class taught by Mrs.B, Mr. A came back from a different classroom. Mr. A tells them to be 'good' despite the fact

that they have not been noisy yet, displaying his authority but more like a greeting and a sign of entering the classroom. Mr. A pronounces “sh” in place of “ch” when he speaks Japanese. The word “shanto” is meant to be *chanto* (meaning ‘properly’ or ‘well’). Jamila copies the way Mr. A says the word in responding, using “shanto” instead of the standard Japanese version “chanto”. Jamila shows a negative affective stance towards what Mr. A has said, directly rejecting what has been said. Along with the phonetic/lexic copying of the teacher’s utterance, there is a slight intonational and phonological diversion from the standard variety. The final phoneme is prolonged and with a lowering intonation, whereas in the standard it would not be prolonged at all and would not be in lowering intonation.

In addition to pupils’ strong preference in using standard Japanese among themselves, analysis of codeswitching into Urdu by bilingual pupils in the rest of the discourse show that Urdu is never used as a peer language among themselves, nor is it used for direct confrontations by pupils towards the teachers. SAJ is a stigmatised variety which is not spoken among the pupils, but an alternative to standard Japanese or Urdu in confronting the teachers. I argue that despite the fact that SAJ indexes stigma involved in using non-standard form of Japanese, SAJ also indexes power and authority of the male adults of the mosque community. SAJ is a variety used by the pupils to fit and to negotiate the social context which they are involved in.

<Bibliography>

Rampton, Ben, (1995) *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity Among Adolescents*. Longman.