

# Head/Complement Relations: Portmanteau Code-Switching between Japanese and English <sup>1)</sup>

Toshiaki FURUKAWA

## 要旨

本稿は日本語と英語のコード切り替え文の1種である「かばん文」(Portmanteau sentence)の統語的特徴を記述する。かばん文とはある構成素(bridge)が日本語と英語の2つの構成素に挟まれている文を指す。日本語と英語のコード切り替え文においてかばん文が可能なのは、これらの言語では主要部と補部が鏡像関係にあるからである。文法的なかばん文と非文とされるかばん文を比較すると、bridgeとなる構成素は補部でなければならないことがわかる。換言すれば、主要部がbridgeとなるかばん文は存在しない。このため、かばん文におけるコードの切り替えは必然的に英語から日本語となる。しかしながら、なぜ補部・主要部・補部の構造を持つかばん文が非文となるのか生成文法に基づく理論的な説明がない。生成文法による理論的説明を試みるのが次なる課題である。

**Key words:** Head/complement relations, Code-switching, Portmanteau sentences

## 1. Introduction

Two competing views on code-switching are widely recognized in bilingualism research. One group of scholars insists that code-switching can be explained only within a system of rules separate from monolingual grammar, while another group claims that the principles of Universal Grammar can successfully account for code-switching phenomena (MacSwan 2000, 2004). In this paper, I present evidence from portmanteau sentences produced by Japanese/English code-switching speakers to support the view that code-switching is subject to the same rules that govern monolingual speech.

Portmanteau sentences are structures formed by embedding a shared constituent, or bridge, in between two other constituents. To understand how such sentences are formed and processed, it is essential to consider the asymmetric structure of head/complement relations. Previous studies on code-switching have not raised clear predictions on the constraints which govern portmanteau sentence generation since they fail to account for this crucial point. This study examines the role of head/complement asymmetry in portmanteau sentences while also

considering that there is likely a number of ancillary factors that can potentially affect their formation and grammaticality.

The next section reviews previous studies that have been done regarding Japanese/English portmanteau sentences. Following this, Section 3 provides original data that I have gathered in sociolinguistic interviews and grammaticality judgment tests. Section 4 analyzes this data and discusses the mechanisms that appear to underlie portmanteau sentences. By providing a descriptive grammatical sketch of syntactic structures attested in Japanese/English code-switching, this study can be used as a basis for further theoretical inquiries on general code-switching phenomena.

## 2. Review

Nishimura (1985:81) states that “two sentences, an English sentence followed by a Japanese sentence, are combined with a shared element” to form a portmanteau sentence, as shown in (1) below:

(1) You pull this much TSUKAU DESHO.

V (non-past)

Use

[(84) in Nishimura (1985: 81)]

Nishimura points out that similar sentences are found in speech of monolingual English speakers:

(2) That’s the only thing he does is fight. (from Kroch: personal communication)

[(87) in Nishimura (1985: 82)]

Nonetheless, Nishimura suggests that portmanteau sentences such as (1) occur more frequently than those resembling (2) (ibid: 82). This may be due to the fact that the bridge in (1), this much, has only one grammatical relation, while its counterpart in (2), the only thing he does, has two different grammatical relations. Thus, the bridging of multiple grammatical relations appears to be a structure that can give rise to varying degrees of acceptability for portmanteau sentences. This is linked to the essential function of portmanteau structures, which are often used by code-switching speakers who repeat information, perhaps for pragmatic reasons. As such, syntactic and pragmatic constraints appear to work in tandem to make portmanteau like that of (1) more frequent than that of (2).

Nishimura (1985) introduces a second type of portmanteau sentence involving “mirror

image correspondence” of Japanese and English constituent structures (ibid: 82). Several examples of such patterns are shown below in (3)-(7), with the shared elements highlighted in bold ((88)-(92) in Nishimura 1985: 83-84), with my emphasis added):

(3) We bought about **two pounds** GURAI KATTEKITA NO.

about bought

(4) Let’s become **KECHI** NI NAROO.

tight let’s become

(5) There’s **children** IRU YO.

V (existential)

(6) Look at the things she buys for **Sean** NI.

for

(7) She got told that **next three months KA NAN KA WA you can’t buy anything** TTE.

or so

P

quotative

“She got told that, for the next three months or so, you can’t buy anything.”

Nishimura (1985: 84) makes several observations of these types of sentences, including that there are no cases where “a Japanese sentence is combined with an English sentence with a shared element.” In other words, portmanteau code-switching appears to occur only from English to Japanese. Likewise, there are no cases where “a verb-final Japanese sentence is combined with an English sentence with a shared element” (ibid: 85). While recognizing that Japanese verbs are never followed by English object noun phrases, Nishimura offers no theoretical explanation for such a phenomenon.

In a later study on Japanese/English portmanteau sentences, Azuma (1993) considered grammaticality, based on which he claimed that acceptability of bridge phenomena can be implicationally related to word class. For example, according to Azuma’s argument, open-class words such as noun phrases can serve as bridges, while closed-class words such as adpositions cannot. Azuma also observed that verbs never function as shared elements in either Nishimura’s or his own data.

### 3. Data

For this study, I collected data during sociolinguistic interviews with a bilingual speaker who is a second-generation Okinawan American living in Hawai'i. Second generation Okinawan Americans as well as Japanese Americans are often fluent in both English and Japanese. However, portmanteau sentences are extremely low in frequency, with only seven tokens found in approximately five hours of recorded interview data. To support these examples, I therefore also consulted two other bilingual speakers for their views on the grammaticality of various portmanteau sentences. In the example sentences presented below, plain font is used for English, italics for Japanese and boldface for bridge constituents

Although examples (8) and (9) below show other syntactic complexities, such as subject drop in (8) and a possibly resumptive pronoun in (9), for the purpose of the current study, let us focus for the time being on the structure of the bridge and its two embedding constituents. In each of these sentences, the bridge constituent is a noun phrase.

- (8) In **twenty years**-*de* pay so much one month.

-in

'In twenty years you will have to pay so much (money per) month.'

- (9) Vegas *it-tara dare demo* even **the tour leader** *demo* they don't lend him money.

go-if anyone even

even

'When you go to (Las) Vegas, no one, (not) even the tour leader, lends money to (anyone, even if he has been robbed).' <sup>2)</sup>

Likewise, examples (10) and (11) show structures where noun phrases serve as bridges. The two constituents sandwiching the bridge are either verbs or case markers.

- (10) He was writing **the death certificate** -*o kaite*.

ACC write

'He was writing the death certificate.'

- (11) One can see **the byooki** -*o*.

illness-ACC

'Another (type of fortuneteller) is good at telling people about their illnesses.' <sup>3)</sup>

Verbs can also become bridges as shown in Example (12), which appears to contradict Nishimura

(1985) and Azuma's (1993) claims that verbs cannot serve as bridges in portmanteau sentences. We will return to this question in Section 4.

- (12) She cannot *ik-a-re-n* *des-yo*.  
go-AFF-can-not PLT-PAR  
'She cannot go (to Japan), you know.'

In examples (13) and (14), a full clause with internal code-switching appears to serve as a bridge.

- (13) I say *there is no such things Okinawa-ga kami-guni iute*.  
NOM god-nation say  
'I said (to my mother), "There isn't such a thing like 'Okinawa is a nation of gods.'"'

- (14) Because *one lady-ga no anmari yoku-nai kara*.  
NOM PAR not very well-NEG because  
'Because one lady was not feeling so well.'

In order to contrast with each of the above examples, (15) is a sentence that I have constructed for the purpose of collecting grammaticality judgments for structures that start in Japanese and switch to English. Azuma (1993) claims that closed-class lexical items such as adpositions cannot serve as bridges, and that this type of sentence must therefore be unacceptable. While I agree with Azuma regarding the grammaticality of (15), his explanation for why such sentence should be ungrammatical is nonetheless unsatisfactory.

- (15) \**Uchi-no kanojo to* my girlfriend I went to see the movie.  
house-GEN girlfriend with  
'With my girlfriend I went to see the movie.'

#### 4. Discussion

I have two preliminary observations regarding the above examples: (a) code-switching in a portmanteau sentence can occur from English to Japanese, not vice versa, supporting the view stated in Nishimura (1985); and (b) when a shared constituent is a complement, the portmanteau code-switching occurs with two heads (i.e., X) appearing on either side of the complement (i.e., YP). The only permissible structure of portmanteau sentence is thus X-YP-X.

Note that (a) and (b) are correlated in the sense that if (b) is correct, (a) must follow. This

is because, when switching from English to Japanese, the X-YP-X structure allows for a head-initial English phrase and a head-final Japanese phrase (e.g., in twenty years de in (8)), and each phrase meets the standard syntactic structure for English and Japanese respectively.

However, (16) and (17) contrast in terms of grammaticality. Based on my collection of grammaticality judgments, the former is considered grammatical while the latter is not.

(16) Mary likes **cats-ga suki**.

NOM like

‘Mary likes cats.’

(17) \*Mary likes **cats-o suki**.

ACC like

‘Mary likes cats.’

The direction of code-switching in the above sentences is the same (i.e., English to Japanese). Instead, these sentences show how grammatical case can also affect the grammaticality of such sentences. Some Japanese verbs, such as *suki* ‘like’ mark their object with a nominative marker *-ga*. Thus, while (16) is grammatical, (17) is not. This shows that case assignment is governed by the Japanese verb in (16) and (17) instead of by the English verb.

The other direction of code-switching (i.e., Japanese to English) would derive a structure that would be incompatible with the phrase structure rules of both languages. The X-YP-X structure would under this arrangement derive a head-initial Japanese phrase and a head-final English phrase (e.g., \*de twenty years in), making the sentence unacceptable.

Let us again consider (12), repeated here as (18) for easy reference. Given Nishimura (1985) and Azuma (1993)’s claims that verbs cannot serve as bridges, (18) seems to be an aberrant example, since it contains the verb *ik-* as a bridge between two sets of an auxiliary verb and a negative marker. My assumption is that (18) is acceptable because the bridging verb is a complement, while the auxiliary negative marker *cannot* is the head. If *ik-* were a head, and not a complement, the sentence would presumably be unacceptable.

(18) She cannot *ik-a-re-n* *des-yo*.

go-AFF-can-not PLT-PAR

‘She cannot go (to Japan), you know.’

Why, then, are portmanteau sentences of the type shown in (19), which starts in Japanese and

switches into English, disallowed? Perhaps it is due to the fact that a head (i.e., -e-nai) is positioned to serve as a bridge, but only a complement performs such function.

(19) \*John-wa *ik-e-nai* go.

TOP go-can-not

'John cannot go.'

Similarly, (20) is unacceptable because again a head is meant for use as a bridge. When switching from Japanese to English, the XP-Y-XP pattern is compatible with the phrase structure rules of the two languages. However, this pattern violates the principle that portmanteau bridges must be complements.

(20) \*Mary-wa *neko-ga suki* cats.

TOP cats-NOM like

'Mary likes cats.'

Nonetheless, (21) is judged as marginally acceptable and thus slightly better than (20). The only difference between (20) and (21) is that, in the latter, the code-switching occurs at a bridge. As a result, the bridge and its following constituent form an English verb phrase (i.e., likes cats). Other constraining factors are relevant to a full understanding of this structure.<sup>4)</sup>

(21) ?Mary-wa *neko-ga likes* cats.

TOP cats-NOM

'Mary likes cats.'

## 5. Conclusion

The most significant point in the present paper is that only a complement can serve as the bridging shared constituent in portmanteau sentences. This point is crucial to understanding the mechanisms of portmanteau code-switching and has not been discussed in the previous literature (e.g., Nishimura 1985 and Azuma 1993). With this constraint in mind, it is natural that code-switching in a portmanteau sentence should be able to occur from English to Japanese, not vice versa. To put it differently, a head cannot serve as a bridge. I have also argued, contrary to the previous studies, that portmanteau sentences with a verb serving as a bridge can be acceptable in cases where the verb is not a head.

The phrase structure of Universal Grammar underlies the fundamental syntactic

phenomena associated with portmanteau code-switching. This raises serious implications for our understanding of the nature of code-switching, since it apparently does not operate only at a superficial level but rather is driven by principles universal to all human languages. Hence, the present paper supports the line of inquiry drawn by many other generative approaches to code-switching phenomena (e.g., Belazi, Bubin & Jacoueline 1994; DiSiullo, Muysken & Singh 1986; MacSwan 2000, 2004; Muysken 1995; Myers-Scotton 1995; Sankoff & Poplack 1981; Woolford 1983). In future research, I hope to provide a more detailed explanation of other syntactic phenomena involving portmanteau sentences.

### Notes

- 1) I would like to express my foremost gratitude to Dr. Yuko Otsuka of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa for her guidance and encouragement. I would also like to thank two anonymous reviewers whose comments were helpful in developing this paper. Carl Polly and Laura Robinson proofread early drafts. My thanks also go to participants of this study. All remaining errors are of course solely my own responsibility.
- 2) An anonymous reviewer questions whether the bridge the tour leader should be considered as a complement of *even* and *demo* 'even' or, rather, as an adjunct. My hypothesis is that it serves as a complement, and I recognize that consideration of code-switching bridges as adjuncts is worthy of additional investigation, as is a suggestion by the same reviewer to use the head/non-head distinction in considering such adjuncts.
- 3) Some contextual information is necessary to understand this sentence. The informant was discussing fortunetellers immediately before uttering (11), and one of the fortunetellers she mentioned was able to predict diseases that people would suffer from in the future.
- 4) A minimalist approach could be explanatory for (21), whereby Japanese verbs could be seen to have a strong feature (NP\*) requiring their objects to be raised, making (20) ungrammatical because an NP cats remains in the lower position. Meanwhile, English verbs do not have this strong feature and, therefore, (21) is grammatical since the NP cats can acceptably remain in the lower position. This example calls for a more detailed analysis beyond the scope of the present paper, which aims only to advance the previous literature on Japanese/English code-switching in Nishimura (1985) and Azuma (1993) by proposing head/complement relations as the governing constraint of portmanteau sentences.

### List of Abbreviations

ACC	accusative case
AFF	affix

GEN	genitive
NOM	nominative case
PAR	particle
PLT	polite form
PST	past tense

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