

Contrasting Speech Errors and Turn-Taking between Two Groups

Kyoko Saito

The purpose of this project was to examine speech errors and turn-taking between two groups. I also looked for any variances in speech errors and turn-taking due to cultural and language differences.

1. [Informants]

The first group consisted of four children and an adult. Two of the children (Tommy and Bobby) are native English speakers; the others (Toro, Mio, and Kyoko) are native Japanese speakers and they are bilingual in both Japanese and English. Kyoko was the only adult speaking freely in both Japanese and English. Actually, I am Kyoko.

2. [Method]

I taped the first group's conversation in Palos Verdes Estates, California. Bobby was five years and two months old and went to kindergarten. Tommy was nine years and ten months old and attended public school. Bobby and Tommy are brothers, and they were born and raised in California. Their parents are native English speakers. Toro and Mio are siblings and lived in Toronto, Canada. They were visiting their grandparents in Palos Verdes Estates. Mio was five years and nine months old, and attended a Canadian kindergarten on weekdays. Toro was eight years and eleven months old, and attended a Canadian public school on weekdays. Both Mio and Toro were born in Toronto, but their native language is Japanese and their parents and grandparents are Japanese. Both children attended a Japanese language school on Saturdays. Because they were soon going to return to Japan, their parents forced them to speak Japanese at home.

While I was preparing lunch and the children were eating, I taped the following conversation.

3. [Conversation]

1. Kyoko: Let's eat lunch and go out. Where do you want to go, Bobby?
2. Toro: Golf area.
3. Tommy: Golf. Golf.
4. Bobby: Golf, golf, golf. Miniature golf, miniature golf.
5. Kyoko: Let's eat lunch now. Let's eat lunch. What would you like for lunch?
6. Mio: Nani ga aruno. (What do you have?)
7. Kyoko: Sarami, sarami sandoichi ka hamu sandoichi. (Salami, a salami sandwich or a ham sandwich.)

8. Mio: Mou hitotsu keiki. (Would you give me another piece of cake?)
9. Kyoko: Oishii deshou. (It tastes good, doesn't it?)
Tommy, would you like another piece of cake?
10. Tommy: Would you give me a small one?
11. Kyoko: A small one?
Tommy, do you think I am the best cake maker in the world? Right?
12. Toro: Not in the world.
13. Kyoko: In Palos Verdes? In the U.S.A.?
14. Toro: No, just in the south.
15. Bobby: Just in the south.
16. Tommy: My mom is good.
17. Toro: My mom's better than this.
18. Tommy: My mom's, too. My mom, too.
19. Toro: My mom cook Japanese and English and French, Italian.
20. Mio: My mom, my mom, my mom always make cheese cake. Right?
21. Kyoko: I like Japanese cake. I like Japanese puppy cake.
22. Mio: I remember Christopher's birthday and that's good. Chocolate and vanilla that is good.
23. Bobby: I like ice cream cake from my — when I was five. You know?
24. Toro: I am almost nine.
25. Bobby: He is already is nine.
26. Toro: My is January.
27. Mio: He is already eight.
28. Tommy: I'm older you. I will be ten on March. What date is your birthday? January what?
29. Toro: January 14.
30. Tommy: My brother November 14.
31. Toro: My sister's birthday is April 14. My cousin's birthday, my cousin's birthday is July 14.
32. Mio: Who speak, who speak, who speak, Bobby army?
33. Tommy: I see that. Mine March 21st. My friend's birthday is Christmas Day.
34. Toro: He'll gets a lot of presents.
35. Tommy: He gets twice as many presents.
36. Toro: I don't like about having my birthday on Christmas. Do you know why? You don't have any presents a long time. I'd rather have like my birthday twice a year. Mou iranai. Omochi taberukara. (I don't want to have it. I will eat a piece of rice cake.)
37. Mio: Kore iranai. Onaka mou ippai. Mou tabenai. Gochisosamadeshita. (I don't want to eat this. I'm full. I don't want to eat anymore. Thank you for lunch.)

38. Toro: Who like Halloween?
 39. Bobby & Mio: Me.
 40. Toro: What were you last time?
 41. Tommy: I was, I was a skeleton with pink hair. Pink spotted hair. Pink spotted hair.
 42. Toro: I was a pup.
 43. Tommy: What looked like a pup?
 44. Toro: Do you know, do you know I did?
 45. Tommy: What?
 46. Toro: I covered with hair.
 47. Mio: I'm bigger than you. I'm bigger than you really. Tell me this.
 Ne, watashi Bobby yori ookii deshou? (I'm bigger than Bobby, aren't I?)
 I'm bigger than Bobby.
 48. Toro: Look this, look this, look this.

4. [Analyses]

First of all, I transcribed the dialog and found all speech errors made by the four children and Kyoko. The speakers often repeated words or sentences. There are several reasons for this repetition, such as for getting attention, emphasizing, correcting mistakes, uncertainty, anxiety, and giving more details. For example, when Tommy said, "Golf, golf"(3) and Bobby said, "Golf, golf, golf. Miniature golf, miniature golf"(4), they showed their eagerness to play golf. When Kyoko said, "Let's eat lunch now. Let's eat lunch"(5), she tried to draw the children's attention to lunch. Mio repeated "My mom" and "who speak" three times in "My mom, my mom, my mom always make cheese cake. Right?"(20), and in "Who speak, who speak, who speak Bobby army?"(32) in order to get the attention of the other children and also to get a chance to speak. Toro repeated "Do you know" twice in "Do you know, do you know I did?"(44) and repeated "Look this" three times in "Look this, look this, look this"(48) in order to get attention or show surprise, and because of his anxiety to speak up. The children repeated words or sentences for emphasis; for example, Tommy repeated "My mom's, too" twice in "My mom's, too. My mom, too."(18) Toro repeated "My cousin's birthday" twice in "My sister's birthday is April 14. My cousin's birthday, my cousin's birthday is July 14."(31) Mio repeated in Japanese "I don't want to eat" in "Kore iranai. Onaka mou ippai. Mou tabenai. (I don't want to eat this. I'm full. I don't want to eat anymore.)"(37) She also repeated "I'm bigger than you. I'm bigger than you really. Tell me this. Ne, watashi Bobby yori ookii deshou? I'm bigger than Bobby."(47) Mio switched to Japanese in order to ask Kyoko if she was bigger than Bobby. All of these showed emphasis. The children and Kyoko expressed their desires and their opinions strongly by repeating words or sentences.

The speakers also provided more details by repeating words; for example, Kyoko said in Japanese, "Sarami, sarami sandoichi ka hamu sandoichi. (Salami, a salami sandwich or a ham sandwich.)"(7) She also said, "I like Japanese cake. I like Japanese puppy cake."(21)

Mio said, "I remember Christopher's birthday and that's good. Chocolate and vanilla that was good."(22) They gave more details about the cake. Tommy gave more details in "I was a skeleton with pink hair. Pink spotted hair."(41) Bobby also gave more details about golf when he said, "Golf, golf, golf. Miniature golf, miniature golf."(4)

For emphasis or due to uncertainty, the listener would sometimes repeat a speaker's words or sentences; for example, after Toro said, "No, just in the south,"(14) Bobby repeated it as "Just in the south,"(15) thus emphasizing the sentence. After Tommy said, "Would you give me a small one?"(10), Kyoko repeated a part of the sentence as "A small one?"(11) for confirmation. In the speech of the informants, I observed their "slips of the tongue" in scientific analysis of their speech errors.

David W. Carroll discusses major types of slips of the tongue in *Psychology of Language* (1986). "In shifts, one speech segment disappears from its appropriate location and appears somewhere else. Exchanges are, in effect, double shifts, in which two linguistic units exchange places. Anticipations occur when a later segment takes the place of an earlier segment. They differ from shifts in that the segment that intrudes on another also remains in its correct location and thus is used twice. Perseverations occur when an earlier segment replaces a later item. Additions add linguistic material, whereas deletions leave something out. Substitutions occur when one segment is replaced by an intruder and differ from previously described slips in that the source of the intrusion may not be in the sentence. Blends apparently occur when more than one word is being considered and the two intended items "fuse" or "blend" into a single item.

If you have closely examined these examples, you probably have noticed by now that these types of errors occur with a number of different linguistic units. In some cases, a single phoneme is added, deleted, or moved, but at other times it may be a sequence of phonemes, morphemic affixes and roots, whole words, or even phrases. As a general rule, errors tend to occur at only one linguistic level per utterance. That is, when a person clearly says the wrong word, as in substitutions, the syntactic structure of the sentence, prosodic structure, and phonological structure remain intact"(page 254).

The informants deleted words often; for example, Tommy said, "My mom is good"(16) instead of "My mom is good at making cakes." Toro said, "My mom's better than this."(17) He should have said, "My mom's cake is better than this." Tommy said, "My mom's, too" (18) but should have said, "My mom's cake is better than this, too." Toro deleted the word "food" in "My mom cook Japanese and English and French, Italian."(19) Bobby deleted "birthday" in "I like ice cream cake from my —"(23) Toro deleted "birthday" and "in" in "My is January."(26) Toro also deleted "th [θ]" in "January 14." (29) and in "April 14 and July 14" (31) Tommy deleted a possessive "s," "birthday" "is," and "th [θ]" in "My brother November 14."(30) He also deleted "is" in "Mine March 21st."(33)

From the standpoint of language difference, Toro and Mio deleted the third person singular "s." Toro said, "My mom cook Japanese and English and French, Italian."(19) Mio said, "My mom, my mom, my mom always make cheese cake."(20) She also said, "Who

speak, who speak, who speak, Bobby army?”(32) However, Toro added an extra third person singular “s” in “He’ll gets a lot of presents.”(34) This is because we have no singular or plural markers in the Japanese language. Bobby added an extra verb “is” in “He is already is nine.”(25)

Even though they sometimes deleted words, or added extra words, they could communicate with each other because they understood each other by context, by inferences, and by their own language experiences.

One of the clear turn-taking rules is that a speaker addresses the next person, but this rule was not always followed. Even though Kyoko addressed Tommy, “Tommy, do you think I am the best cake maker in the world, right?”(11) Toro answered instead of Tommy. Toro also interrupted the conversation and answered for Bobby; for example, Kyoko addressed Bobby, “Where do you want to go, Bobby?”(1) but Toro answered her.

Topics were shared by the four children and they immensely enjoyed mutual conversation. Cakes reminded them of their mothers and of their birthdays. Birthdays reminded them of their ages and of Christmas because they receive presents on birthdays and at Christmas. Christmas is a special day and reminded them of Halloween. It appears that individual topics related well to each other, and that the switching of topics was smooth.

5. [Informants]

The second group consisted of four native-English-speaking children (Lisa, Sean, Bobby, and Tommy), and of two adult native English speakers (Gloria and Mr. Bernhardt), and of me, Kyoko, who speaks both Japanese and English.

6. [Method]

Bobby was six years and four months old and attended kindergarten. Tommy was eleven years old and attended public school. They were in the first group. Sean was five years and six months old and attended precare school. Lisa was three years and two months old. Sean and Lisa are brother and sister. Gloria was 45 years old and she is the mother of Tommy and Bobby. Mr. Bernhardt (age 78) was the American benefactor with whom I lived. All four children, Gloria, and Mr. Bernhardt are native monolingual English speakers. Kyoko is a native Japanese speaker who can also speak English.

While we were eating dinner, I taped the following conversation.

7. [Conversation]

1. Mr. B.: You want juice. Did you say? OK. Give you apple juice.
You want a Dr. Pepper, too?
2. Bobby: Uh-huh.
3. Mr. B.: Don’t, don’t, don’t, don’t, don’t play with it. That’s food. You don’t play with it.
4. Kyoko: Who wants to drink apple juice? Sean, what would you like for drink?

5. Sean: Ahn — Dr. Pepper.
6. Kyoko: How about — Dr. Pepper, Dr. Pepper. How about Gloria?
7. Gloria: No, thank you.
8. Bobby: Dr. Pepper. Thank you.
9. Sean: I will open it. I can open it.
10. Kyoko: Can you open, Lisa?
11. Sean: She can't. She can't eat. She can't drink whole thing this.
12. Bobby: I can open this.
13. Sean: I can, too. Simple.
14. Lisa: A dook this, dook this, dook this. With hot dog? Can I hot dog?
15. Sean: Not yet.
16. Bobby: Not, she can't all.
17. Sean: Yeah. She likes some. She show, she stock a half of them.
18. Lisa: Keep burping Dr. Pepper. You keep stop burping.
19. Sean: She almost said, she almost said, guess what, she, she almost said, guess what, she almost said "keep burping."
20. Lisa: Don't do that because — dod eating.
21. Sean: Apple, apple juice make me burping.
22. Bobby: I need my wieners. I need two wieners.
23. Sean: She even calls wieners.
24. Kyoko: Yeah, wiener. What do you call?
25. Sean: What? What?
26. Kyoko: Wiener or Vienna?
27. Gloria: Hot dogs.
28. Kyoko: Hot dogs?
29. Bobby: Can I have ketchup? I have three. Could I have ketchup?
30. Gloria: You have plenty enough.
31. Bobby: I know one. I barely have only for one.
32. Sean: I know. I barely have any.
33. Bobby: No, I will get for myself.
34. Kyoko: Do you need mustard?
35. Bobby: I got for myself. I know I got myself even.
36. Kyoko: Sean, what is your brother doing now?
37. Sean: I don't know. Maybe he is. Maybe he is. He is —.
38. Kyoko: Is he crying? Crying?
39. Sean: What?
40. Bobby: Yeah, he is crying.
41. Lisa: He is weeping.
42. Sean: I don't think he is crying.
43. Bobby: I think he is. Because he missed a cake.

44. Sean: You know. We told about the cake.
45. Tommy: Because he didn't want to come. Not his business. He missed the cake.
46. Bobby: Because she said last time when I saw.
She said we could have some strawberry cake.
47. Sean: Strawberry cake?
48. Bobby: Uh-huh. This is the time so you have to bake a strawberry cake.
49. Kyoko: Sorry, I didn't. I couldn't go to the stand today, the vegetable stand today so
I couldn't bake a strawberry cake today.
50. Gloria: You are in trouble.
51. Tommy: We have a lemon cake.
52. Bobby: You are in trouble. You promised.
53. Tommy: Wait. She made a lemon cake.
54. Kyoko: Lemon cake I made so next time I really promise.
55. Bobby: You promised that strawberry cake.
56. Kyoko: So, this, this, this time —
57. Mr. B.: Strawberry cake with a lot of ketchup.
58. Sean: So what's the dessert then?
59. Kyoko: Lemon cake.
60. Sean: Lemon cake?
61. Bobby: But I hate a lemon cake.
62. Kyoko: You hate it? You have ice cream. Bobby, Bobby, Bobby —
63. Sean: I will have ice cream.
64. Kyoko: Bobby, would you ask Mr. Bernhardt to go to the garage and pick up two ice
cream? Would you tell Mr. Bernhardt, Bobby?
65. Mr. B.: Oh, you don't want to have ice cream, do you?
66. Bobby: Yes, I do.
67. Mr. B.: All kids, ice cream, too. With all that food?
68. Gloria: Yes, please.
69. Tommy: Kids, all over. Yes, please.
70. Lisa: Yes, dammy.
71. Mr. B.: What flavor do you want? Vanilla?
72. Kyoko: There are two. Only two.
73. Mr. B.: There are only two? Oh?
74. Bobby: No, mom wants it. I want it. Sean wants it. Tom wants, too.
Do you want to ice cream, Lisa? Five people.
75. Kyoko: Oh, this is really excellent. Sean, do you want this recipe?
How about Tommy?
76. Bobby: Do you need the recipe?
77. Tommy: Information? I want to —
78. Lisa: Snakes, a big snake. A boy has.

79. Sean: Here, snakes.
80. Tommy: Uh-huh. I know.
81. Kyoko: How many snakes?
82. Sean: Ahn — I think three.
83. Kyoko: Three snake or three snakes?
84. Tommy & Sean: Three snakes.
85. Sean: Why this thing on? Why this thing on? Why that?
Where should I push down? Is this on?
(Sean was touching the tape recorder at this time.)
86. Kyoko: Uh-huh.
87. Sean: No, stop minute.
88. Kyoko: Because Toro, Toro and Mio want to listen —
89. Sean: What?
90. Kyoko: To, to English.
91. Sean: What?
92. Kyoko: Toro and Mio. Bobby and Tommy's friends. Japanese friends.
93. Sean: How about me and sister? How about me?
94. Kyoko: Because this coming summer, they will come so you can meet them.
95. Sean: What?
96. Kyoko: This coming summer, they will come to the United States so that
they will meet you.
97. Gloria: Do you understand what she said?
98. Sean: No.
99. Bobby: Yes.
100. Tommy: Yes, see Sean. They are coming here. They are coming to grandma that
why they will here. Do you understand? They come from Japan to here.
They can play with us. Then they can play with us. You can meet them.
101. Gloria: They are Japanese students. Toro and Mio.
102. Sean: Are they your kids?
103. Kyoko: No. Are you my kid?
104. Sean: No. My mother's name is Julie.

8. [Analyses]

First of all, I found speech errors for all members of the group. They often repeated words or sentences. This revealed attention getting, emphasis, mistake correction, uncertainty, anxiety, detail giving, and surprise by repeating one or more words or by repeating one or more sentences. For example, when Mr. Bernhardt said, "don't" five times in "Don't, don't, don't, don't, don't play with it. That's food. You don't play with it"(3), he emphasized that food should not be played with. Sean said, "I will open it. I can open it"(9) to emphasize his ability and he changed the auxiliary verb from "will" to "can." Sean also said,

“She can’t, she can’t eat, she can’t drink whole thing this”(11) to emphasize the fact that his little sister couldn’t open the can and he corrected the verb from “eat” to “drink.” He must have realized that he should use the verb “drink” for Dr. Pepper. Lisa said, “A dook this, dook this, dook this”(14) to get attention. At that time, Lisa couldn’t pronounce [l] yet. Sean repeated “She almost said” four times in “She almost said, she almost said, guess what she, she almost said, guess what, she almost said keep burping.”(19) He was showing surprise and getting attention by repeating the words. Sean also repeated “Apple” twice in “Apple, apple juice make me burping”(21) to emphasize apple. Bobby said, “I need my wieners. I need two wieners”(22) to add detail. Sean repeated “what” twice in “What? What?”(25) to emphasize that he couldn’t understand. Bobby said, “I got for myself. I know I got myself even”(35) for emphasis. Sean repeated “maybe” twice in “I don’t know, maybe he is, maybe he is —”(37) to show uncertainty. Kyoko said, “Sorry, I didn’t. I couldn’t go to the stand today, the vegetable stand today —”(49) to correct the auxiliary verbs from “didn’t” to “couldn’t,” and she also added detail as “the vegetable stand.” Kyoko repeated “this” three times in “So, this, this, this time —”(56) for emphasis. She also repeated “Bobby” three times in “Bobby, Bobby, Bobby —”(62) Bobby, would you ask Mr. Bernhardt to go to garage and pick up two ice cream?”(64) in order to get Bobby’s attention. Sean repeated “Why this thing on?”(85) twice to get attention and due to uncertainty. Kyoko repeated “Toro” twice in “Because Toro, Toro, and Mio want to listen”(88) for emphasis and to hide the real reason for taping the conversation. Sean repeated “How about me?” in “How about me and sister? How about me?”(93) for emphasis. Kyoko said, “Because this coming summer, they will come so you can meet them”(94) and she repeated “This coming summer, they will come to the United States so that they will meet you.”(96) In the second sentence, she added detail, the United States. Tommy said, “Yes, see, they are coming here. They are coming to grandma that why they will here”(100) to give detail in his second sentence. He also said, “They can play with us. Then they can play with us”(100) for emphasis and in his eagerness to play with them.

For emphasis, for correcting mistakes, and for giving detail, the listeners repeated speakers’ words or sentences; for example, after Bobby said, “I know one. I barely have only for one”(31) then Sean repeated Bobby’s sentence as “I know. I barely have any.”(32) After Gloria said, “You are in trouble.”(50) Bobby repeated it. Mr. Bernhardt repeated Kyoko’s sentence for confirmation in “There are only two”(73) After Kyoko asked Sean “Sean, do you want this recipe?”(75) Bobby repeated her sentence as “Do you need the recipe?”(76), because even though Kyoko addressed Sean and Tommy, they did not say anything.

Informants often deleted words as slips of the tongue; for example, Mr. Bernhardt said, “Did you say? OK. Give you apple juice.”(1) He deleted “what” in the first sentence and “I will” in the second sentence. Lisa deleted a verb in “Can I hot dog?”(14) Bobby deleted a verb in “Not, she can’t all”(16) and deleted the object “her” in “Because she said last time when I saw. She said, we could have some strawberry cake.”(46) Kyoko deleted an object

in “There are two. Only two.”(72) instead of “There are two kinds of ice cream flavor.”

Even though the informants sometimes deleted words, they could still communicate with each other because they could understand the sentences by context, by inferences, and by their language experiences.

When I examined the second group’s turn-taking, the rules were not always followed; for example, Kyoko addressed Gloria “How about — Dr. Pepper. Dr. Pepper, Gloria?”(6) Bobby answered “Dr. Pepper. Thank you.”(8) Even though Gloria asked Sean if he understood what Kyoko said, Bobby answered instead. Kyoko addressed Lisa “Can you open, Lisa?”(10) but Sean answered “She can’t. She can’t eat. She can’t drink whole thing this.”(11)

Sometimes, the listeners interrupted the speakers before they had finished their sentences; for example, before Lisa finished hers, as “Don’t do that because — dod eating.”(20) Sean interrupted her. Before Sean finished his sentence “I don’t know. Maybe he is. Maybe he is. He is —”(37) Kyoko interrupted him. When Kyoko said, “So, this, this, this time —”(56) Mr. Bernhardt interrupted her. When Kyoko addressed Bobby as “Bobby, Bobby, Bobby —”(62) Sean interrupted her. Before Tommy finished his sentence “Information? I want to —”(77) Lisa interrupted him. While Kyoko was speaking as “Because Toro, Toro and Mio want to listen —”(88) Sean interrupted her and said, “What?” Then Kyoko finished her sentence. Most of the interruptions occurred when the speakers put pauses in their sentences.

The group’s topics were shared by everybody; for example, Dr. Pepper gave them a chance to speak up. They expressed their opinions about whether they could open the can or how much of it they or others could drink. From talking about wieners, they changed the conversation, as wieners had reminded them of using ketchup. Then ketchup gave them a chance to express their opinions such as to how much ketchup they wanted. Sean’s brother reminded them of strawberry cake and then they remembered why they had come together. Moreover, the tape recorder reminded Bobby and Tommy of their Japanese friends, Toro and Mio, about whom they told Sean. This was one topic they couldn’t share because not all the group members knew them. Tommy, Bobby, Gloria, Mr. Bernhardt, and Kyoko were familiar with Toro and Mio, but Sean and Lisa were not.

9. [Conclusion]

When I compared speech errors and turn-taking between the two groups, due to cultural and language differences, I found no special cultural differences between them, as both groups repeated words or sentences for the purpose of getting attention, emphasizing, correcting mistakes, showing uncertainty or anxiety, and for giving more detail. Moreover, both groups deleted words as slips of the tongue. However, there were some language differences. Toro and Mio often deleted the third person singular “s.” Kyoko deleted objects often due to a language difference. The Japanese language has no singular or plural markers and often the object in a sentence is deleted.

Even though both groups deleted words in their sentences, they had no trouble communicating because they could understand each other by context, by inferences, and by language experience.

Neither group followed the clear turn-taking rule which states that a speaker must address the next person and then the addressed person has a right to speak. Moreover, the listeners in both groups interrupted the speakers before they had finished their sentences.

Code-switching was the only clear difference emerging between the two groups. Code-switching is the switching of languages, dialects, or styles of discourse during a conversation. As the first group consisted of three native Japanese speakers and two native English speakers, code-switching occurred only among the native Japanese speakers. Every time Toro and Mio asked questions of, or spoke to Kyoko, they used Japanese. Likewise, Kyoko used Japanese when she was spoken to in Japanese. It is axiomatic that communication in Japanese among Toro, Mio, and Kyoko was easier and more natural than struggling to speak in English.

Bibliography

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