Book Review

Codeswitching in University English-Medium Classes: Asian Perspectives. (Series: New Perspectives on Language and Education). Edited by Roger Barnard and James McLellan. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2014. xv + 224 pp. ISBN 978-1-78309-7 (hbk).

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In addition to an introduction by the editors, an overview by Ernesto Macaro, and an afterward by Andy Kirkpatrick, this book has eight chapters by various scholars reporting on codeswitching in English-medium university classrooms in various countries in Asia, namely Taiwan, China, Japan, Thailand, Bhutan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Korea, as well as among some Korean students in New Zealand. Each chapter is divided into two parts, with an initial study followed by a commentary. In some cases the commentary is based on data from the same country as the main study, and in others, attempts have been made to pair the countries, so that the backgrounds are comparable.

In his overview, Ernesto Macaro offers a brief theoretical framework for the investigation of codeswitching in language classrooms. In particular, he considers whether switching into the L1 of students is beneficial or harmful for L2 learning.

In Chapter 1, Ching-yi Tien analyses her own use of English and Mandarin in an introductory linguistics course in a university in Taiwan, and she reports frequent switches to Mandarin to explain concepts and also to banter with the students, even though use of their first language in English classes conflicts with departmental policy. In his commentary, David Li insists there is no need to feel guilty about codeswitching in class, as it is often beneficial for students' learning.

In Chapter 2, Lili Tian analyses codeswitching in two English-medium classes in universities in China, and she reports that switching to Chinese most commonly occurs to explain the meanings of English words. In her commentary, Claudia Kunschak reports that most English teachers at a university in south China claimed to spend just 5% of their class time codeswitching out of English.

In Chaper 3, Simon Humphries reports on the efforts of teachers of English in two colleges in Japan, where Japanese dominates in the speech of the teachers. In contrast, in his commentary, Richmond Stroupe describes how the language teachers at a private university in Japan manage to restrict their use of Japanese to about 3% of the class time in all but elementary classes.

In Chapter 4, Chamaipak Tayjasanant describes the practice of two English teachers in Thailand, one of whom uses Thai for over 80% of the time, while the other uses English for over 67% of the time. In his commentary, Matthew Robinson describes the situation in Bhutan based on interviews with two teachers at the Royal University of Bhutan where there is apparently very little codeswitching, partly because only about a third of the population speak the national language, Dzongkha, as their first language.

In Chapter 5, Le Van Canh describes the codeswitching of a university teacher in Vietnam, based on detailed analysis of the audio recording of four hours of teaching and also stimulated recall by the teacher. In his commentary, Fuad Abdul Hamied analyses the codeswitching that occurred in one class in Indonesia and also provides feedback from the students about their attitudes towards the switching that took place.

In Chapter 6, Noor Azam Haji-Othman and colleagues from the Language Centre at Universiti Brunei Darussalam report on codeswitching to Malay during English classes, which apparently occurs among students but almost never by their teachers, and also to English and Malay during introductory Tutong language classes. In their commentary, Ain Nadzimah Abdullar and Chan Swee Heng observe that codeswitching by English teachers in Malaysia is more widespread than in Brunei, as all English teachers who responded to a survey acknowledged that they sometimes engaged in codeswitching.

In Chapter 7, Kenneth Keng Wee Ong and Lawrence Jun Zhang analyse the use of determiners such as *nei-ge* ('that') in English sentences by young people in Singapore, arguing that it provides evidence refuting the hypothesis that a matrix language supplies the functional morphemes during codeswitching. In her commentary, Isabel Martin reports that codeswitching between English and Tagalog in the Philippines is exceptionally widespread, and furthermore that it facilitates fluent conversational interactions.

In Chapter 8, Moyra Sweetnam Evans and Ha-Rim Lee describe the use of codeswitching in written recalls by Korean students in New Zealand after they read some texts in English. In her commentary, Hyun-Ju Kim describes the perceptions of academic staff towards codeswitching by means of a questionnaire distributed in a Korean university.

Finally, in his afterward, Andy Kirkpatrick notes that many of the papers reflect the feelings of guilt that teachers of English often feel when they engage in codeswitching, but such feelings are misplaced when codeswitching is done in a constructive fashion.

Despite the admirable efforts in this book to generate debate between the different authors, in fact little debate emerges. In many cases, the commentary section of each chapter reports a separate study and makes little mention of the main study in the chapter, and even in Chapter 3 in which both parts describe the situation in Japan but report very different results, there is little attempt to analyse in detail the reasons for these differences. This is a pity, as despite the wealth of data presented in the book, we do not really get any closer to resolving the main issue, of whether switching into L1 during English language classes is beneficial or harmful. The underlying assumption of most chapters, suggested in the initial overview and also reiterated in the afterward, is that codeswitching can be constructive when it is not too extensive, especially when it is used to explain complex concepts or provide a simple explanatin for unknown vocabulary. But while there is plenty of data illustrating how this kind of codeswitching can occur in university language classes, little evidence is actually offered to confirm the assumption that it is constructive, or to determine what degree of codeswitching might be regarded as not too extensive.

However, one should acknowledge that it would be naïve to expect these fundamental questions to be resolved in a slim volume such as this, and we should instead celebrate the wealth of fresh data that is presented, material that certainly adds to our knowledge about the extent of codeswitching practices in a wide range of English-medium classes in Asia, some of the reasons why this codeswitching occurs, and the attitudes of various teachers and their students towards the practice of codeswitching. Indeed, all the chapters in the book are packed full of data, many offering numerical analysis of the extent of codeswitching and the reasons for it occurring, and most chapters include detailed examples of actual codeswitching occurring in the classroom.

In most cases the data analysis and the extracts are all clearly presented, though one or two examples might have been explained a bit further. For example, it took me a while to understand how *accommodation* in a sentence that is otherwise in Thai involved 'tag-switching' (page 97), until I finally realised that the term 'tag-switching' was being used to include all single-word switches. And extract 20 on page 101 seems to involve only Thai, so I could not work out where the codeswitching occurred. But these are minor flaws in a valuable

collection of material that is thoughtfully analysed to illustrate the use of codeswitching in classrooms.

The title of the book is slightly misleading, as nearly all of the data (apart from the chapter on Bhutan) is from East Asia, and there is nothing from places such as Iran, India, or Central Asia. Nevertheless it represents a valuable collection of material from various countries in East Asia, and it further provides some useful snapshots of what goes on in a wide range of different English language classes throughout the region.