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Code Switching in Kailasam's Play – *Poli Kitty*

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T. P. Kailasam

Code Switching in Writing

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The study of the phenomenon of Code Switching in writing is in its infancy. Grosjean (1982) notes that “code switching is a very common phenomenon and writers reflect this in their work.” McClure (2001), in her investigation of Assyrian English code switching in writing and in speech, noticed that oral Code Switching has wider range and function in speech and that code switching patterns differ in genre of written text. McClure (2001) reiterates that although creative writing portrays similarities and differences found between speech and writing, the phenomenon of code switching in writing has not received much attention by scholars.

Scholars have exhaustively studied the plays of T. P. Kailasam (1884-1946), a modern playwright in Kannada, a Dravidian language spoken mainly in the states of Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and larger cities in India, from various literary perspectives. However, there has been scant research on the phenomenon of code switching and Code mixing in Kailasam’s plays.

This paper looks at the plays of the Kannada playwright Kailasam who, in his plays, profusely employed code switching in the dialogues in order to effectively deliver the punch line. The paper will look at the play “Poly Kitty” by Kailasam in the framework of Austin’s (1962) “performative utterances”.

Introduction

“All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances”- Shakespeare, *As you Like It*.

These are lines of eternal truth made by the very famous playwright and dramatist Shakespeare. As actors, we deliver our dialogues according to situations while at the same time send a meta message about who we are, what we are, what we think and what we want. The use of language has reached great heights and we consciously or unconsciously employ techniques like body language, gesture, tones, etc., to make our speech effective.

In the written form of play, however, there exists a great difficulty to present the subtle nuances of communication that are found in speech. In plays, the playwright, among other techniques, employs the phenomenon of code switching to make the reader aware of the Meta-message.

Meta-message is a second message, encoded and super-imposed upon the basic message, which indicates how we want someone to take the basic message

Languages in Contact and Code Switching

Languages in contact influence one another leading to bi/multi lingual phenomenon such as borrowing, code switching, interference and transfer. Code-switching can be described as a

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means of communication which involves a speaker alternating between one language and another in communicating events. In other words, the process describes someone who code-switches using two languages (interlingual) or dialects (intralingual) interchangeably in a single communication (Milroy and Muysken 1995:7).

The term 'code' refers to speech varieties or dialects in a language or even languages, which are studied in a social context. Code switching can be described as a method/means of communication where the speaker varies between one language and the other in the dyad. Scholars have studied the phenomenon of code switching in varied situations. Grosjean (1982) defines code switching as "the alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation".

According to Grosjean (1982) code switching can occur at the single word, phrase or at sentence level. Gumperz (1982) defines *conversational code-switching* as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems". Gumperz (1982) observes that in "code switching, the speakers communicate fluently with each other maintaining an even flow of talk that has no hesitation pauses, changes in sentence rhythm, pitch level or intonation".

Heller (1988) defines code switching as "the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode". Myers-Scotton (1998) highlights the aspect of language proficiency in her definition of code switching and defines code switching as a phenomenon which the speakers indulge in "when the speakers are sufficiently bilingual to produce monolingual utterances in either of the languages, although they may well speak one language better than the other".

The above definitions can be applied appropriately to Kailasam's plays are, indeed, an artistic representation of interpersonal communication.



The present study looks at the phenomenon of code switching in one of Kailasam's plays.

The phenomenon of code switching will be categorized according to the categories made by Blom and Gumperz (1972). According to Blom and Gumperz (1972), "situational code switching assumes a direct relationship between language and the social situation" and metaphorical code switching is "where the switch relates to particular kinds of topics or subject matters rather than to change in social situation".

Gumperz (1982) later developed the notion of conversational code switching to account for switching in a dyad where the participants "are unaware of the codes they were using at certain time in their conversation". Auer (1998) concurs with Gumperz's (1982) notion of conversational code switching by studying the code switching phenomenon in spoken language and concluded that the two prevailing methods of language analysis (grammatical/syntactic and pragmatic/discourse) is insufficient and therefore conversational structures have to be considered to account for the diversity in language contact phenomenon.

Poplack ([1979/1980] 2000) divides code-switches into three categories, based on the position of the code-switches in a sentence and proficiency in language required by the speakers to code switching.

Tag-like switches are made when "the speaker makes an utterance which is mainly in one language, except for a tag in another language and suggests that tag-like switches can be produced in L2 even when the speaker only has a limited knowledge of that language". Tags, interjections and idiomatic expressions, represent the lowest category according to Poplack's scale.

Extra-sentential switches are made when “switches occur between “full sentences or larger segments.’ In this type of switching, the switch occurs within a sentence or a clause. These switches demand a higher competence in L2 than tag-like switching”.

Intra-sentential switching “demands an even higher level of competence in both languages as compared to tag-like switching or extra-sentential switching”. *Intra-sentential switching* represents the final category of Poplack’s scale.

The concept of Nonce borrowing was defined by Grosjean (1982) states that “code switching can be of any length, a word, a phrase, a sentence and is a complete shift to the other language, where as borrowing is a word or short expression that is adapted phonologically or morphologically to the language being spoken”.

Gumperz (1982) defines “the introduction of switched words or short, idiomatic phrases from one variety into the other that are incorporated into the grammatical system of the borrowing language and are treated as part of its lexicon, take on morphological characteristics and enter into its syntactic structures”.

Poplack (1979, 1980, 2000) define Code Switching “as alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent and borrowings is an item from one language that has been phonologically, morphologically and syntactically integrated to fit into another language”

In this paper, anything ranging from single word switches to entire turn will be regarded as code switching and words that are phonologically and morphologically adopted will be categorized as a hybrid words and not treated as merely borrowed words due to their function.

A Brief Introduction to Kailasam

Kailasam, or Thyagaraja Paramasiva Kailasam (1884-1946), was a playwright and a prominent writer of Kannada literature. His contribution to Kannada theatre, and especially comedy, earned him the title Prahasana Prapitamaha, "the father of humorous plays". His plays mainly focused on social problems like the dowry system, religious persecution, woes in the extended family system and exploitation of women.

Kailasam’s language was poetical even as it was satirical and sarcastic. Kailasam used words from Sanskrit and other Indian languages to convey the required shades of meaning by his characters in his plays e.g. ‘Guruji’, ‘brahmacharya’, ‘pariksha’, ‘sabha’, ‘khadga’, ‘nishada’, etc..

Kailasam’s draws a rhetoric distinction between real life and stage, saying that in real world there is no sidewing for characters to retire when they fail to perform. If characters fail to

perform, they only perish! Kailasam used household names like Pathu, Sathu, Kitty, Subbu, aholbaba, etc., and used the contracted forms of expressions and hybridized forms of Kannada and English. For example, Namma Clubeu ‘our club’ to appeal to the audience and to strike a note of familiarity among the audience while subtly trying to uplift the society like the cause of widows as the widows were ill-treated in the society.

The paper looks at the phenomenon of code switching in a play of Kailassam, ‘Poli Kitty,’ considered as one of his best works.

Some Sample of Code Switching

The protagonist Kitty in the play is a boy from an orthodox Brahmin family who was studying in the sixth form (11th grade). Due to financial circumstances, he had to discontinue his schooling. His favorite past time is wrestling and spends a lot of time at the wrestling pitch and comes in contact with other wrestlers who speak Urdu and Hindi. Code switching for Kitty is an unconscious behaviour and he freely code switches between Kannada, Hindi, Urdu and English. Kitty also shows a penchant for creating words using two or more languages like Laptology = Lapta (‘To steal,’ from Kannada) and Ology (‘To study’ from English), Baccatana= Bacca (‘child’ from Hindi) and Tana(‘resembling’ in Kannada).

Functions of Code Switching

Kitty speaks the standard language with elders, as a mark of respect. He code switches with aplomb to express anger, frustration, and helplessness. This code-switching phenomenon serves a two-fold purpose of making the reader laugh while also conveying an implicit satirical message to the readers. As Judith Butler (1997) says, words have the power to ‘do things’. In this play, Kitty code switches to create a feeling of aversion towards the upper class.

In the play, Kitty is asked to write a composition by the school inspector who has chastised the English master before the class. Kitty, to express his anger, writes a composition, which is an excellent example of the wit, satire and the phenomenon of code switching utilized with expertise to convey Kitty’s Frustration, anger and helplessness at the situation.

Some Examples

Kitty: ‘Write a composition’anthlo yenuo modalu hakonda taskara! Achari ! ‘the dog is a noble animaloo and man who loves dogoo is a noble manoo! ‘adu (A)! innu (B) ‘ Give example, nimma lifeninda antha’;(from your life).....

Kitty’s answer to the question:

Quoschn A: Dog is noble animal, man who loves dog is nobleman

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Answer

(a) Dog=2/s

1st/dog = Country (kantri)

2nd/dog = Caste (jaati)

1st/dog's house = street

Therefore, Country dog's food = yanjalu but yanjalu is in tippe gundi

Therefore, 1st/kantri dog's house is street

2nd/dog is jaati

2nd dog's house is bungalay

Therefore, bungalaywalas are afraid of robbers: again therefore bungalaywalas are doddamanushyarjaati!

Therefore keep money and jewels extra!

But 2nd /dog also wants food.

Therefore money having doddamanushyas give food for

2nd/dog with flesh to make atron ng bite

1st /dog, robber and badamanushyas

but flesh market's master is Kasaba;

(k= kataka, saba= sabi=mussalman-Gandhi brother)

Therefore wanted é wanted u:, food for 2nd dogs for strong teeth, (b) egsample from life!

I day I walk up road of big-wigs pet (doddamanushyara pété full of Bangalows =banglégalu

I bungalow with name "sukha nivasa" on gate door pillar = joyful living place. This out side bungalow.

Therefore inside all bungalows quarrels etc.

Therefore doddamanushyars get much pay excetra and buy many foods and grow fat.

Their quarrels is all empty fat = bari kobbu. Bungalay walas being all fat , (no muscle), always afraid of people, keep dogs.

When I was before sukhanivasa bungalow, a big black dog came and made noise.

Dog's noise = bark =bogalu

This dog which us noble animal, jumped on my legs and became hungry, took one quarter sé:ru from my leg.

Four paavs = I sé:ru

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Therefore 1 quarter sé:ru = 1 paav ans

Therefore to stop giving more meals to dog. I took a heavy stone in hand, I puncér weight
5 sé:rs = I puncér Ans.

I pressed puncér stone on noble animals' head strongly. Noble animal stopped meals with my leg
and made crying noise = goolu. hearing noble animal's crying noise the doddamanushya of the
bungalow came out and sent javaan = working man, in car for doctor.
Therefore doddamanushya also noble man.

Doctor came and dodda manushya said "see boy's leg"!

Doctor saw dodda manushya asked "This boy got any disease?" dog noble animal, price is 200
rupees. Please also see if dog's teeth are broken, "that boy's leg is very strong"
In the above example the owner of the dog uses English language
This is example from life for Dog is noble animal.

Example 2

- Lo yen hennigs
- Chamdana yagarsi avanu ninna charandi yalli sulaiso maat yettidane
- "he I speaking of skinng you alive and putting you sleep in a gutter"
- Gatra hegiddarunuve dillu narmi narmi anta tildidde
- I always thought that The heart is soft despite the physical attributes
- "Nimma mommmaganige khilasi andre tinsodu alveno
- Nimm tabiyat taklifu
- Nanna coatoo, open collar na pin haki close colaru
- 100 loafes of breaddu at one anna eachu

Analysis and Discussion

Kitty- "Write a composition" anthlo yenu modalu hakonda taskara! Achari ! "the dog is a
noble animaloo and man who loves dogoo is a noble manoo! "adu (A)! innu (B) " Give example,
nimma lifeninda antha"; (from your life)

Life ninda is a word created by affixing (inda) the instrumental marker to English word Life

Kailasam makes an excellent use of English and Kannada languages to bring out the naturalistic
expression of Kitty "the dog is a noble animaloo (nativisation and the use of long u: to stress)
and man who loves dogoo (nativisation and the use of long u: to stress) is a noble manoo
(nativisation and the use of long u: to stress)! "adu."

Quoschn A: Dog is noble animal, man who loves dog is nobleman

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Kailasam uses the nativised form of pronunciation of the word *question* to quoscen to bring out the class difference between the upper class and the lower class.

Therefore, Country dog's food = yanjalu but yanjalu is in tippe gundi

Kailasam uses the English form of plural i.e the usage of bound morpheme "S" to Kannada tippegundi (dustbin) to make it an anglicized word as tippegundis.

2nd dog's house is bungalay, the local Kannada language influenced pronunciation of the word *bungalow*.

Therefore, bungalaywalas are afraid of robbers: again therefore bungalaywalas are doddamanushyarjaati!

Bungalay walas is a mix of English and Hindi and creates a sarcastic term bungalay walas. but flesh market's master is Kasaba; (Kasaba here is a hybrid of two words in Kannada (k= kataka[butcher], saba= sabi=mussalman-Gandhi brother).

Nativisation of words refer to and is concurrent to the studies conducted by Grosjean (1982), Gumperz (1982) and (Poplack 1979, 1980 and 2000) who propound that a borrowed word is a phenomenon where the word is incorporated into the grammar of the borrowing language.

Eg. 100 loafes of **breaddu** at one anna **eachu**.

Nimma mommmaganige **khilasi** andre tinsodu alveno

Nimm tabiyat **taklifu**

Nanna **coatoo**, open collar na pin haki close **collaru**

In the above examples, words borrowed from English and Hindi are nativised by the author to make the dialogue more realistic and naturalistic.

Butler (1997) notes that the ability of words to "do things" makes hate speech possible but also states that, at the same time, such speech is dependent on its specific embodied context. Kailasam's code switching between English and other languages empowers the words to make things happen. As we read Kitty's answer, the term – bari kobbu or 'empty fat' conveys the meta message that the upper class people that Kitty comes across are empty implying that they have no values and are quite fat due to good living.

Lo yen hennigs

Chamdana yagarsi avanu ninna charandi yalli sulaiso maat yettidane

" he I sspeaking of skinng you alive and putting you sleep in a gutter"

Gatra hegiddarunuve dillu narmi narmi anta tildidde

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I always thought that the heart is soft despite the physical attributes

Illocutionary Act

Kailasam has nativised the word Dil (Hindi) to Kannada as Dillu and the use of the word narmi meaning soft/tender is said in Hindi, a language that is not Kitty's mother tongue, conveying the thought that the concept of tenderness is something alien to him.

This feature is concurrent to Austin's (1962) illocutionary act concept where the word that varies with the context in which it is uttered implies that it is impossible to adequately define the performative meanings of words, including hate, abstractly. In this sentence, sulaiso – a hybrid of Hindi and Kannada words sulana and irisu is used.

The relevance and import of this sentence exists only, if this sentence is taken in the context of Kitty's poverty and his aspirations for a better life.

Summary

This paper looks at Kailasam's use of language in his play *Poly Kitty*. Language is used by Kailasam to critique the society while trying to evoke humor in the audience. This use illustrates Austin's (1962) illocutionary act concept, which iterates that words and their meanings vary with contexts in which these are used, and therefore impossible to define the meanings of words abstractly.

The paper observes that Kailasam created hybrid words such as Laptology to bring out the nuances of character's anguish and aspirations, thus making the character more real. The paper also observes that Kailasam code switched at the word level, phrase level and syntactic level. Kailasam employs the contextualization cues (Gumperz 1982) as a metacommunicative device to make the character and his condition more realistic to the audience while marking the sociological boundaries. The above study clearly marks the case that code switching is a powerful tool employed by the playwright to bring out the subtle nuances of the character while placing them amongst the audience.

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