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# A Discourse Analysis of Code-Switching: a case study of interactions between Japanese students who studied abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic *

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キーワード：code-switching, experience of studying abroad, discourse analysis

　近年、日本では、急速に変化する社会に対応し得るグローバル人材を育てるため、文部科学省や大学をはじめとした教育機関における海外留学が推進されている。しかし、2019 年 12 月末に「原因不明の肺炎」として報告され、2020 年に入り世界中に感染が拡大した新型コロナウイルスは、海外への渡航を制限し、言語習得はもちろん、現地の文化やコミュニケーションを実際に体験したいと願い、留学を希望していた人々に大きな影響を与えた。

　あるコミュニケーションの場において、話し手が言語を切り替える「コードスイッチング（以下 CS)」は、バイリンガル社会や多言語社会でよく観察される行動として研究がなされてきた。海外の学校に通い、学習した言語を用いて現地の人々とコミュニケーションを取る海外留学経験者は、母語と留学先の言語を日常で使用することから、二言語あるいはそれ以上の言語を切り替える CS を行うと考えられる。

　これらの背景から、本研究は「コロナ禍」である 2021 年 8 月または 9 月から、アメリカまたはカナダで交換留学をしていた日本人女子大学生と、パンデミック前の 2018 年からアメリカに留学した筆者との会話で観察された新型コロナウイルス感染症に関する用語の CS を分析し、その CS が相互行為の中でどのような機能を持っていたのか明らかにすることを目的とする。分析の結果、コロナ禍の留学経験者が行った CS は、言葉の意味通りの内容を伝えるのみならず、話し手が実際に濃厚接触者となり隔離を告げられた当時の会話やその状況、3 回目のワクチン接種という留学先での経験を聞き手に伝える機能を持っていたことが明らかになった。

## 1 Introduction

　　The Japanese government has encouraged more university/college students to study abroad to become "global human resources (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports,

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Science and Technology: MEXT, 2022)." They are usually required to have language competence as well as intercultural communication competence. According to Japan Student Services Organization (2023), the number of Japanese university students that studied abroad reached a peak of 115,146 students in 2018; however, due to COVID-19, only 1,487 people went to study abroad in 2020. The following year in 2021, the number of students gradually increased to 10,999. It is evident that the COVID-19 virus had a significant impact on students' study abroad experiences.

In order to control the spread of the infection, many countries enforced travel restrictions as a border control measure, along with calls from governments and experts for the inoculation of a preventive vaccine. This atypical situation had a major impact not only on Japanese students, but also students from all over the world who had to postpone or cancel their study abroad. In addition, for students who did get the opportunity to study abroad, their experience was significantly impacted by the pandemic. International students' language use in particular was greatly influenced by COVID-19 as they had to collect information about the virus in a foreign country and in their non-native language.

International students typically are required to learn the language/s of their study abroad destinations. Therefore, within exchange and international student communities, speakers are commonly bilingual or multilingual as they must study and use a language different from that of their native countries. It has been shown that such bilingual and multilingual speech communities switch between languages within their conversation to exchange messages (Auer, 1998; Gumperz, 1982). Changing from one language to another is regarded as "code-switching (CS)" and is considered a sociolinguistic phenomenon dependent upon factors such as context and cultural background (Gardner-Chloros, 2009; De Fina, 2007). It can be said that people who practice more than two languages in their everyday interactions perform CS. Therefore, students who study abroad that are able to speak not only their mother tongue, but also the language/s used in their respective study abroad countries, are likely to utilize CS in their interactions.

On May 5th of 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 pandemic no longer "a public health emergency (WHO 2023)." However, a review of studying abroad in this atypical situation is needed to make use of such an experience as analyzing the kind of language use that took place in the COVID-19 environment may prove useful for future research. This study, on that account, focuses on the discourses among Japanese students who have studied abroad in either Canada or the U.S. during the

pandemic, especially concerning their use of CS in conversations related to COVID-19 based on discourse analysis. Following this concept, the aim of this article is to investigate how their use of CS was affected by the context of the ongoing pandemic during their time in a foreign country, and to discover the function of CS which the participants produced to establish the specific context of the conversation. Hence, this study refers to the research questions as follows:

1) What kinds of words related to COVID-19 were code-switched by Japanese students who studied abroad?

2) What is the function of the CS in the context of the conversation about COVID-19?

By answering these research questions, this study contributes to understanding the function of CS related to the specific context of COVID-19, by people who have studied abroad. The structure of this paper is as follows. First, the present article reviews literature on COVID-19 and studying abroad, CS, and then, introduces Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) as an approach. Next, the data is explained. Subsequently, two CS examples from female Japanese university students are analyzed. Finally, this paper will discuss how the experience of COVID-19 in foreign countries influenced those participants who were studying abroad during the pandemic and the function of their CS.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Covid-19 and studying abroad

The Japanese government required people who wished to enter Japan to submit either a valid vaccination certificate or pre-departure test from April 29th after midnight Japan Standard Time of 2023 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2023). As this study mentioned before, the number of Japanese students with study abroad experience had increased year by year; however, the spread of COVID-19 obliged those students to stop the continuing or planning of their study abroad or to postpone their plans until border restrictions were lifted.

Previous studies which were written before the pandemic that have pointed out the impacts and effects of studying abroad (cf. Yoshimura & Nakayama, 2010; Niimi et al., 2016; Nwosu, 2022). Niimi et al. (2016) importantly discovered that students who have study abroad experience acquired not only language competence but also positive

attitudes towards communicative competence and flexibilities. Other articles have analyzed international students' attitudes towards English from the perspective of language use (cf. Kuteeva, 2020; Siegel, 2022). Thus, these studies focus on the language skills and attitudes toward intercultural communication improved by study abroad experiences, as well as the impact and effects of studying abroad. Inversely, other research has examined students' study abroad experience during COVID-19. Kitano and Naitou et al. (2022) collected ethnographic stories by Japanese people who were studying in various countries and had to return to Japan at the time the pandemic first erupted. Furthermore, Heinzmann et al. (2022) conducted an interview towards two students who planned to study abroad but came back to their home, Switzerland, earlier than they expected, and analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on the students' social connection, language use, and emotions.

While previous studies analyze and discuss the effects of study abroad, intercultural communication, and the narratives related to participants' experience, there are few findings on the language use of people with study abroad experience. Thus, this article focuses on linguistic practice, especially CS and contributes to a further investigation of the language use of people who have studied abroad.

## 2.2 Code-switching

According to Gumperz (1982: 59), conversational code-switching is "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems." Code-switching is generally a common language skill among bilinguals or multilinguals used to communicate with each other, and is used in various ways depending on who one talks to. Gumperz (1982: 75-84) provides six conversational functions of CS: Quotations, Addressee specification, Interjections, Reiteration, Message qualification, and Personalization versus objectivization. However, Gumperz also suggests examining more interactions when CS occurs due to the complex combinations of those functions of CS. Blom & Gumperz (1972: 424-425) focused on speakers who construct a situation using CS. They introduced *situational switching* which described the language change to a direct relationship between language and the social situation, and *metaphorical switching* which designated the language shift to construe the meaning and context in the communication. Hall & Nilep (2015) abridge such switching to explore relationships between language and identity.

Ahearn (2021:146) defines CS as "[t]he sorts of shifts from one language variety to another that occur in a single social setting." It is also pointed out by linguistic anthropologists that CS indexes social meaning and individual or group identity. Ahearn (2021: 146-147) explains that CS is an absolute subject: to convey multiple social meanings and function in the language practice and to index particular social relationships, meanings, hierarchies, or language ideologies. Moreover, De Fina (2007) found that CS indexes people's identity regarding cultural and social backgrounds that influence one's language use. CS references relevant communication and allows people to index not only the reference of speech, but also social relationships and meanings.

In this study, CS is also viewed as a mode of behavior that is performed by multilingual speakers while utilizing and combining their full linguistic resources. Although CS is usually defined as a switch of the speaker's pronunciation, looking at the actual conversation in the data handled in this study, there are parts where CS is considered to be performed even if the pronunciation of the words were more in line with standard Japanese than English.

A difficulty within linguistic analysis has been the distinction between CS and borrowings. Scholars such as Poplack (2018) have therefore identified CS borrowings. According to Poplack (2018: 6), borrowings are regarded as the lexical items which are transferred or incorporated from *donor* language ($L_D$) into *recipient* language ($L_R$). Moreover, in the case of borrowings, a word from $L_D$ is applied to the grammar of $L_R$; on the other hand, in the case of CS, the grammar of $L_D$ is continued to be used (Poplack, 2018: 24). However, regarding the indexicality of CS, as in the previous studies presented above, the use of words which are considered borrowings that preserve the grammar of $L_R$ in Poplack's definition could also be treated as CS in communication.

Thus, it is necessary to define the term CS used within the present article. In this study, not only switching languages between sentences but also the switching of singular words and vocabulary is considered as CS. For example, when a Japanese word is replaced by its English equivalent and incorporated into the grammar of the sentence, this is considered to be CS.

## 2.3 Interactional Sociolinguistics

This paper follows Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) as a methodology. According to Gumperz (2015: 309), IS is an approach used to "interpret what participants intend to

convey in everyday communicative practice." In addition, the IS method analyzes situated interpretations, the assumptions and inferential process, and the relationships within interactional data (Gumperz, 2015:317). Therefore, it is significant to focus on social and cultural contexts such as background knowledge, conventions, and norms to shape the analysis of the data. Sierra (2018) applies the IS method to research how linguistic and media stereotypes appear in everyday talk and found that the use of specific language in interaction expresses not only humor and identity, but also stereotypes and ideology. An IS approach seems to be indistinctive from Conversation Analysis (CA) (Toomaneejinda & Saengboon, 2022:163) because both IS and CA investigate conversations as a data. However, IS focuses on "shared or non-shared interpretations rather than denotational meaning (Gumperz, 2015: 312)." Therefore, IS can be considered a type of Discourse Analysis.

One of the key features of IS is "contextualization cues" demonstrated by Gumperz (1982). Communication has the contextualization process as follows: Performance is first entextualized, and then becomes decontextualized. Accordingly, such context is recontextualized into appropriated communication (Bauman & Briggs, 1990). Contextualization cues are "any feature of linguistic forms that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions (Gumperz, 1982: 131)." In addition, contextualization cues indicate "relevant meanings and frames (Canagarajah, 2020: 565)" in social events. CS corresponds to one of the features of contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982; 2015; De Fina, 2007) and indexes interactional presuppositions as a communicative strategy in a given context. This article analyzes the communication among people who have experience of studying abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic using IS as a method to examine the CS produced by those people and its function.

## 3 Data collection

The present data was recorded via an online meeting tool, Zoom, from January to June of 2022, among friends who have studied abroad in English speaking countries. The conversations were conducted mostly in Japanese. A total of 782 minutes of digital video-recorded data among eight participants was collected and later transcribed according to the transcription convention in the appendix. In this paper, the actual Japanese utterances are displayed above their translations as shown below in the transcription. In the data, CS was observed 218 times, and most of those instances were related to the participants'

classes and their lives during studying abroad. This paper will select two excerpts from the data of four participants when CS was associated with COVID-19 to analyze its function. To uphold ethical standards in the study, all participants were fully informed about the research process and the intended use of their data prior to participation. Consent was obtained from each participant for the use of recorded conversations in research and publication. Moreover, pseudonyms were used in transcriptions instead of real names to protect anonymity.

The participants of this article included four female Japanese university students who were studying abroad either in the U.S. or Canada as exchange students, and the researcher, who was in a master's degree course at a Japanese university. The exchange students previously attended the same university in western Japan; thus, they already knew each other well, however, the participants and the researcher had never met in-person. All participants, including the researcher have the experience of studying abroad for more than six months. However, the four students started their studying abroad in August/September of 2021 and came back to Japan in April/May of 2022 while the researcher studied abroad in the U.S. in August of 2018 to May of 2019 during her undergraduate study. The students participated in Zoom meetings several times and were required to talk for approximately one hour each time. The researcher participated in the meetings as a facilitator; thus, she sometimes provided conversation topics such as their memories studying abroad. The detailed information of the participants is provided in the table below.

Table 1: Participant information

| Name (Pseudonym) | Age | Study abroad country | Participating place |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Aki | 22 | Canada | Library |
| Kasumi | 22 | Canada | Library |
| Hikari | 21 | Canada | Dorm |
| Matsuri | 22 | America | Dorm |
| Satsuki (researcher) | 25 | America | Home |

In 4.1, the firtst recorded video meeting was held on March 16 of 2022. Participants included Aki (A), Kasumi (K), Hikari (H) and the researcher (S). In the data, H was the youngest of the participants and therefore she used more honorific Japanese than the

others. In 4.2, the data was recorded on April 9 of 2022 and Matsuri (M) and the researcher participated in the conversation. There were two more students who were studying abroad with M, however, they were not able to join the Zoom meeting at that time. Therefore, only M and S were participants for the data.

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 "Test" and "positive" result

The following excerpt (1) reflects choice of language by the participants who have study abroad experience in Canada and the CS related to COVID-19. The fragment is taken from the interaction between the students who were studying abroad in Canada and the researcher. The researcher asked if the participants had any stories to share regarding their COVID-19 experience. K chose H to respond researcher's question, asking H to share her story (line 362). The participants mostly spoke Japanese in the meeting, thus, the translation by the researcher is below the Italic Japanese sentences on the transcript.

Excerpt (1)

(K=Kasumi, H=Hikari, A=Aki, S=researcher)

| 362. | K: | *koko wa Hikari-chan kana*? @@@ |
| | | probably it will be your turn, Hikari-chan? @@@ |
| 363. | S: | *Hikari-chan,* @@@ |
| | | Hikari-chan, @@@ |
| 364. | H: | *e nanka* |
| | | um so |
| 365. | | (0.5) |
| 366. | H: | *ruumu meito no.* (1.5) *ruumu meito no ko ga*:: (0.5) |
| | | my roommate. (1.5) my roommate:: (0.5) |
| 367. | H: | *ruumu meito no oniisan ga corona no noukousesshokusha ni natte,* |
| | | my roommate's brother became a close contact, |
| 368. | | *son*o. (0.7) *fuyuyasumiake ni modotte* £*kitatoki ni*£ hh |
| | | um. (0.7) £when she came back to our dorm |
| | | after winter break£ hh |
| 369. | | (0.5) |

| 370. | H: | *nanka sakki made attottan yakedo,* |
| | | she said they hung out a while ago, |
| 371. | | test *shitara*:: |
| | | but then he took a test:: |
| 372. | | (0.6) |
| 373. | H: | positive *yattan yo ne tte iwarete.* |
| | | and got a positive result. |
| 374. | | (0.5) |
| 375. | H: | e:: £*mitaina*£. |
| | | £we were like£ wha::t |
| 376. | S: | @@@ |
| 377. | H: | *ruumu meito minna de* (.) *e,* £*mitaina*£ |
| | | my roommates and I £were like£(.) wha::t, |
| 378. | | *de nanka noukousesshokusha to attotta hito to,* |
| | | so like with a person who met with a close contact, |
| 379. | | *chotto onaji kicchin tsukatta kara* |
| | | we used the same kitchen |
| 380. | | *minna kakuri shite ne mitaina.* |
| | | And so we were like told to quarantine. |
| 381. | | (2.1) |
| 382. | H: | *sore*[*de*:: |
| | | and[then:: |
| 383. | S: | [*sounan da* |
| | | [I see |
| 384. | | (1.0) |
| 385. | H: | *tookakan kakuri shimashita ne* @@ |
| | | we had to stay in our room and quarantine for 10 |
| | | days @@ |

The conversation started when S asked if someone had any interesting experiences related to COVID-19. In line 362, K encouraged H to speak, then, H started sharing her experience in line 364 with a Japanese filler "*e nanka* (Kushida et al., 2017: 146)." H's story was about her roommate becoming a close contact; thus, H and her other roommates had

to quarantine. From line 366, H starts talking about the details of how she and her roommates were told to quarantine. The utterances in lines 370 to 373 are considered to be a quotation by H's roommate whose brother had a "test (line 371)" and got a "positive (line 373)" result, resulting in her becoming a close contact. Here, notice that H conducted CS, "test" and "positive," in her quotation with using a Japanese quoted marker "*tte* (line 373)." It is also worth noting that this quotation was the translation of the conversation that H and her roommates had. In Japanese, "test" and "positive" would be "検査 (*kensa*)" and "陽性反応 (*youseihannou*)." The function of these switches can be classified as "quotation (Gumperz 1982)" where H chose some English words instead of the equivalent Japanese words in her quoted speech. However, it is clear that H started telling her story about her COVID-19 experience due to conducting CS as a quotation function. The actual situation therefore became relevant to the context at that moment. After the CS, H reproduced her and her roommate's reaction with a laugh again in line 375. She then reiterated the utterance in line 377 and enhanced it with sharing not only H's attitude, but also her roommates' attitudes. H continued to explain that they used the same kitchen with the roommate who became a close contact, so they were told to quarantine for ten days (lines 378-385). However, although H had met the close contact for "only a few minutes (out of the extract)" in person, she was still forced to quarantine. It is apparent in the conversation that H was surprised about having to quarantine according to her emphasized speech and repetition of the conversation with her roommates. In order to reproduce the actual situation when H was told to quarantine, it is noticeable that the CS that H made worked as a contextualization cue (Gumperz 1982). While H translated and quoted the conversation that she had with her roommates in the past mostly in Japanese, some of the words, such as "test" and "positive," were switched into English. That is, the CS in the quotation triggered the establishment of the conversation in on-going communication to clearly explain H's specific situation in the context related to COVID-19.

The excerpt begun with the question about participants' experience of COVID-19. The data showed that H decontextualized the actual conversation that she had before and put the context into the on-going communication. While H talked about her COVID-19 experience during her study abroad, the participants gazed at their own cameras on their laptops and sometimes replied to H's utterances (line 383). There was no interruption or additional questions about the CS; therefore, the participants who had study abroad experience understood the meaning in the interaction. In the following section, further

examples of CS related to COVID-19 terminology is introduced.

### 4.2 "Booster"

Excerpt (2) begins when S asked M about the COVID-19 situation in the U.S. and M then answering her question in line 1372. M had been studying abroad in America for 8 months at the time of the recording.

Excerpt (2)

(M=Matsuri, S=researcher)

1372. S: *sokka sokka, corona w*a？ *daijoubu sou.*

          I see I see, how about COVID-19? Are you okay.

1373. M: *ano* (.) booster *mo utte*：： *nanka. Mattaku kankei nai tte ittara,*

          well (.) I got a booster shot:: like.

          So I'm not worried about that

1374. *maa chotto* £*are nan desu kedo*£,

          £Not at all£

1375. *zenzen mou ichimiri mo ki ni shite nai gurai*

          It doesn't matter at all

1376. S: *un un un, sokka iine. ja sankaime mo utte*：：：.

          yeah yeah yeah, I see sounds good.

          So you got the third one:::.

1377. M: *demo. jugyouchu wa masuku shinaito ikenain desu kedo*：：

          but I have to wear a mask during the class::

1378. M: *demo nanka nihon demo fuyu toka shitetakara zenzen kininaranakute*

          but it's like because in winter in Japan I wore it

          I don't care about that

1379. S: *un un un. iinee. jaa taimen. jugyou*？ *mou zembu*

          yeah yeah yeah. Nice. So it's a in-person.

          Class? are all of your classes held in-person

When S asked M about the COVID-19 situation in the United States of America, M replied to S with the English word, "booster (line 1373)" with laughter. The word for "booster" shot is "追加接種 (*tsuika sesshu*)" or "ブースター接種 (*busuta sesshu*)" in

Japanese. According to Digital Daijisen (2012), a Japanese dictionary, the Japanese word "ブースター (*busuta*)" means a device to increase electrical voltage, to assist launch a rocket, or to enhance hydraulic pressure. Although the spread of vaccination against COVID-19 led to the use of the term, "ブースター接種 (*busuta sesshu*)" which means booster shot in Japan, "booster" is used as an adjective. Thus, the use of "booster" in line 1373 is regarded as CS of an English word[1]. As it is already explained in the previous data collection section, M had been studying abroad in the U.S. since August of 2021. It was required at that time for exchange students to receive two vaccination shots against COVID-19 before they could commence study at their overseas universities. Therefore, M had her first two vaccination shots in Japan and her third "booster" shot in the U.S. As De Fina (2007) demonstrated, CS indexes one's cultural background and experiences. M's use of CS for the word "booster" in line 1373 indexed her study abroad experience and established the context in which she got the third booster shot in the U.S. In addition to CS, she emphasized that she didn't care about COVID-19 "at all" because she got the booster shot (line 1375). It is considerable that she was not worried about the COVID-19 situation anymore and felt that the virus had lost its impact. Consequently, M showed her "footing (Goffman, 1981)" as an exchange student who studied abroad during COVID-19. Therefore, from this perspective, it is understandable that the CS worked as a contextualization cue to demonstrate her identity as an exchange student who was studying abroad in COVID-19 in this discourse. However, contrary to M, in line 1376, S uses "3回目 (*sankaime*)" meaning "the third booster shot" in Japanese instead of "booster." S had been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Japan. Although she had study abroad experience in the U.S., she did not conform with M's footing as an exchange student who was studying abroad during the pandemic. It is plausible to conclude that M's CS, "booster," was produced due to her experience and regular use of the English language at that time.

Taking advantage of having a booster shot in the U.S., M stopped worrying about the COVID-19 situation. In line 1377, M referred to the wearing of masks during her class; thus, it is evident that wearing a mask during classes was mandatory in the school where she was studying abroad. At the time when the data was collected in April 2022, the

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[1] The pandemic of COVID-19 had brought new terms into Japanese: such as "social distancing." "Social distancing" became a loanword, "ソーシャル・ディスタンス (*sosharu disutansu*: social distance)" in Japanese. Although the participants of this article did not use this term in the conversation, those new type of words related to COVID-19 should be discussed in future research.

number of COVID-19 infections increased both in Japan and the U.S. The number of infected people, however, had not yet reached its peak and therefore wearing a mask indoors was recommended to prevent transmission. Japanese people had a custom of wearing a mask to prevent the spread of colds or influenza before the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, in the U.S, where M was studying abroad, it was uncommon in people's everyday life to wear masks to prevent virus transmission. As of April 2022, wearing a mask outside of class was not required at her school in the U.S.; however, the students "had to wear masks (line 1377)" inside of the classroom. Although she referred to her own Japanese experience of regular mask-wearing in line 1378, she further demonstrated that she had a positive attitude towards wearing a mask. In summary, by presenting CS, M indexed her own experience during study abroad. It can be considered as a *metaphorical switching* (Blom & Gumperz, 1972) due to her indicating two contexts: explaining her experience of vaccination and reproducing her identity as an exchange student during the COVID-19 situation. Moreover, M expressed that she had not been opposed to the virus infection prevention measures and showed herself as someone who aligned with the American norm of wearing a mask. M's utterances in lines 1377 to 1378 enhanced and index her footing as an exchange student who had experienced the pandemic in accordance with the customs of both her own country and the country she studied abroad in.

## 5 Discussions

The present study analyzed the use of CS in discussions on COVID-19 by university students who have study abroad experience.

Answering the first research question, the findings revealed that the switched words related to COVID-19 were influenced by participants' experiences during their study abroad. For example, in excerpt (1), the CS of "test" and "positive" appeared in H's translated and quoted conversation about the time when H and her roommate were told to quarantine. In addition, excerpt (2) demonstrated M's CS of "booster," evident of the types of words she was using in her daily life while studying abroad. COVID-19 had a significant impact on the students who studied abroad under the atypical situation, in consequence affecting their language as shown by the use of CS in both cases. These findings lead to the answer of the next research question.

Gumperz (1982) distinguished six conversational functions of CS, and in addition,

Ahearn (2021) and De Fina (2007) pointed out the indexicality of CS. The CS represented in the data of this study is applicable to those functions. The CS in excerpt (1) was in quotation when H was sharing her own experience and the CS in expert (2) indexed the specific experience in the atypical situation where M got her third booster shot in the U.S. In excerpt (1), H did not translate the entire conversation she had with her roommate; however, she inserted some of the English words by CS. Therefore, the function of this CS is not only to recreate the actual conversation but also to tell the clear details to the audience. On the other hand, the CS in excerpt (2) provided an indication of the situation in which M had her third booster shot; therefore, the function of this CS signaled proper context related to her experience in a foreign country. However, the interlocutor, S, who had not studied abroad at the pandemic, used the equivalent Japanese word of "booster" instead of the English word. Although S did not conduct CS, she understood M's CS and continued the communication. It is because both participants shared common knowledge of the English words as well as the background knowledge of being a student studying abroad in an English-speaking country during the pandemic. The interaction was therefore able to proceed without any trouble or misunderstandings. Although there were some differences between the participants such as the exact time they studied abroad, all participants were able to recognize the indexicality of the CS and continued the interaction. To conclude, it can be argued that the CS in both data conveyed not only the denotational meanings of the English words, but also established the context of the participants' experiences regarding their situations under COVID-19.

## 6 Conclusion

This study examined the CS produced by students who had the experience of studying abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic and the function of the CS by analyzing two datasets of online communication. From the analysis, it was found that the words related to COVID-19 were produced based on the participants' study abroad experiences. Furthermore, the CS indexed not only the literal meaning but also the specific contexts and backgrounds in which participants had experienced while abroad during the atypical situation.

However, it should be noted that this paper used only two datasets from the 728 minutes of conversation data. While previous studies have discussed students' impacts and attitudes towards studying abroad or their intercultural communication, this article

focused on the actual conversation between participants who were studying abroad during the pandemic. A qualitative approach was taken, referred to by Otani (2019) as an empirical science that deals with a small number of participants. In addition, it was discovered that the students of this study chose vocabulary related to their experiences in foreign countries and produced CS when discussing COVID-19 to convey not only the meaning of, but also to invoke the contexts in which they had previously encountered into on-going interactions. Although the data is limited, this research contributes to the identification of the functions of CS associated with COVID-19.

Moreover, this study revealed that the vocabulary newly acquired in the atypical situation of the pandemic was manifested in the CS of those who had studied abroad. With the stabilization of the COVID-19 situation, the number of Japanese students studying abroad is expected to continue to increase compared to pre-pandemic levels. Not only COVID-19, but other crises such as war or disasters, may affect the language use and experiences of students going to study abroad in the future. Therefore, it is essential to conduct longitudinal studies on the language use and behavior of students who have studied abroad.

Future studies are needed to analyze other data of CS that relate to participants' classes and their lives during study abroad and furthermore, data based on the narratives not only of people with study abroad experience but also those of a more diverse background, including those who have not studied abroad. As a research area that is currently lacking, it is essential to continue the research of CS by people who have studied abroad under COVID-19 to capture how speakers use language in their conversations.

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## Appendix: Transcription conventions

| | |
|---|---|
| (0.0) | time gap between utterances |
| (.) | time gap less than 0.19 second |
| = | latching utterances with no intervals in between |
| [ ] | beginning and end of overlapping utterances |
| ( ) | uncertain transcription |
| : | stretched vowel sound |
| ? | rising intonation |
| h | outbreathing sound |
| .h | inbreathing sound |
| @ | laughter |
| (( )) | participants' embodied action |
| > < | the words inside are rapidly produced |
| < > | the words inside are slowly produced |
| £words£ | the words inside are produced in laughter |
| WORD | the words are loudly produced |