



The Adaptability of Chinese-English Code-switching in Microblog Hot Search

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Abstract

Code-switching is a phenomenon of language contact in which two or more languages or varieties are used in language communication. Nowadays, with the increasingly close global communication and the general improvement of the English level of Chinese people, Chinese-English code-switching is becoming more and more frequent in daily communication, and the frequency of its use in Internet communication is also increasing. This paper takes the Chinese-English code-switching in microblog hot search as corpus and explores the types of code-switching and then based on Yu Guodong's adaptation model, analyzes the adaptation contents of code-switching from three aspects: language reality, social conventions and psychological motivations.

Key words: Code-switching, adaptation, microblog, linguistic variation.

1. Introduction

In this era of information explosion and the prevalence of social media, the phenomenon of language use on microblog, which is one of the most popular social platforms in China, is particularly noteworthy. When English becomes a commonly used language, Chinese-English code-switching in microblog language is becoming more and more frequent. Nowadays, code-switching is frequently used in

everyday conversation, newspaper advertisements, news media and so on.

The launch of Sina Microblog in 2009 has made microblog a new trend in communication because of its simplicity and efficiency. As a medium of dissemination, microblog has exerted a significant impact on people's lifestyles and cultural communication for its concise and pithy dissemination characteristics. When there is a large number of searches for a certain event or word on

microblog, the relevant keywords will be listed on the hot search list, and users can automatically insert a topic to discuss it, so microblog hot search is more effective and fresher than the traditional search engine. Therefore, microblog has garnered widespread attention. At the same time, numerous studies and investigations are also emerging. In recent years, many linguists have conducted extensive researches on the diverse linguistic phenomena in microblog from various perspectives. As a language learner, the author has also noticed a certain linguistic phenomenon in microblog hot search: code-switching between Chinese and English, and has developed a keen interest in it.

Based on Yu Guodong's adaptation model, this paper will analyze Chinese-English code-switching by taking the hot search of Sina Microblog as the research object. The purpose is to find out the types of code-switching in microblog hot search, and analyze the adaptation effect of code-switching from three aspects: language reality, social conventions and psychological motivations, with a view to providing new perspectives for understanding language contact and language variation.

Observing and recording are the two main methods for data collection from microblog, and the collection period is from October 9th, 2024 to November 8th, 2024. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used in this study. Specifically, the study uses quantitative method to collect the examples of Chinese-English code-switching in microblog and to reveal the types of code-switching. It uses qualitative method to analyze the adaptability of code-switching and verify the Adaptation Model.

2. Code-switching

2.1 Definitions of Code-switching

Code-switching in this paper is a phenomenon that people switch one language to another on a given occasion. Different research purposes for scholars will lead to

different understandings and interpretations of code-switching. For example, Gumperz (1982) defines code-switching as the combination in the same communication which exists in two different grammatical systems or subsystems including the alternating use of languages, dialects and styles. Myers-Scotton (1993) utilizes code-switching to stand for the synonymous phenomenon of language switching. Verschueren's (1999) definition of code-switching is any distinguishable variant of a language, involving systematic sets of choices, whether linked to specific geographical area, a social class, an assignment of functions, or a specific context of use.

In brief, code-switching can be defined as the use of two or more language variants in the same conversation. Code-switching sometimes occurs among paragraphs, sentences, words or phrases. Code-switching is not merely a language form, but also a phenomenon of transmitting information, which carries social significance and involves social psychological factors. The distinctions between the two terms, code-mixing and code-switching, are controversial issues. In this paper, code-switching is a cover term with the aim of covering the performance of Chinese-English code-switching in the context of microblog language.

2.2 Previous Researches on Code-switching

The phenomenon of code-switching has drawn many researchers' attention. In China, research on code-switching has also been carried out from multiple perspectives, including language teaching, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and pragmatics and so on. These perspectives are intertwined and complementary to each other, providing rich perspectives and powerful basis for in-depth understanding of code-switching.

Zhou (2015) took the variety show "Where Are We Going, Dad? Season 2" as corpus and analyzed the motivations and pragmatic functions of code-switching among

Mandarin, Cantonese and English from three aspects: language reality, social conventions and psychological motivations. Yang (2016) attempted to use the register theory of systemic functional linguistics to study the code-switching phenomena in the novel "The Joy Luck Club" and explored its linguistic functions. Cheng (2019) conducted an in-depth analysis of the classroom code-switching phenomena from both macro and micro perspectives, combining dynamic and static descriptions. The results further improved the research on second language acquisition. Guo and Zhou (2021), based on the discourse analysis model and taking the movie "Be There or Be Square" as corpus, analyzed the Chinese-English code-switching phenomena produced when the characters in the movie communicated in language and expounded on the different functions and category characteristics of this phenomenon. Zhang (2022) collected some examples from daily conversations and analyzed how code-switching achieved its pragmatic functions. Wang (2024) took the Hong Kong Cantonese-English code-switching as the research object and analyzed the reasons for the occurrence and application of code-switching in the conversations of Hong Kong college students. Jiang (2024), aiming at the code-switching phenomena occurring between the two sides in the communicative scenes for the purpose of English teaching, used the method of conversation analysis to analyze the association between code-switching and teaching effects.

From the above review, it can be seen that scholars have focused their research perspectives on the field of language teaching to conduct in-depth investigations, and most of the corpus they used were drawn from the typical scene of college English classrooms. In addition, some scholars have also chosen film and television works, variety shows or novels as research objects to analyze the code-switching phenomena and the causes behind them. However, in the current research status,

relevant studies on the types and cause analysis of code-switching on online platforms are rather scarce.

In view of this, the author selects the code-switching in microblog hot search as the research object, and this choice has significant innovative significance. Besides, starting from the perspective of the Linguistic Adaptation Model, the author combines it with code-switching. The Linguistic Adaptation Model provides a theoretical basis for understanding the mechanism of code-switching in specific situations. Through this combination, it is possible to dig deeper into the deep-seated rules behind the code-switching in microblog and further improve the research on code-switching.

3. Analysis of Code-switching in Microblog Hot Search

3.1 Types of Code-switching on Collected Data

There are five types of code-switching: letter embedding, word embedding, phrase embedding, clause embedding and discourse embedding. Due to the characteristics of microblog hot search, which require concise language to increase the attention and click volume of the entries, the first three types occur more frequently in hot search.

In the study of code-switching, letter embedding is a relatively subtle form of conversion, which involves embedding the letters of one language into another language.

(1) AAA 阵容

(2) 文化中国行看打开中国旅行的 N 种方式

In Example (1), the term "AAA 阵容" is usually used in the fields of e-sports and sports, referring to a team composed of three top or highly competitive players. In different games and sports, it is used to emphasize the high level and professional competence of team members. In Example (2), the letter "N" is used to mean "a lot", which is quite eye-catching and attracts the attention of netizens so as to increase the reading volume.

Word embedding in code-switching refers to embedding words, including acronyms, initialisms, clipped words, proper nouns and so on from one language into another language.

(3) 中西面点专业教学 vlog

(4) 刘忻 COS 伽罗

(5) 杨紫冬日 OOTD

In Example (3), “vlog” stands for “video blog” and is a popular form of online content. In Example (4), “COS” is the abbreviation of “costume play”. The word “COS” is a clipped word formed by cutting out the later part of “costume”. Clipped words were initially used in spoken language. Now many clipped words are widely accepted and even used in formal language. Many English clipped words are also deeply loved by Chinese people and are widely used in Chinese conversations or discourses. In Example (5), “OOTD” is an initialism for “Outfit of the Day”, referring to what is worn that day. These examples demonstrate the phenomenon of embedding English words in the Chinese context, reflecting the interaction and integration of languages under the background of globalization. Through such embedding, language users can communicate ideas and information more effectively. Meanwhile, it also shows the flexibility and inclusiveness of language. This phenomenon is particularly common in social media, popular culture and daily communication, and it is an important manifestation of language contact and language variation.

Phrase embedding in code-switching refers to embedding phrases of one language into another.

(6) 鹿晗 gap day 音乐节票价

“Gap day” is a special day that people set aside to take a break from their daily life, relax themselves and do something they enjoy. This expression is derived from the phrase “gap year”. Using the original English term directly

in this microblog hot search can maintain the original flavor of the language.

The above are examples of the three types of code-switching, namely letter embedding, word embedding, and phrase embedding in Sina Microblog hot search. The word embedding type has the highest frequency of occurrence. This is mainly due to the characteristics such as conciseness and vividness of microblog. Meanwhile, it is also convenient for netizens to understand. Therefore, a large number of word embedding are adopted to make the hot search entries accurate and concise. Consequently, in the following research will focus on analyzing the code-switching of the word embedding type.

3.2 Analysis of Code-switching with Adaptation Model

Verschueren (1999) proposed Linguistic Adaptation Theory in his *Understanding Pragmatics*, and argued that the process of adaptation is the process by which human beings choose from all possible options to meet the communicative needs. Language use is defined as making continuous language choices because language has three key characteristics: variability, negotiability and adaptability. According to Verschueren’s adaptation theory, variability, negotiability and adaptability are the basic attributes of language, which are closely related together. Variability makes it possible to conform to the nature of adaptability. Negotiability is the method of adaptability. The three factors are inseparable. If there is no variability and negotiability, adaptability will not have its connotation.

Based on Verschueren’s Linguistic Adaptation Theory, Chinese scholar Yu Guodong (2000) proposed the Adaption Model to explain the phenomenon of Chinese-English code-switching. He believes that code-switching is the result of language users’ adaptation to language means according to the actual context and at different levels of consciousness, which is specifically manifested in the adaptation to the

linguistic reality, social conventions, and psychological motivations. Based on Yu Guodong's adaptation model, this study takes the code-switching in microblog hot search as corpus and analyzes the adaptability of code-switching from three aspects: linguistic reality, social conventions, and psychological motivations.

3.2.1 Code-switching Adapting to Linguistic Reality

Code-switching that adapts to the linguistic reality refers to the use of two or more languages or language varieties by communicators due to purely linguistic factors. Such code-switching occurs entirely for reasons within the language itself. Yu Guodong (2000) stated that when language users encounter deficiencies or gaps in expression in one language, they will adapt to choose another language to fill these gaps. Since English and Chinese are two different linguistic and cultural systems, people often encounter the so-called "linguistic gaps" when using them. These gaps are not merely the lack of direct translation equivalents but the essential differences in semantic expression between the two languages. Even if some English words have corresponding expressions in Chinese, these translations are either too complicated or unable to fully reflect the specific meanings of the original code. The language in microblog hot search dynamically adapts to such linguistic reality and effectively conducts code-switching. In microblog hot search, Chinese-English code-switching is specifically manifested in two situations: lexical vacancy and semantic asymmetry.

Due to the differences in human cognition and culture, there is no complete one-to-one correspondence between different languages. Each language has its own unique characteristics and irreplaceability. Some things or concepts only exist in a specific culture, and languages in other cultures may lack the vocabulary that can accurately express these

things or concepts. In such circumstances, the language in microblog hot search will utilize dynamic code-switching to fill lexical vacancy, so as to better convey semantic information.

(7) 宋茜 cue 迪丽热巴跳新疆舞

The original meaning of the word "cue" is "hint" or "signal". In the context of example (7), it refers to the situation where one person prompts another person to perform a certain behavior or action through a signal or gesture. In Chinese, there may not be a directly equivalent word that can concisely express the concept of "cue". It is used to describe the transmission of signals among people, and this specific meaning may require a longer explanation or description in Chinese, such as "给信号" or "提示". Using a longer concept to explain it doesn't conform to the characteristic of brevity of microblog hot search.

(8) 骆鑫张染乔是什么姐狗 cp

The popular Internet term "CP", which is the abbreviation of "couple", originally meant "husband and wife". Now it generally refers to the title given by audiences to their favorite on-screen couples. "磕 cp" means being fond of a certain couple. However, this term is not limited to real couples. Sometimes it even ignores gender. People can randomly put a pair of favorite characters together. If the English term "CP" is replaced by Chinese expressions like "情侣", "夫妇" or "夫妻", it is obviously inappropriate. Therefore, the English term has filled the gaps in Chinese expressions, won the favor of young people, become a popular online buzzword and frequently appeared in microblog hot search. Therefore, the direct use of English code can fill the situation of semantic asymmetry and it is also favored by young people, and has become a popular online hot word, which frequently appears in microblog.

3.2.2 Code-switching Adapting to Social Conventions

Social conventions refer to a series of rules, customs, codes of conduct and so on that

are widely accepted and recognized by social groups in society. The adaptation to social conventions means that in the process of communication, language users need to follow the specific cultural customs, codes of conduct, moral values and so on in a certain society, thus using two or more languages or language variants. As individuals in society, everyone's behavior patterns and ways of speaking need to conform to the cultural customs and social expectations of the society they live in, otherwise, they will be rejected by the society. Although the network environment is relatively loose, it cannot be completely separated from the real environment, and language users also need to follow social conventions. When topics that are not advocated by social culture appear on the microblog, the strategy of code-switching will be adopted to adapt to cultural customs.

(9) 张大大玩叶珂微 do 梗

In the example (9), the meaning of "do" is related to cosmetic surgery. "微 do" means only a little cosmetic surgery. Currently, with the development of society and the progress of people's thinking, the attitudes towards cosmetic surgery have become more tolerant compared to the past. More and more people choose to have cosmetic surgery to improve their own appearance. However, traditional concepts still have a certain influence. It is believed that our bodies, including hair and skin, are gifts from our parents, and maintaining a natural appearance is a virtue. Besides, some people, in order to insist that they are naturally and purely beautiful, will firmly deny the fact that they have had cosmetic surgery. Therefore, some people still hold cautious or disapproving attitudes towards cosmetic surgery. Therefore, the word "整容" does not appear, and the use of "do" reflects an adaptation to social conventions.

(10) 眉林我的智性恋 crush

People often use "crush" to express their short-lived yet intense affection. Due to the influence of thousands of years of Chinese

culture and the long-term edification of Confucianism, Chinese people have gradually developed an introverted and reserved character. This personality trait has become a part of the national psyche and is deeply imprinted in people's behavior patterns and ways of thinking. Therefore, in daily language use, Chinese people tend not to express their passionate love too directly. Using code-switching avoids the potential conflicts that might arise from being too straightforward.

3.2.3 Code-switching Adapting to Psychological Motivations

The adaptation to psychological motivations is a communicative strategy. Under this strategy, language users will take the initiative to choose language in order to achieve certain communicative purposes, such as creating a humorous atmosphere, avoiding certain contents or marking their own identities. People usually conduct code-switching and make choices based on specific purposes.

Microblog hot search is updated in real time, reflecting the latest hot topics, events and the trends that the public pays the most attention to in the current society. In the special text of microblog hot search, the code-switching that adapts to psychological motivations is the result of language users' choice to use two or more languages or language varieties for reasons of creating humor, achieving simplicity and quickness, and conforming to fashion trends.

(11) 春花焰: 蚊子也是 play 的一环吗

(12) 李白最想撤回的人生 bug

In example (11), "play 的一环" usually refers to a component or a part in a game, drama or a series of planned activities. This code expression with a gamification concept achieves a humorous effect to a certain extent and is also quite impressive, making people can't help but click on the hot search to see what the specific content is. The original meaning of "bug" is a small insect, and now it refers to loopholes and

errors in computer systems or programs. In the above examples, introducing the word “bug” into the description of Li Bai’s life experiences creates a sense of novelty and freshness. In this case, English has a more mocking and humorous flavor than Chinese.

(13) 没被 NPC 吓到被周笔畅吓到了

(14) 乐华首次公开艺人 KPI 业绩

With the rise of numerous network platforms, online information transmission has become increasingly common and efficient. People generally hope to maximize information with the most economical expressions. Code-switching frequently occurs on microblog platform. On the one hand, it is because people on the Internet tend to use concise language. On the other hand, it also conforms to people’s psychological need for pursuing efficiency. In the above examples, “NPC” is the abbreviated form of “non-player character”, and “KPI” is the abbreviated form of “key performance indicator”. The embedding of English initialisms replaces the expressions of the original text that might be complicated and require multiple explanations to describe, thus achieving the purpose of concise and quick expression and making information transmission more efficient.

(15) 北京的黄昏 city walk

(16) 早安结婚 rapper 在台上 battle

“City walk” is a concept of modern urban leisure activities, originating from the West. It emphasizes taking a leisurely stroll in the city and exploring the urban landscape and culture. Using it here to describe the evening activities in Beijing incorporates foreign fashionable codes into the depiction of local scenes in Beijing. The expression “city walk” gives this activity a fashionable and trendy flavor. “Rapper” and “battle” are typical codes of hip-hop culture which is a very fashionable and personalized cultural type among modern young people. Incorporating the codes of hip-

hop culture into this situational description adds a sense of fashion and topicality.

4. Conclusion

This paper studies the types of code-switching by combining examples in microblog hot search and conducts an analysis of the adaptability of code-switching based on Yu Guodong’s Linguistic Adaptation Model. The author has found that in the language of microblog hot search, the word embedding type has the highest frequency of occurrence. This is mainly because microblog hot search language often need to be concise and vivid to attract people’s clicks and reading. Meanwhile, English words are quite eye-catching and can attract attention more effectively. Through the qualitative analysis of the collected code-switching data, this paper analyzes code-switching appearing in microblog by using Yu Guodong’s adaption model. It is found that the language of microblog reflects quite obviously and prominently in adapting to the linguistic reality, social conventions and psychological motivations. However, sometimes the influences of the linguistic reality, social conventions and psychological motivations are not single or exclusive but may intersect with each other. But generally speaking, conducting research on the code-switching of microblog hot search from the perspective of adaptation is practical and helps to understand the reasons for using code-switching in online communication.

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