

Adaptability of Teacher's Code Switching in MA's Classes of English Majors

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Abstract—Code switching is a common social phenomenon in the multilingual community. Research on code switching overlaps in many fields, sociology, psychology, linguistics, anthropology, and pragmatic in particular. This paper reviewed code switching and its early research from different perspectives. And then the models of code switching and degrees of salience were discussed on the basis of adaptation theory of Verschueren's in English majors' MA program classes. Eventually, the significance of code switching in language teaching was restressed.

Index Terms—code switching, adaptation, multilingualism, models, salience

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Language Choice in Multilingual Communities

Multilingualism is a natural way of life for millions of people around the world due to a deluge of factors like migration, politics, colonialism, religion, culture contact, education, economy, mixed marriage and so forth. Within a multilingual community, people select to use two or more languages or dialects in their communication. The fact that language users select different languages or varieties for communication in different circumstances mirrors that “not all languages or varieties are equally appropriate or adequate for use in all speech events” (Romaine, 1992, p. 8). With the exception of awareness, each individual is entitled to choose what sort of language he or she wants to use. Members in immigrant families often switch from one language to another. Similarly people in historically colonized areas alternatively use their own dialects and hegemonic languages. Even in a marriage, the spouses from different language background alternately use their own languages and a third language with their kids or parents in such a smaller speech community. Hence it is important to note that code switching may occur among communication of more than two persons. That is, one person may use one language while others respond with other languages. An individual can also use one language first and then jump into another in continuous utterances. Along with the course of education in English teaching as a foreign language in China, code switching can be easily found in English classes. The essay will probe into code switching of teachers and its attachment to adaptation theory in MA's classes of English majors based on some investigations.

B. Code Switching, Code Mixing and Borrowing

Code switching is defined as using two or more than two language varieties in one conversation. It is a change by a speaker or a writer from one language or language variety to another. However, there's no consensus on the definition of code switching. It may vary from different interpretations. Hudson (1996) deems code switching is the inevitable consequence of bilingualism or multilingualism and anyone who speaks more than one language chooses between them according to concrete circumstances. He explained the domain of code switching and confirmed that it was used at least in a multilingual society. Kathryn (2004) mentions that definitions of code switching may vary because this research topic is conducted by both ethnography manias as well as discourse analysts or conversation analysts. As a consequence, different terms are used to refer to the same thing. Generally speaking, it can be defined as an individual's use of two or more language varieties in the same speech event or exchange. From the social aspects, code switching is a kind of language change of varieties. Belazi, Rubin, and Toribio (1994) assert that code switching is the alternate use of two or more languages within the same utterance. All of these definitions have common points in nature. That is, code switching is a type of language choosing process in more than two varieties in one segment of conversation.

If you attempt to get a clear distinction between code switching and code-mixing, it seems to be a hard task. Generally, code switching, code mixing and borrowing are intertwined with each other and a clear line can be never eventually drawn through the communicative atmosphere. Code switching is defined from the changing situation while code mixing without situation changed at all. Code mixing is expounded from the static facet. Code mixing can touch upon different levels of language such as phonology, morphology, grammatical structures or lexical items (Richards, Schimidt, Kendrick, & Kim, 2002). Conversely, code switching is stated in a rather dynamic method. There are two kinds of code switching at the syntactic level. They are intra-sentential code switching that occurs below sentential boundaries and inter-sentential code switching that occurs between sentences. These two types of code switching often impart into one another for many cases. And they also mix up with each other through the process of borrowing which is loaned from other languages to become one part of the language. Language is so complicated that we will not

distinguish these issues in this essay hereinafter. Some other prominent examples of code switching categories are Poplack's inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag switching, Auer's discourse-related and participant-related alternation, Muysken's alternation, insertion and congruent lexicalization and so forth (Poplack, 1980; Auer, 1990; Muysken, 1995). The distinctions among code switching, code mixing, diglossia, borrowing and once borrowing are discussed to lay a foundation for the research from different perspectives.

C. Early Research of Code Switching

Since the middle era of 20th century, the topic has attracted a great deal of research attention. Scholars have investigated the structural patterns, functional determinants, social correlates, and psycholinguistic processes of code switching in diverse communities. It was welcomed by many researchers including linguists, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists. And it was branched into many applied linguistic fields such as syntax, discourse analysis, pragmatics, language teaching and learning, second language acquisition.

As early as late 1960s to early 1970s, code switching sparked Blom and Gumperz (1972) with interest. They had studied code switching between dialects in Hemnesberget, a Norwegian fishing village, and outlined the formal and informal functions dialect switching displayed in various social settings and events. Blom and Gumperz (1972) made a distinction between two types of code switching, namely, situational code switching and metaphorical code switching. Situational code switching occurs in response to a change in situation. Metaphorical code switching refers to the switch which has a stylistic or textual function. Its function is to signal a quotation, mark emphasis, indicate the punchline of a joke, or signal a change in tone from serious to comic ones. It is not random but functionally motivated. Myers-Scotton (1993) extols their contributions. Albeit the topic had been discussed before, Blom and Gumperz's chapter received considerably more exposure because it was included in Gumperz and Hymes's sociolinguistics *Directions in Sociolinguistics* in the 1970s. It is a common sociolinguistic phenomenon in bilingual or multilingual societies, which usually signals solidarity. An informal situation between bilingual speakers is normally the settings of this case.

With the increasing focus on codeswitching, the angles of the study had turned its tide from social contexts to grammatical contexts. Previously, Gumperz and his co-author Eduardo had discussed code switching between English and Spanish which was primarily concerned with analysis of conversational events, foregrounding, and the role of switching in the composition of a speech event or situation. However, as Gumperz (1976) addressed in his later work, it was not long before researchers began to take an interest in the grammatical properties of code switching. For some of these researchers, inspired by Wolfram's and Labov's work on African-American vernacular, the search for an underlying structure of code switching was guided by a desire to inform political and social discussion. Those fundamental studies on code switching forge an intermittent scope for the researchers on the horizon. Most of the recent studies are likely to focus on pragmatic function of code switching. Cahyani, Courcy, and Barnett (2016) explored the pedagogical and sociocultural functions of teachers' code switching by investigating a case study in bilingual classroom in Indonesia.

Regarding research on code switching in China, many scholars got caught in the study from different angles. One comprehensive code switching research was reviewed by He Ziran and Yu Guodong (2001). This research provides a silhouette for the oncoming studies on code switching. Yu's research on code switching mainly put its emphasis on adaptation theory from a pragmatic point of view (Yu 2000, 2004). Distinctively, Chen Xinren (2008) discussed the relationship between code switching and national identity in a new direction. Through qualitative study, he concluded that there's a significant difference between code mixing toleration and national identity. Those students who have more toleration towards code mixing less identify national compassion. People involved in several language codes seem to be fluctuated to find the sense of belonging. In TEFL environment, the interest of code switching in teachers' classes seems to be in prevalence during the past few years. In Liu and Xiang's empirical investigations (2020), the functions of code switching primarily lie in the strands of translating, language retrenchment, discipline, personal emotion, task checking and turn taking. They asserted the positive functions of code switching to language teaching. Wang and Wu (2016) pointed out that neither teachers nor students had preferences to mother language or foreign language, just because they wanted to adapt to class communication successfully. Xiong (2019) concluded that teachers' code switching was a kind of purposeful strategy to make up language barriers and explain technical terms. From psychological aspects, she recognized that both teachers and students regarded code switching as a natural language use.

II. A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF CODE SWITCHING

A. Code Choice and Code Selection

Verschueren (1999) admits that using language does consist of the continuous making of linguistic choices, consciously or unconsciously, for language-internal and language-external reasons. In other words, language using is a process of choosing or selecting all the way according to certain situations. These choices can be made at different levels: linguistic structure, communicative strategies, various degrees of consciousness, the speakers and the hearers. Code selection is the selection of a particular language or language variety for a given situation. When someone masters more than one code while communicating with others, that person usually chooses one code for certain purposes and uses another code for other reasons. This code selection is quite regular that its patterns can be investigated (Richards et

al., 2002). A college or university, as a melting pot, is a vivid place where language switching or language selection occurs all the time. Language teachers selecting different languages in the class just display their identities and purposes. Language classes have unique features different from other domains like family, workplace, close friends, or travels. This kind of situation is strongly influenced by education policies, native languages and target languages. In language classes, a teacher may consciously select one code for his or her intentions, or avoid one code for some special reasons. Therefore code switching in language classes can be directly investigated by its own features.

B. Review of Adaptation Theory

Adaptation theory, a shortened term for pragmatics as a theory of linguistic adaptation, was proposed by Verschueren in a working document of the international pragmatics association in 1987. Detailed discussions about it can be found in his book *Understanding pragmatics*. He points out that language has three hierarchical features: variability, negotiability, and adaptability, which have been reckoned as three significant notions in the adaptation theory. The link among the three elements is that the adaptability is embodied in variability and negotiability. Regarding variability, Verschueren (1999) means “the property of language which defines the range of possibilities from which choices can be made” (p. 59). Negotiability refers to “the property of language responsible for the fact that choices are not made mechanically or according to strict form-function relationships, but rather on the basis of highly flexible principles and strategies” (Verschueren, 1999, p. 59). By adaptability, it aims at solving the basic problem of language. The answer it offers is that it enables human beings to make negotiable linguistic choices from a variable range of possibilities in such a way as to approach points of satisfaction for communicative needs (Verschueren, 1999, p. 61).

The adaptation theory attempts to tackle the basic problem as what and how language contributes to life and survival on different levels such as human race, smaller and larger communities, individuals, day-to-day situation (Verschueren, 1987). In other words, the question can be interpreted as follows: what’s the purpose of using a language? How does language function in communicative contexts.

Adaptability is illustrated from four angles of investigation. It can be found the four sectors (contextual correlates, structural objects, dynamics and salience) co-influence and interact through the process of language using. These tasks can be seen as necessary ingredients of adequate pragmatic perspectives on any given linguistic phenomenon (Verschueren, 1999).

III. ADAPTATION MODEL OF CODE SWITCHING IN CLASSES

Code switching in English majors’ MA classes has its fixed features different from other types of code switching. The switching happens between Chinese language and target languages as English, Japanese or other foreign languages. The foreign languages are the target languages we are learning, which belong to the second language acquisition to a very large extent. The language is not the natural language born with us. There’s no denying the fact that people really can’t acquire the same language capacity as those of the native speakers. A large number of students just use the second language in an unnatural way. Code switching of language varieties in such condition bears its own characteristics for one of the language is our mother tongue and the other is the dominant language. A question may arise under such circumstances. Namely, what does code switching adapt to? Language users mainly adapt to linguistic reality, social conventions and mental motivation (Yu, 2000). If you reconsider the definition of pragmatics, you would deeply understand these propositions. Using a totally different code just adapts to various context in a dynamic way. The contexts comprise the linguistic context, the social context and the mental context, just as Verschueren innovates in his conception of context, which is composed of the communicative context (physical world, social world, the mental world, the utterer and the interpreter) and the linguistic context.

A. Adaptation to Linguistic Context

When it comes to adaptability to linguistic reality, two snags in the MA’ program classes of English majors should be noted: First, using a second language to explain a linguistic point or a literature term is quite difficultly understandable to the students. MA students couldn’t fully understand some notions, conceptions, and some terminologies first appear in their textbooks or teachers’ handouts. Second, the language involved in code switching has no equivalence in target language. For example, when a teacher of pragmatics gives the explanation of “Speech Act Theory” to the students, he/she often uses some examples in Chinese language to illustrate the theory hence making it understandable. The author coincidentally found an excellent example, to a proper extent as it can be. When his teacher of Japanese course tried to distinguish “自動詞” and “他動詞” to the English majors, he used the similar terms like “the transitive verbs” and “the intransitive verbs” in English language to make them intelligible because it’s hard to explain according to Chinese grammar. When linguistic teachers introduce some linguists, none of them likes to translate the names of linguists into Chinese. Consequently they keep the original English proper names. Another interesting case is that a teacher once said “下次课做 presentation 的同学做好准备”. Presentation is an awkward word to be interpreted in Chinese. It is not proper to be translated as “演讲” or “表演” or “展示” because the definitions of these Chinese words are slightly different. Therefore it is natural to alternate the code in the class where necessary, even in the middle of the sentence.

B. *Adaptation to Communicative Context*

Language can only be spoken by human beings. To achieve the communicative goal, a speaker has to choose one proper utterance which is understandable to a hearer. Therefore subjects (utterer and interpreter) are the most important elements in communication. If the two parties speak the same language, it would be less likely to switch codes. When at least one of the two speakers can speak a different language, one of them has to negotiate to the other in order not to fail in the communication. If a teacher speaks English to the students and the student speaks Chinese, both of them will feel awkward until one of them changes the current language. In daily communication you may encounter such experience that you can't utter your dialect to a person who is speaking Mandarin to you. That means before one chooses language varieties, there should be a linguistic situation. Does it belong to the communicative contexts or linguistic contexts? That remains unsolved plausibly because the elements are not strictly separated.

Code switching can also be used to identify situations we are involved in. We use the choice of language in order to define the situation, rather than letting the situation define the choice of language (Hudson, 1996). Code switching can be a sign of cultural solidarity or distance or serve as an act of identity. When you pass by a classroom noticing a teacher speaking a foreign language, you can tell it is a language class or at least an English-related class. If you also hear that the teacher speaks some Chinese words, you can tell they are second language learners. That is the case that code switching defines the situation.

However it is not wise to deem that situation does not influence the language choice and code switching. A teacher will try not to use Chinese language in the English class because he/she knows that it is an English class that he/she should try his/her best to construct an English-speaking environment for the learners. We are highly conscious of our linguistic choice on some occasions. In English classes, we have a deep-rooted thought that we should speak English as much as possible.

Not all linguistic choices are equally salient. Salience (the status or perceptibility of those processes in relation to the cognitive apparatus) is a cognitive term in the adaptation to mental motivation. In this case, the face theory is integrated into the adaptationist-theoretic framework. Look at the following example:

A teacher: 王兵 给我们的 presentation 的题目 很好。但是在具体的 讲解 过程中, 我们没有看到 相关的 lists of issues. 而且 讲解的 内容 也和题目的 relation 不大。Anyway, it is a good topic.

C. *Adaptation to Mind*

Verbal interaction is no doubt communication from mind to mind. We should never forget that minds are minds in society. When coder and encoder make choices between languages, all aspects of a being can be activated physically, socially or mentally. Language is a production of mind to some extent. The following example may properly illustrate this point. A teacher of pragmatics explained the word "meme" to his students. While explaining the term, he suddenly switched English to a Chinese word "模因" subsequent to the word "meme". He emphasized that the reason he chose this kind of translation just because "模因" could appropriately reflect the mind of Chinese language with its sound and meaning in a perfect way. This Chinese term could be backdated from Zhu Zhifang's opus (1998). He, Xie and Chen (2007) also adopted this term in foreign language pragmatics.

D. *Adaptation to Social Conventions*

The adaptation to social conventions refers to the adaptation to the culture and actions of performing. When a teacher of sociolinguistics explained the language, culture and thought, he mentioned that it was not polite to say offensive words publicly in Chinese culture. While exemplifying the situations, he only used the words like "damn it" to avoid the embarrassment in Chinese culture because students were not conscious about the foreign words. When people choose a code, they have to obey the rules of society and conventions. Not only the face-threatening should be avoided, but also the taboos. Therefore code switching has something to do with the traditional pragmatical elements like speech act theory, face theory and co-operative principles. Code switching marks the negotiation and cooperative principles to reach an import of conversation (Myers-Scotton, 2000). It is a kind of maxims for language users to generate implicatures about proposed interpersonal relationships.

IV. CONCLUSION

In fact code switching is a complex strategy. You can't expect to predict what they are choosing next when you speak to strangers. Although code switching can be used in an unconscious or conscious way, it is really a positive strategy for the language teachers in the MA's class of English majors. It is good to the second language learners who want to intake the western knowledge from the perspective of adaptation theory because code switching can help accomplish the task of communication. It can help language users adapt to various contexts as well.

This study, benefiting from existing researches, proposes an adaptation model of code switching. It is argued that code switching is the realization of communicators making adaptation. Adaptation is made via linguistic factors, social conventions, and psychological motivations. The present research draws particular attention to pragmatic approach to code switching. Then various approaches to the analysis of code switching are generalized and introduced, namely, the sociolinguistic, grammatical, psychological, and conversational analysis approach. Those four approaches have

contributed to our perception of code switching, but no one is strong and comprehensive enough to cover the complexity and subtlety of the specific linguistic phenomenon. A new approach should be exploited so as to cover the linguistic, social, cultural, and cognitive elements.

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