Teachers’ Chinese/English

Codeswitching in Classroom: An Adaptation Approach

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Abstract:
This thesis is a detailed analysis of the pragmatic adaptability that teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching can fulfill. We classify the objects to which teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching adapts into the Linguistic Reality, the Teachers’ Roles, and the Teachers’ Psychological Intentions. Later we try to present students’ evaluation on teacher’s codeswitching.

Key Words: codeswitching, the Linguistic Reality, the Teachers’ Roles, and the Teachers’ Psychological Intentions

1. Literature review
1.1 The study of codeswitching
The study of codeswitching, the natural consequence of language contact, has been one of the focuses of various research fields, including sociology, ethnography, linguistics and so on. In the linguistic perspective, the study of codeswitching has been developed from different approaches, that is, from the grammatical, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, conversational analysis and even pragmatic approach. Yu, 2001

The grammatical approach focuses on searching for the universal linguistic or syntactic constraints functioning in the switching between two languages; the sociolinguistic approach studies the connections between social factors and the performance of codeswitching; the psycholinguistic approach aims to find out what aspects of language capacity enable speakers to switch between languages and how the mental process operates; and the conversational approach attempts to bring the dynamics of codeswitching in the study through the analysis of sequencing of conversational turns. The four approaches have revealed us several linguistic and non-linguistic facets of codeswitching, but no one can provide a comprehensive interpretation considering the complexity of codeswitching for us. Thus another more convincing model is greatly desired. The pragmatic approach is an analysis approach to study codeswitching from a more comprehensive perspective considering the dynamics, complexity, and variability of codeswitching.

Utilizing Verschueren’s linguistic adaptation theory (1999), Yu Guodong has provided a pragmatic model of Chinese/English codeswitching (2001). This research includes three parts: the adaptability of the Chinese/English codeswitching; the negotiability of the Chinese/English codeswitching; the variability of the Chinese/English codeswitching. The whole study has fully taken the linguistic, social,
cultural, psychological factors and the dynamics involved in codeswitching into consideration. They have analyzed this phenomenon in general, but as to the codeswitching in a specific context, they do not provide detailed interpretation.

1.2 The study of teacher’s codeswitching in classroom

The use of native language and target language has been one of the focuses in the study of second language acquisition for several years. The center of majority of the researches is the necessity of the use of L1 in foreign/second language classrooms. Those researches can be divided into three categories: those that maintain the exclusive use of target language; those that disagree on the excluding L1 from classrooms; and those that are in the middle of the debate (Macaro, 2001). In our country, the researchers, such as Zhou Fuqin (2000) and GuoMinghua (2002), have also studied the necessity and functions of native language in foreign language classrooms.

Apart from the debates of the necessity of the use of L1 in foreign/second language classrooms, researchers have studied teacher’s classroom codeswitching and discussed their reasons and functions.

Firstly, when analyzing reasons of teacher’s codeswitching, several researchers have taken linguistic, social factors into consideration (from Flyman-Mattsson & Burenhult, Johnson, 1983: Merritt et al., 1992; Lin, 1988 etc.). For example, Merritt et al. (1992) explore the determinants of teacher’s codeswitching between English, Swahili and mother tongue in three Kenyan primary schools. Reasons for code-switching put forward include the socializing role of the teacher, the importance of variation and repetition, and the teacher’s linguistic competence and insecurity.

Later researchers have further mentioned certain psychological reasons and functions of teacher’s classroom codeswitching (Guthrie, 1984; Flyman-Mattsson & Burenhult, 1999; Macaro, 2001). Flyman-Mattsson and Burenhult summarize five reasons and functions of teacher’s codeswitching in classroom: linguistic insecurity, topic switch, affective functions, socializing functions, and repetitive functions.

These researches have only specifically analyzed some factors involved in the interpretation of teacher’s codeswitching and a more comprehensive model to systematically analyze codeswitching as a dynamic process and take all the linguistic, social, and psychological factors into considerations at the same time in order to give a sound explanation of this phenomenon is still in need.

We have used tape-recording, field notes, interviews and questionnaires to try to investigate teachers’ codeswitching in classroom. This paper, utilizing Verschueren’s theory of adaptation theory, based on Yu’s model on codeswitching, is to analyze the functions and reasons of teacher’s codeswitching in classroom.

2. The adaptability of teacher’s codeswitching in classroom

When teachers, playing different roles in classroom, engage in the process of teaching, he or she has specific teaching and communicative goals. In order to realize these purposes, they will make various language choices with the help of non-language means and other communicative strategies, among which codeswitching is an important way. The reason why the teacher chooses codeswitching to approach or realize teaching or communicative goals is to adapt the linguistic reality, the teacher’s roles or the psychological motivations. As a consequence of language choice making and adaptation, there comes to the speech that is manifested by various linguistic varieties. At last, it will be perceived and interpreted by the hearer or reader. The success of the communication depends on the mutual involvement of the speaker and hearer.

2.1 Teachers’ Codeswitching as Adaptation to the Linguistic Reality

Linguistic reality is taken to refer to the real existence and nature of a certain language.
Teachers’ codeswitching as a means of linguistic reality is that the occurrence of codeswitching is totally from pure linguistic reasons. Specially, as a result of those linguistic features and the nature of language, teachers have to switch to another language or language variety to realize their respective communicative and pedagogical purposes, for example:

1. T: “wǒ mén liáo jié dào yào tí gāo yǐng wén xiě zuò néng li, jiù yào yǒu yì shī de shì yòng yì xiě xiě zuò cè lüè hé fāng fā, rú writing in an idea bank, brainstorming, freewriting, listing hé clustering zhè xiě dōu shì hěn hào dé fāng fā….” (W in College EnglishⅣ classroom)

In this class, the teacher has instructed students how to use some writing strategies to improve their English writing ability. When mentioning these specific strategies, he switches to English expressions instead of using possible Chinese translations. Because “writing in an idea bank”, “brainstorming”(to write down every idea that pops into your head or out of any group members mouth without censoring or judging) and “clustering” (a pictorial method of brainstorming or listing) have no proper Chinese translations, “freewriting” may be translated into Chinese“sùi yì xiě zuò” but it has also contains the meaning of “write without stopping for five minutes about anything that comes into your mind”. So the teacher’s codeswitching is to adapt to linguistic convention so as to express them concisely and accurately.

Adaptation to the linguistic reality is one of the three important motivations of teachers’ performance of Chinese/English codeswitching. The most important communicative function that Chinese/English can fulfill under this category is to fill the linguistic gap between the two languages and make the communication smooth as well.

2.2 Teachers’ Codeswitching as Adaptation to the Teacher’s Role

Teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching as adaptation to the teacher’s role refers to the instances of Chinese/English codeswitching as a result of the teacher’s consideration of his/her role in society—the teacher’s “macro-role” or the roles in classroom—the teacher’s “micro-roles”.

We tentatively discuss teachers’ two kinds of roles: one is the teacher’s social role; the other is the teacher’s role in classroom. Teachers play very important role in society who are respectable and set examples for other people. We call this kind of role the teacher’s “macro-role”. Next, teachers also play different parts in their dynamic process of interactions in the classroom context. Harma (1991) has given one kind of categorization: teachers in classroom can play the roles of a controller (in complete charge of the class); an assessor (for example, to see how well they are performing or how well they performed); an organizer (for example, to encourage students to participate or to make suggestions); a participant (to participate as an equal in an activity). We can name this kind of role teacher’s “micro-role”. Chinese/English codeswitching in foreign language classrooms is one of the effective strategies used by teachers to preserve their respective roles.

2.2.1 Teacher’s “macro-role”

2. T: “hǎo, shùn biàn shōu yì xià shǎng cì kē tí dào dē zhě liàng gè cí zú pass the water, pass the wind. yì qián wǒ shǎng xìe shí, lǎo shì jiāng dào hóng lóu mèng zhōng wáng yì féng yì duān mà rén dě huà, ràng dà jiā fān yì, shì jiā shǎng tà jiù shí nonsense de yì sī, dān lǎo shī ràng tián kòng what the wind (written on the blackboard “___the wind”), jǐng guó shèn sī shǔ lǜ, zhōng yú yǒu wèi tóng xué shuō ‘break’, lǎo shī xiǎo zhē shuò ‘Good! Dān ni shī nà mo dà jǐn gàn ma? …nǐ yòng pass the wind jiù xìng le.” (D in Postgraduate English classroom)

In our society, teaching is regarded as the most sacred and noble profession;
teachers are those who have higher quality and never say any dirty words not even to say in the classroom. In this class, she has to mention such English expressions, and by the way talks about his personal experience on this phrase. In order to adapt to the “teacher’s macro role”, she avoids Chinese dirty words, but switches to English such as ‘nonsense’ with the aim to weaken the negative effect of those dirty words.

2.2.2 Teacher’s “micro-role”

3. T: “Do you think that computers have consciousness?”
   Ss: (keeping in silence)
   T: consciousness? You know ......“ji suàn jiýou yi shí ma?”
   S1: “...No, computers have no consciousness. It only contains some programs produced by Human being, and process the data....”
   (L in College English □ classroom)
   When asking this question, the teacher wants to be a participant in this discussion, but the students keep in silence. So, how to break silence and make students become voluntary participants in the activity is a problem to be solved. Consequently, in that context, he has to make his role as an intended participant automatically change to be a prompter by encouraging students to think and open the mouth. What is the role of prompter? As Harmer (1991) said: “Often the teacher needs to encourage students to participate or needs to make suggestions about how students may proceed in an activity when there is a silence or when they are confused about what to do next. This is one of the teacher’s important role, the role of prompter.” Why does he choose codeswitching as a strategy? Firstly, Chinese is our native language and switching to Chinese may shorten the distance between the teacher and students and lessen their anxiety to speak English. Secondly, maybe students do not make clear the meaning of “consciousness”. So his switching codes to Chinese is just to adapt to the change of his teacher’s role.

2.3 Teachers’ Codeswitching as Adaptation to the Psychological Intentions

Teachers’ psychological intentions in the present study refer to the teachers’ spontaneous motives or intentions behind their performing of a specific act of Chinese/English codeswitching in classroom. The teachers’ intentions or motivations influence or even determine not only what to say but also how to say, namely, how to construct teachers’ discourse to realize certain purposes.

2.3.1 Teachers’ codeswitching as emphasis strategy

4. T: “ How about Rose? ... She has a part-time job. So she has to get up early every morning, cleaning, washing, and changing clothes for her father. She thinks that is her responsibility. She said: ‘ I do anything to get him better.’ Zhè lǐ yòng le yí gèzhòng yào de cíjiào ‘responsibility’ means something I have to do not something I want to do or do not want to do. And in the next part, ‘The little John also has a strong sense of commitment.’ zhè lǐ yǒu yòng le yí gè jiàò ‘commitment’, what does it mean? ...Good! ‘responsibility’, and look at the next part, ‘The right thing to do has also been a rewarding family experience’. zhè lǐ yǒu yí gè ‘also’, suǒ yí tâ mèn dōu shí zài tán ‘responsibility’”. (D in Postgraduate English classroom)

It is a passage about family problem, and the teacher is giving necessary explanations while reading some parts of the text. The teacher using three codeswitchings is to adapt to his psychological intention of emphasis and let students give enough attention to the usage of these words and have a deep understanding of the passage.
2.3.2 Teachers’ codeswitching as authenticity-keeping strategy

This category can be subdivided into kinds: Knowledge-providing and text-oriented. Here we can only give one example.

Knowledge-providing codeswitching refers to the case of teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching with the aim of providing authentic explanations of the knowledge. This is a common practice in introducing something new and giving accurate interpretations.

5. T: “‘refuse’, ‘decline’, reject’“ turn down’ zhè jǐ gè dōu kě yǐ yì wèi ‘jù’ jūe’” dōu yǒu ‘you do not do something that you are asked to do, or do not take something that you are offered’, dàn shì tài mèn de yì yì yòng fǎ shí yòu qū bié de.ní kě yǐ shuō refuse or decline an invitation; refuse permission; decline, reject, or turn down a suggestion; reject or turn down a proposal. ‘decline’ bǐ ‘refuse’ lǐ mào, bù kěn ding/ér qiè ‘decline’ shì yǐ yán cí jù jūe.” (W in College English classroom)

When distinguishing these four words and phrase having similar meaning and same Chinese expressions, he consciously switches to English version to adapt to his psychological intention of giving each authentic explanation and providing students complete and accurate knowledge of the words. This kind of codeswitching is quite frequently used in the process of teachers’ text explanation.

2.3.3 Teachers’ codeswitching as understanding-facilitating strategy

In the process of the text explanation, we often meet those very long sentences having complicated structures; in that case, teachers usually use the form of codeswitching to facilitate students’ understanding and help them give a clear explanation.

6. T: “Next sentence ‘Our lives, the lives of all humans, which are the result of a very length biological and social evolution, having benefited from such great efforts, from necessary work and superfluous work, have acquired inestimable value, and I am unable to understand how one can consciously envisage destroying life.’ It is a very long sentence and we’d better analyze the sentence structure and then we can make clear the deep meaning of the sentence. How many clauses, here? Hǎo, zhè gě jù zhī shì yóu liǎng gè bīng liè fèn jù zú chéng de. Dà jiā xiǎn zhào yìxiàzhēng gě jùzì de zhūyǔ” …duì, ‘our lives, the lives of all humans’…” (W in Postgraduate English classroom)

Why does the teacher switch to Chinese version here? As to those non-English-major students, they are not so familiar with English grammatical terms. If the teacher uses these terms to explain the complicated sentence structure, students would feel very confused. So he adapts to this psychological intention of facilitating students’ understanding, and switches to Chinese so as to make students understand the grammatical interpretation easily.

2.3.4 Teachers’ codeswitching as generalization strategy

Teachers’ codeswitching as generalization strategy refers to teachers’ using codeswitching to generalize the main idea of his/her long argumentations or explanations.

7. T: “An aptitude test refers to…oh… any of a variety of tests which are used to predict how successful an individual will be in future study or work. The difference between an achievement test and an aptitude test is …achievement test scores are used to evaluate present competence, present? You know? while aptitude test scores are used to predict future competence. So, that’s the difference between these two kinds of
tests. Suǒ yǐ, qián zhě shì yòng lái cè shì xiàn zài néng li de, ér hòu zhě shì yòng lái cè shì jiāng lái néng li de kǎo shì.” (L in College English • classroom)

After her long English introduction of two kinds of tests, the teacher will have a generalization. His purpose is to make students have a clear idea of the introduction and let most students follow his interpretation as well. So he adapts to this psychological intention by choosing switching to Chinese as a strategy. This kind of strategy is often used after a long, complicated interpretation.

In this subcategory, teacher’s codeswitching can be used as face-keeping strategy and humor-creating strategy, because the scope is limited, we cannot discuss them in detail.

Generally speaking, among these three categories, the teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching as an adaptation to the Linguistic Reality and the Teachers’ Roles are called passive codeswitchings, and teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching as an adaptation to the Teachers’ Psychological Intentions is named as active codeswitching.

Teachers’ using codeswitching in classroom must have some influence on students’ foreign language learning, so in the next part, we present a statistical analysis of the students’ evaluations of teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching and try to discuss its influence on the students’ language learning.

2.4 Analysis

2.4.1. Data collection and the statistical results

We use questionnaire, interview, and quantitative method to collect and analyze the data. The questionnaire consists of ten questions, and each question is an example from above ten subcategories of objects to which teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching adapts respectively. After each question, students have to choose an evaluation from five choices: A. Outstanding B. Excellent C. Good D. Unnecessary and E. Not good, and give their reasons (questionnaire in Appendix). The 54 students have been classified into two groups, high-proficiency students and low-proficiency students, according to their final examination grades. When we process data, we use Rank-sum Comparison Analysis in Non-parameter Statistics to show students’ overall evaluation trend on each kind of codeswitching (Table1, Table 2) and then compare the results of two groups of students (Table 3).

2.4.2 Analysis

2.4.2.1 Analysis on the Students’ Acceptance of Teacher Codeswitching

Table 1

High-proficiency Students’ Evaluation Frequency Distribution and Rank Effect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Unnecessary</th>
<th>Not good</th>
<th>Rank effect</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Rank interval 1-40 41-146 147-212 213-243 244-260

Average rank 20.5 93.5 179.5 228 252
In Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3, Rank is set from “Outstanding” to “Not good”, so we know that the smaller the Rank Effect is, the better the students’ overall evaluation on each codeswitching is.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Unnecessary</th>
<th>Not good</th>
<th>Rank effect</th>
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</table>

Rank interval 1-51 52-144 145-221 222-255 256-280
Average rank 26 98 183 238.5 268

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low-proficiency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Rank effect</td>
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</table>

In Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3, Rank is set from “Outstanding” to “Not good”, so we know that the smaller the Rank Effect is, the better the students’ overall evaluation on each codeswitching is.

Table 3 gives us a very clear representation of Rank Effect Order of Two Groups of Students. Firstly, the first, fifth, seventh and ninth codeswitching get relatively better evaluations from students, which indicates these kinds of codeswitching can have better effects on students’ language learning. In Question Five, the teacher uses codeswitching to adapt to his psychological motivation—Knowledge-providing, that is, he switches to English to give students an accurate and authentic English explanation on the synonyms. In Question Seven, the teacher is to create humor and arouse students’ interests in classroom. The teacher uses Codeswitching One is to adapt to the linguistic reality—to give the authentic English terms. In such cases, students like to
accept those authentic expressions, and at the same time they can have a deep impression on teachers’ explanations. Codeswitching Nine is a common method used by foreign language teachers to analyze the sentence structure of those very long sentences. Students have been familiar with this method and accept it because it is too difficult for them to understand those English grammatical terms and expressions of sentence structures.

As to some cases, two groups of students have their different attitudes, for example: Question Ten and Six. In Question ten, the teacher uses codeswitching to adapt to the psychological intention—generalization. Teachers usually switch to a simple Chinese sentence to have a summary. Why do High-proficiency students have a better impression than low-proficiency students? By interviewing, we know that the former has higher listening comprehension ability, and they can understand most of the teachers’ words; the switching to Chinese can only test their understanding. On the contrary, the latter has relatively poor listening comprehension ability. They can hardly understand those English explanations quickly, and usually what they heard and can understand is only Chinese generalization, so they feel very nervous. So, in our later interactions, teachers can provide slower and clearer English explanations and if possible repeat them, and at last if necessary, we can give a brief Chinese summary. It is similar to Question Six. The low-proficiency students are not so familiar with these new words as the high-proficiency students, so they can hardly accept this codeswitching.

3. Summary

We cannot say that all the above categories and sub-categories are carried out with the same degree of consciousness. Generally speaking, the consciousness degree for the teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching as adaptation to the linguistic reality is comparatively lower, while the consciousness degree for teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching as adaptation to teachers’ roles and psychological intentions are comparatively higher. Teachers’ codeswitching under the same category also does not possess the same degree of consciousness. Thus, we have to take a dynamic attitude towards the study of it.

We have proposed three different categories to which teachers’ Chinese/English codeswitching in classrooms adapt to, but we cannot say that the three categories are definitely clear-cut, because overlapping does exist in some cases and difficulty does exist in categorizing tokens of codeswitching according to the three categories we have proposed in the present research. In addition, we have to say what we have discovered in the present study on the adaptability of teachers’ codeswitching is far from being a complete list; there are many other cases to be studied and discussed in the future.
References