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Code-switching of Chinese students at the tertiary level in conversations: concerning English

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Abstract. We examined Chinese university students' daily-life casual attitudes regarding code-switching of English. It challenges students' everyday and simple conversations. Code-switching is "the use of two or more languages within the same conversation, usually within the same conversational turn, or even within the same sentence. According to the study, code-switching is a combination of two languages used during the same auditory communication or conversation between Chinese University students. An interview sample of students represents one of the public universities in Beijing. Participants included 42 Chinese students from various majors, including journalism, media, communication, drama, and languages. This study involved a questionnaire containing 21 questions. According to the study, there was an evident shortage of English code-switching features among this population. To say it differently, they rarely use code-switching, as they are afraid of conveying a wrong meaning, and using Chinese is easier and more convenient.

Keywords. Chinese, code-switching, daily conversations, English

1. Introduction

Code-switching is a process showing the use of two or more languages or dialects in spoken communication. (Cheng & Butler, 1989) both consider it a natural language phenomenon in bilingual conversations. This research investigates whether Chinese bilingual University students can provide a daily, engaging, and smooth way of using code-switching in their daily-life English conversation. The study starts with background information and shows how interested students are in code-switching.

The role of code-switching is considered the act of Bilingualism. That is how it shows the Bilingualism of speakers moving accordingly to social interaction (Wei & Wu, 2009). On the one hand, the person who can code-switch is proficient in the language's mechanism. (Appel & Muysken, 1987) proposed "the alteration between varieties or codes, across sentences or clause boundaries." In other words, when bilinguals decide to switch language depending on the situation, they are in, which can be called domain-based or situation code-switching, where domain means the one code is regularly used in particular cases. In contrast, another principle is commonly used in different situations (Meyerhoff, 2009).

1.1 The objectives of the study

The students intently or casually use Code-switching in any casual attitudes in daily life or outside. We conducted this study to know how and why ESL and EFL students use code-switching during their research at the Communication University of China. This study also is one of the first that started tapping into the construct of ESP as defined in the ESL literature.

The second objective of this is to find out why Chinese students use code-switching does code-switching has any positive impact on their English language communication. Code-switching gives confidence to Chinese students as they can confidently communicate with international students. CUC is one of the higher institutions in China dedicated to media, communication studies, languages, and other related majors. Therefore, the use of the English language in campus daily life seems essential according to the English Language on media and based on students' motivation of English as a foreign language. Therefore, Code-switching can be described as a natural outcome of bilinguals' interaction in two or more languages in multilingual and multicultural communities. This investigation tries to shed light on whether those students at CUC code-switch to English and why they code-switch to English in daily communication.

1.2 Statement of the problem

A bilingual is a person who can code-switch and mix between the languages they speak through their conversations by substituting words or phrases from one language with words or phrases from another language. Code-switching operates in discussions among different bilingual speakers using English as a communicating language. On the other hand, some studies have been conducted on Chinese bilingual speakers of English. Whereas, there is a shortage of information about how Chinese university students use this type of language in daily conversations. Previous studies on code-switching emphasized why bilingual (second language) students code switch into (first language) or vice versa. In CUC, there are no studies that argue for this kind of code-switching. This study examines code-switching in a university setting and only addresses how and why Chinese students at the Communication University of China are code-switching in their daily dialogue. It also tries to examine whether those who code-switch intend it.

1.3 The hypothesis of the study

Bearing in mind these different purposes of code-switching, English is the second language used in China. The primary structure of this study is to obtain a better understanding of the students' usage of casual attitudes using the English language in this university. This goal will be achieved by addressing the following research hypotheses:

1. The Chinese university students are using code-switching when they come to conversational attitudes;
2. they like/dislike identifying using this type of process in their daily life;
3. they usually feel that using this practice can increase their language efficiency and approach.
4. The English language is fun/boring when students use it during their conversations.

1.4. The research Questions

For several years, code-switching and mixing researchers should try to find a reason for code-switching and mixing. Gumperz and Auer (1982) (1984) respectively defined code-switching as one of several discourse cues (both verbal and nonverbal) that help signal and interpret interlocutors' intentions. At the same time, the interest of other researchers was to describe the morpho-syntactical constraints in inter-sentential switching, focusing on the position or location in a sentence where codeswitching and mixing would be allowed.

More intentionally, the term "code" denotes any system of signals that includes numbers and words with real meanings (Jingxia, 2010). It is defined as the occurrence of switches between two languages in bilinguals' utterances which takes place in the form of a single word, phrase, or sentence (Momenian & Samar, 2011), along with the occurrence of switches both between and within utterances (Al-Qaysi & Al-Emran, 2017; Jdetawy, 2011; Taweel & Btoosh, 2012).

Consequently, this study is based on three main questions:

1. Why do Chinese university students use code-switching when they come to casual attitudes?
2. how do they like/dislike using this process in their daily lives?
3. Do they usually feel interested in using this practice to increase their language efficiency and practice?
4. Do media and any role in Chinese students' inclination towards code-switching?

2. Literature Review

Gumperz (1982:59) defined Code-switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems." The comparison with Myers-Scotton (1993a, vii) gives a natural explanation of code-switching as "the use of two or more languages in the same conversation, usually within the same conversational turn, or even within the same sentence; of that turn." In addition, Hoffman defines it quite similarly to Myers-Scotton's (1993a). M.S. considers code-switching "the alternate use of two languages or linguistic varieties within the same utterance or during the same conversation" (Hoffman, 1991: 110). Nevertheless, Gumperz (1982), Hoffman (1991), and Myers-Scotton (1993a) give the definitions based on their understandings, they asset in common using code-switching as an umbrella term to include any linguistic alternations within or beyond a sentence.

Other linguists proposed that code-switching is "the lack of sufficient proficiency to continue in the language in which speaker the conversation began" (Myers-Scotton, 1998). It is a fact that speakers demand the help of another language because they will not know that specific lexicon in one language; for sure, this condition requires borrowing vocabularies that play the role of code-switching. Wei and Wu (2009) showed that Cantonese students' using English leads to deliberation.

Meeting complex communicative demands requires the speakers of a community where two or more languages to switch from one language to another (Chung 2006). Haugen (1956) argued that bilinguals tend to use or form sentences with elements from both languages, especially at the beginning of language development. It is usual for a speaker who speaks two or more languages fluently to switch or mix between them on justness or frequently while talking to other people who speak the same languages. If a speaker spends much time in a bilingual or multilingual environment, they will start to switch from one language to another.

Jingxia (2010) introduced code-switching as the notion of moving between two languages in the middle of a conversation when both speakers speak the same two languages. Code-switching also refers to the diglossic circumstances in which bilinguals utilize various dialects in various events (Leyew, 1998). Contrarily, code-switching can occur within two different languages at sentence boundaries instead of two different varieties in the same discourse (Bilgin & Rahimi, 2014; Lee, 2010).

3. Research Methodology

This is a data-based study with a quality randomly picked from closed-ended questions to collect, describe, and interpret data relevant to Chinese students' code-switching of the

English language in CUC, Beijing, China. I ordered my data during the ongoing first term of October 2021. This data goes back to the 'speech community defined by Bloomfield, 1993; Gumperz, 1968; Hymes, 1972; Irvine; Wolfson, 1989).

This study was conducted to identify whether students are more familiar with code-switching in casual attitudes. Two research tools were used to achieve this objective: questionnaires and interviews. This type of design that uses different research methods to investigate the same issue is called a triangulation mixed-method design. The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity and reliability of the process. Besides, using multiple methods in a research design would also help to "give a fuller picture and address many different aspects of phenomena."

3.1 Participants of the study

A total of forty-four Chinese university non-English primary students (21 female & 21 male students) from the Communication University of China participated in this study. The selected university is a public university located in Beijing, China, and the participants are from different academic majors (including media, communication, journalism, art, drama, and audiovisual television (see table 1). They are currently registering in school, and the samples are distributed while studying. The fact that all-volunteer participants were recruited from different majors in the university helped provide a variety of views about their impact and use of code-switching.

All participants were asked to fill out hard copy questionnaires, including three parts. The first part ordained participants' background information: including age, gender, nationality, university and major, academic level, first language, and (English) language level. The second part is dedicated to the "Always-Never" scales: including two questions. The third part is dedicated to "strongly agree - strongly disagree" scales: including 19 questions.

The study involves students from different (Chinese regions) with ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds ranging from 22 to 25 years. Concerning English language efficiency, most of the students (20 students) have a basic level in English, and some are (12 students) intermediate and (10 students) proficient, respectively. The number of foreign languages that the participants spoke ranged from one to two languages. These languages included English (31), Japanese (10), and Vietnamese (1). (*See Table 1 for the distribution of the participants*).

Table 1. Distribution of the Participants

Category	Sub-category	Frequency (N=42)
Name of the University	Communication University of China	42
Gender	Female	21
	Male	21
Age	22	14
	23	08
	24	10
	25	10
Nationality	Chinese	41
	Chinese-Vietnamese	01
First language	Chinese	42

English Language level	Basic	20
	Intermediate	12
	Proficient	10
Other languages	English	31
	Japanese	10
	Vietnamese	01
Academic level	Bachelor degree	20
	Master's degree	15
	Ph.D.	07
	Drama	03
Major of study	Audiovisual translation	03
	News	03
	Journalism	03
	Journalism and communication	03
	MBA	03
	International Business	03
	Information and communication systems	02
	Chinese international education	10
	Art theory	03
	News translation	03
	English	03

3.2 Research Instruments

Forty-two participants completed full copies of the questionnaire. We tracked their responses to two parts of the questions. Part one used a six-point Likert Scale from (*1 always*) to (*6 Never*). Part two also six-point Likert Scale with (*1 representing Strongly Agree*) and (*6 representing Strongly Disagree*). Tables 2 and 3 below present the responses we got.

3.3 Data collection

Part One: The purpose of Q1 & Q2 was to know how much students liked using this language feature. In Q1, they indicated that code-switching is attractive to them, and in Q2, they show less use of code-switching as a language tool. (See table 2.)

Table 2. Students' preference and perceptions of code-mixing.

		N= 42							
<i>Questions</i>		1	2	3	4	5	6	M	SD
Q1	I like code-switching.	05	07	06	20	03	01	3.333	3.724
Q2	I ** use it every day.	00	00	00	16	20	06		4.844

M=mean, SD= St. deviation

** 1 Always, 2 Usually, 3 Often, 4 Sometimes, 5 Seldom, 6 Never

Part Two: In this part, students were given some statements (i.e., Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q20, Q21) which indicated students preference, hesitation, lack of vocabularies, embarrassment, ability, daily-life interaction (using English or Chinese, ostentation (in which showing others that they can speak English), and motive. (see Table 3).

4. Results and Discussion

According to the data collected in the previous section, we can notice a clear and definite trend toward code-switching of Chinese students to the English Language. In all statements, a large majority of participants answered unanimously. Generally, code-mixing is a

dominant trend amongst college-goers, and they are positively disposed towards the practice. Participants showed multiple selections in every statement; for instance, in Q1, they showed a high parentage of using Mandarin than English when they did not know the exact meaning of the words; however, in Q6, they tried mixing the Chinese language to express the purpose if they failed to do so in English. Q7, Q8, and Q9 showed 'agree' that they prefer to mix Chinese with English to be more precise and not misunderstood. What is most interesting is that students 'agree' about speaking English at least once per week, which means they have no interaction with other students in English or maybe not at all Q10. Besides, Q11 shows that their friends or partners may or may not like to mix both languages in conversations. Q12 majority of students assured that learning the English language is essential, so they prefer to speak in Chinese because they do not want others to know their English is poor Q13.

Regarding language anxiety, students 'strongly agree' that they should interact in a friendly way that maybe helps them to avoid unclear communication Q14. Participants strongly prefer to speak Chinese over any other language; however, when they have a chance to do so, they can say both Q17 and Q18. Regarding the language mixing process, they 'neutral get confused when other speakers mix both languages on the same occasion Q19. In a very sophisticated value by showing that they are well-educated, they 'disagree' using code-switching to show they have a good English Q20. They are also 'neutral' using code-switching and sending text messages through the WeChat app.

Table 3. Students' Questionnaire.

		<i>Frequency= 42</i>				
<i>Questions</i>		1	2	3	4	5
Q3	When speaking English, I use some Chinese words because I do not know the correct word in English.	02	11	08	15	06
Q4	I sometimes mix Chinese with English in the same sentence (spoken).	04	08	13	13	04
Q5	I never mix Chinese with English in the same sentence (writing).	09	19	00	11	03
Q6	I mix both Chinese and English to express my meaning better.	03	07	09	17	06
Q7	When people speak to me in a mixture of Chinese and English, I can understand them better.	04	08	13	13	04
Q8	I usually speak Chinese to clarify my meaning with others to learn English better.	06	10	16	10	00
Q9	When speaking Chinese, I use some English words to help others understand my meaning better.	06	09	09	18	00
Q10	I speak English at least once per week.	00	05	05	23	09
Q11	My friends do not like speaking English.	08	12	17	05	00
Q12	I learn English because it is useful.	00	06	08	13	15
Q13	I do not prefer speaking English because I do not want others to know my English is poor.	07	04	24	07	00
Q14	We should interact with others in a friendly way and avoid making conflicts.	00	06	04	11	21
Q15	When speaking English, I sometimes use Chinese words because I do not know the correct words in English.	02	08	13	13	06
Q16	Every day I speak both Chinese and English.	00	17	08	13	04
Q17	I prefer speaking English to Chinese.	04	11	03	02	00
Q18	I prefer speaking Chinese to English.	00	03	07	16	16
Q19	It is unclear when people speak Chinese and English because I cannot completely understand what they mean.	02	11	20	07	02
Q20	I use some English words when speaking Chinese to show that I can speak English.	12	15	06	09	00

Q21	I always send onomatopoeia words (拟声词) through WeChat to express emotive meaning.	02	04	16	12	08
1 strongly agree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree						

4.1 Language environment

Code-switching mainly communicates with social events that need appropriate words because they forget or are not known. Therefore, it requires knowing the easy dish for the speaker who uses it in any situation. A speaker also may or may not code-switch in an interaction, depending on which mode helps the speaker stay comfortable. C.S. can occur in such language environments to show the speaker can speak the switched language. These include two local situations. As a result, the informal occasion with free play being the people around is when the speaker is with people who speak "weak English" or vice versa. However, the very formal occasion shows he is on the level as the people they stay with. All the same, they would not like to use such a process in some cases. At both centers, code-switching occurs, but to what extent does the formality of the environment affect the use of code-switching.

Berlin's (2005) statement, "the dominance of the target language is dependent on the language-learning environment" (p. 40). Berlin (2005) further adds that speakers usually acquire a relatively higher status when conversing in the target language than speaking the first language. Although learning the target language is preferable to the broader society, only the learner will decide whether they want to acquire it based on their feelings about its usage (p. 40).

Table 4. Student's attention toward code-switching

		Frequency= 42				
Questions		1	2	3	4	5
Q9	When speaking Chinese, I use some English words to help others understand my meaning better.	07	09	08	18	00
Q10	I speak English at least once per week.	00	06	06	19	11
Q11	My friends do not like speaking English.	08	13	17	04	00
Q13	I do not prefer speaking English because I do not want others to know my English is poor.	13	08	15	06	00
Q14	We should interact with others in a friendly way and avoid making conflicts.	00	06	04	11	21
Q16	Every day I speak both Chinese and English.	00	17	08	13	04
1 strongly agree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree						

4.2 The Language "Privilege"

The students speak English because they feel English is exciting. English makes them feel more educated and sophisticated in their society. Means could see the role of happiness in learning the language in such individuals. They feel more comfortable using C.S. because they can understand the meaning better. As for Q6, the students show a chief purpose of frequently mixing Chinese and English to clarify their meanings better. About Q7, "When people speak to me in a mixture of Chinese and English, I can understand them better," it approves that all the students (natural and agree) about their understanding of language. Besides, the students' (neutral) prefer speaking and using Chinese frequently, which their second language ability can improve, approved with a medium-range Q8. By looking closely at Q12, the participants think (agree) English is functional, which means they have a favorable view of learning English.

Meanwhile, Q17 and Q18 admitted students' preference for speaking Chinese or English which showed a high positive range (agree) for Chinese and a negative range (disagree)

for English. The integrative rule of students is to show other peers they can speak English (agree) approved by Q20. Q21 (neutral) showed the daily practicing of code-switching in their daily communication with the WeChat app.

Table 5. Student's language attitude towards C.S.

		Frequency= 42				
<i>Questions</i>		1	2	3	4	5
Q6	I mix both Chinese and English to express my meaning better.	02	08	11	15	06
Q7	When people speak to me in a mixture of Chinese and English, I can understand them better.	02	08	15	15	02
Q8	I usually speak Chinese to clarify my meaning with others to learn English better.	07	10	14	11	00
Q12	I learn English because it's useful.	00	06	08	13	15
Q17	I prefer speaking English than Chinese.	09	23	06	04	00
Q18	I prefer speaking Chinese than English.	00	04	06	16	16
Q20	I use some English words when speaking Chinese to show that I can speak English.	12	15	07	08	00
Q21	I always send onomatopoeia words (拟声词) through WeChat to express emotive meanings.	02	05	15	12	08

One strongly agree, two disagree, three neutral, four agree, five strongly agree

4.3 Language Use

Code-switching works mainly to address a new communication event with one language barrier. The reason is that it could happen in different or unique linguistic backgrounds. In Q3, it showed that students are (agree) obligated to use code-switching (Chinese) because they do not know the correct word in English. They usually gain a relatively high status when they converse in the target language (Berlin 2005). According to what we mentioned above, Q4 showed they (neutral - agree) sometimes use code-switching on spoken occasions. However, they (disagree) about never using it on writing occasions. The confusion of using the words somehow matters. The students showed that they (neutral) get confused when the other speaker uses code-switching and does not entirely understand the meaning.

Table 6. Student's recognition of code-switching

		Frequency= 42				
<i>Questions</i>		1	2	3	4	5
Q3	When speaking English, I use some Chinese words because I do not know the correct word in English.	02	11	08	15	06
Q4	I sometimes mix Chinese with English in the same sentence (spoken).	05	08	12	12	05
Q5	I never mix Chinese with English in the same sentence (writing).	10	19	00	10	03
Q19	It is confusing when people speak Chinese and English because I cannot completely understand what they mean.	02	16	16	06	02

1 strongly agree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree

5. Conclusion

The study shows that though students like the term code-switching in their simple conversations, they have an apparent insufficiency of using code-switching in daily-life conversations. Students do not prefer using code-switching because they are afraid of being misunderstood by others. They do not always practice English, so they use Chinese to convey better than English. Educators and policymakers at Chinese schools could know that students use code-switching because they may want to improve their language ability. We recommend scholars to work more on this type of study, whether the students are essential in language study or bilingual.

Table 7. The variables of code-switching among the Communication University of China's population.

<i>Frequency=42</i>	1	2	3	4	5
Mean	2.05	4.08	4.95	5.75	2.06
Std. Deviation	2.012	2.397	2.373	2.023	2.909

1 strongly agree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree

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