A Study on the Adaptability of Chinese-English Code-switching in Advertising Discourse

Weixuan Shi[1], Xingying Du[2]

[1]Professor in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, NO. 689 Road, North District, Baoding 071003, Hebei, China

[2]Graduate Student in School of Foreign Languages, North China Electric Power University, NO. 689 Road, North District, Baoding 071003, Hebei, China

*Corresponding Author:
Weixuan Shi
Email: du466@qq.com

Abstract: Code-switching (CS), as a phenomenon of language contact, has aroused great attention from various fields. Researchers do studies on code-switching from different perspectives like the sociolinguistic, grammatical, psycholinguistic perspectives and conversation analysis perspective, etc. This thesis based on Verschueren's Adaptation Theory and Yu Guodong's Adaption Model studies exact ads in order to summarize the reasons and features of English-Chinese code-switching. Through analysis, it can be found that CS as a pragmatic strategy in advertising discourse can provide microscopic view of language inner structure for the purpose of adaptation to linguistic reality, social rules and wishes of audience. Therefore, this adaption can help advertiser to better carry out publicity and code-switching can truly become an effective advertising strategy.

Keywords: Advertising discourse, code-switching, adaptability, pragmatic strategy

INTRODUCTION

Code-switching (CS) can refer to any semiotic system and it may be not only a language, but also a dialect, a style or a register [1]. In a broad sense, McCormick [2] refers CS as "the juxtaposition of two (or more) languages or dialects" . As a general language culture phenomenon of interaction and cross-cultural communication with two or more language varieties, CS has won great favor of linguists since 1970s.

Existing research can be divided into four categories: Gumperz [3] representing for sociolinguistics has studied the internal relationship between CS and social factors, especially its social meaning and motivation. One of the deficiencies is that while using CS, they neglect some factors of interlocutor's psychology, cognition and language. Regarding from grammatical angle, the representative Poplack has proposed some grammatical rules which might have universal applicability, but not suitable in actual corpus. From the point view of psycholinguistics, Giles [4] has brought forward the Accommodation Theory, attempting to explain the psychological process in CS, however, not a mature theory yet. Moreover, Peter Auer, Li Wei and some others are trying to discover the dynamic process of CS from the perspective of conversation analysis and son on. Due to the wide level and great diversity that CS covers, a finer and stronger theoretical basis with broader interpretation is needed to support it. Therefore, Verschueren's Adaption Theory is a better selection to explain all factors concerning language, psychology and socioculture in a full scale.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This part elaborates the Adaption Model of CS. In 1999, Verschueren [5] completely put forward the research framework of language adaptability in the book *Understanding Pragmatics*. The theory is a functional pragmatics overview, taking into account the full complexity of language phenomenon's cognitive , social and cultural functioning. From the perspective of pragmatics, the Adaption Theory will penetrate the language that can signal meaning at all levels. Thus, it has strong explanation and inclusive force.

The Adaption Theory claims that the use of language is a process of making choices and adaption, and the underlying essence of the choosing lies in that language has three design features, namely variability, negotiability and adaptability [6]. The variability of language refers that the choice of language is a dynamic process with great diversity; The negotiability of language maintains that the choice of language is conducted on the basis of flexible pragmatic principles and strategies, rather than the rigid stereotype; The final adaptability advocates that speakers can make negotiate choices via numerous possibilities as well as satisfy the need of communication.

Specially to advertising discourse by Yang, Changyong [7], CS is employed by advertisers to make adaptable choices for the purpose of publicity, including the adaption to linguistic reality, social conventions and psychological motivations by Yu Guodong [8]. The first two are passive adaption, while the last is consumer's active adaption. Concrete analysis is as follows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Under the adaption analysis of CS, two central issues will be solved: first, why should advertising designers conduct CS? Namely, the communicative objective of CS. Second, how should the CS be realized under the support of adaption theory? That is the contributing factors of how it can be achieved. Advertising discourse as a present form of language is designed by advertisers who should obey the essence of language and various pragmatic principles to adaption in the process of CS, thereby, better pragmatic effects of advertisements can be achieved for communicative purposes.

1) Analysis of CS as Adaptation to Linguistic Reality

In Chinese-English advertisements, CS as adaptation to linguistic reality refers to the fact that the use of two languages is caused by pure language factors within the internal range of Chinese and English [9]. The adaption is realized by metafunctions of CS such as the function of emphasis, convenience and reference.

Example 1: there is a Rossini Watch ad in the *World Affairs Pictorial* for the third period of 2004 with the description as following. Under the background of grassy lawn, two antique sling wooden chairs are lying beside the woods with the advertising slogan: "Time always follows me". The ad successfully quoted a classic English saying "Time always follows me." On the one hand, it can represent that the time on the dial plate is definitely precise and the watch is of high quality that the time can be kept forever. On the other hand, the quotation of English code can make consumers easily cope or paste the slogan on the Internet to search the product for convenience, thus, plenty of time can be saved. Furthermore, the insertion of English slogan emphasizes the Rossini Watch brand is imported from abroad with top quality which can show a man's good taste. The reference function of the ad not only can pass basic selling points to consumers but also can enlarge information. The three functions as representatives to the adaption of linguistic reality integrate together to enhance the best effect of the ad.

2) Analysis of CS as Adaptation to Social Conventions

Social conventions focus on the formation of conventional behavior and the thinking pattern that can be easily accepted. CS as adaptation to social conventions signifies that with respect to such kind of factors like specific socioculture, customs and taboos, the communicators have a tendency to adapt to the use of two or more languages or language varieties.

Example 2: The New BMW 7 Series，Sheer Driving Pleasure，BMW 760 Li. This is the ad for BMW the famous German automobile trademark. Although the BMW trademark doesn't have much cultural connotation in German, after its introduction into China, Chinese ad designers translate the English code BMW into "Baoma" as adaption to target culture and Chinese customs. As is known, "Baoma" in Chinese culture is a rare magic horse with amazing speed and such kind of translation adapts to specific sociocultural concepts for Chinese consumers, therefore, the series of BMW automobiles is warmly welcomed and accepted by Chinese public as a symbol of social status and personal identity. In addition, due to its prevalent popularity as well as its featured social factors and specific cognitive pattern, new social connotation of BMW is endowed by the public. BMW equals business (B), money (M) plus women (M), which is in accord with every man's dream. Such sensation effect of product is exactly the typical successful case of the CS adaption to specific socioculture in brand translation.

3) Analysis of CS as Adaptation to Psychological Motivations

Psychological motivations refer to the personality, emotion, faith, intention and so on factors of both sides in the communication. CS as adaptation to psychological motivation indicates that communicators according to their psyche make a choice of language aiming at achieving various psychological motivations, such as the function of identifying, AIDA principle and westernized effects, etc.

Example 4: Kingrun Nanshan International Golf Resort One Mountain, One World

Kingrun Nanshan International Golf Resort as the first international living circle in Chongqing is an integrated golf villa incorporating golf sports, business hotel, leisure and entertainment as well as luxury residence. Ad designers employ Chinese-English CS with the purpose of promoting its multi-functional and integrated international community, but such kind of promotional method and strategy is truly the reflection of "westernized psyche", which means consumers performance of pursuing advanced taste and fashionable exotic life to represent a higher living standard and upper social class. Similarly, the successful ad firstly arise consumer's attention (A). Then, make them interested (I) in the product. Next, consumers will generate strong desire (D) to by it. Finally, they will be in action (A), turning the desire into purchase. Moreover, "International" endows the community the flavor of exotic style, and "One

Mountain, One World" makes the relationship between the consumer and the community much closer. Meanwhile, consumers identify the meaning of English code inserted in the Chinese ad revealing the social identity and good education.The success of the ad lies in the strategic use of CS and its adaption to consumer's psychological motivations. The CS strategy is comparable to the key to business success, thus, there is no wonder the big attraction of property sales afterwords.

CONCLUSION

Two conclusions can be made through the above-mentioned adaptability of CS, firstly, in Chinese-English advertising discourse, the reason why ad designers employ CS as a communicative and pragmatic strategy is to publicize and promote products; Secondly, under the framework of Verschueren's adaptability and Yu Guodong's Adaption Model, CS successfully used in Chinese-English ads contributes a lot to advertiser's adaption to language reality, social conventions and consumer's psychological motivations. The analysis of CS adaption in concrete examples also testify the feasibility of the theory. As a result, the CS adaption can truly help advertisers implement sales publicity, however, all aspects of efforts should be included if CS is wanted to be a real effective advertising strategy.

REFERENCES

1. Wardhaugh, R. (1998). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Third edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Company.
2. McCormick, K. M. (2001). *Code-switching*: Overview. In R. Mesthrie (ed.).
3. Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: CUP.
4. Giles, H., & Ryan, E. (1982). Prolegomena for developing a Social Psychological Theory of Language Attitudes. *London: Edward Arnold.*
5. Verschueren, J. (1999) *Understanding Pragmatics*. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press; Edward Arnold (Publishers) Limited, .
6. Verschueren, J. (2000). *Understanding Pragmatics*. London: Edward Arnold Ltd, 2000.
7. Changyong, Y. (2015). A Sociolinguistic Study on Language-Mixing: In Case of Korean-Merican Advertising. *Journal of Linguistic Studies, 20*, 133-149.
8. Guodong, Y. (2004). Adaption Model of Code-switching Research. *Contemporary Linguistics, 1*, 77-87.
9. Xiaowei, G. (2009). Study on the Adaptability Model and Function of Code-switching. *Foreign Language Teaching Research, 19,* 218-220.