

Exploration of Code-Switching Phenomenon in Network Communication Among Youth Groups

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ABSTRACT

Youth groups are major players in online media. In recent years, with the popularization and popularization of the national common language, the phenomenon of code switching among young people in the online media environment has become increasingly frequent. Therefore, this paper takes the language in the network communication of young people as the research object, and adopts the sociolinguistic research method, by collecting and analyzing the network communication corpus of young people, to explore the distribution law, characteristics and causes of code-switching in the network communication of this group. Through the research, it is found that the phenomenon of code switching occurs frequently in the network media communication among young people today, and it keeps up with the hot topics and topics of the network media. The code switching types are intra-sentence code switching and inter-sentence code switching tendency. By exploring the phenomenon of code-switching in the current network communication of youth groups, we can further understand the language attitude and language use of youth groups under the background of the popularization and popularization of national common languages.

KEYWORDS

Youth group; Network communication; Code switching

1 Introduction

Code switching refers to the rotation of bilingual speakers using two or more different languages, dialects or styles in a bilingual or multilingual communication environment, on different occasions or in a conversation. Code-switching research deeply discusses the reasons and characteristics behind this linguistic phenomenon by studying code-switching in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual areas. At present, the existing literature research on code switching mainly focuses on the following four aspects: combing the theory of code switching; Study on the Phenomenon of Code Switching between English and Chinese; A Study on Code Switching between Dialect Regions and Putonghua; There is still much room for research on code switching between foreign languages and Chinese in teachers' classrooms in Chinese as a foreign language classroom. Under the background of national common language promotion and popularization, there is still much room for research on code switching phenomenon of young people. Through the collection of natural corpus, this paper analyzes the code-switching phenomenon of youth groups in online media, and explores the characteristics and causes of code-switching phenomenon.

2 Definition of Code Switching

The study of code-switching began in the west. There are mainly code-switching and code-mixing, and there are several related definitions: replacing the corresponding part of the original language with a word or sentence belonging to another different grammatical system or subsystem in the same utterance^[1]; 1. Codes refer to the symbol system used for communication, including linguistic systems, and various varieties of languages, such as dialects, styles and registers.^[2] Zhu Yujin pointed out that code-switching generally refers to the speaker's switching from using one language (including dialect and style) to using another language. There are three phenomena: (1) the speaker uses different languages on different occasions; (2) The speaker uses different languages in a conversation; (3) Words use different languages in one sentence. Yao Mingfa, a scholar in China, synthesizes the definitions of Gumperz and Clyne, and thinks that code-switching refers to the situation that two different codes are used alternately in a certain discourse (including words, phrases, clauses and sentences).

3 Types of Code-Switching

Blom and Gumperz(1972) in *The Social Significance of Language Structure*: Code-switching in Norway divided code-switching into two types according to the causes: situational code-switching and figurative code-switching. Situational code-switching refers to the transformation of speakers according to their social relations and speaking occasions. Metaphorical code-switching means that the speaker wants to create another atmosphere or achieve a certain effect through language transformation. Myers-Scotton regards code-switching as a means for the speaker to negotiate the rights and obligations of both parties from the perspective of social function, and holds that the choice of language in

conversational communication is the result of the interaction between social factors and personal dynamic considerations. According to my own research on Swahili-English code-switching in Kenya, I put forward the famous markedness model, which divides code-switching into marked and unmarked.^[3] Poplack divides code-switching into three types: inter-sentence switching, intra-sentence switching and additional switching. Code-switching between sentences occurs at the boundary between two sentences or clauses, and each sentence or clause belongs to another language; Code-switching within a sentence involves the conversion within a sentence or clause; Additional code-switching refers to inserting additional elements expressed in another language into sentences or clauses expressed in a single language.^[4]

4 Literature Review

In terms of the forms and causes of code-switching, Wu Yu (2016) focused on the code-switching between turns and within turns through the collected corpus, and summarized the differences in the total amount, gender and age of code-switching.^[5] Zhang Xiumei (2017) takes the code-switching of Malaysian Chinese as the research object, and analyzes the reasons of code-switching in Malaysian Chinese society through questionnaires, corpus analysis and other methods, so as to understand their language communication applications.^[6] Li Ling (2024) studied the types, functions and factors of code-switching between Korean and Chinese through audio collection and questionnaire survey.^[7]

In terms of social pragmatics of code switching, Sun Feifeng (2012) proposed that the study of code switching by pragmatics is a dynamic study of language use and understanding in specific contexts, aiming at exploring the role of psychological, cognitive and cultural factors in code switching, and it can also expand new and reasonable explanations through linguistic theories such as politeness theory, face theory, adaptability theory and language memetics, so as to further explore the rationale and function of code switching.^[8] Ma Jianchun and Xie Jingyi (2017) proposed that code switching has special pragmatic functions or produces some social utility, that is, making up for language vacancies, supplementing explanations, adjusting the psychological distance between the two parties in communication, emphasizing the status of the speaker, pursuing fashion and humor, euphemistically expressing rejection and other pragmatic functions to achieve communicative purposes.^[9] Chen Beibei (2020) uses the Tiantianshang corpus as a sample to study the phenomenon of code-switching between Mandarin and Fang language in verbal communication, and summarizes the pragmatic value of code-switching verbal communication by analyzing its common patterns from the perspective of lingual meaning by describing the form of code-switching.^[10]

In addition, some scholars Zhu Wanjin and Wang Runjing (1997) analyzed the reasons, functions and significances of three generations in Xi'an using Henan dialect, Shaanxi dialect and Putonghua to switch codes in family conversation from the perspectives of society, domain, situation, mentality and conversational structure, based on natural conversation corpus, and concluded that the social significance of language comes from social context. Conversation is a constantly developing language activity. With the progress of conversation, the metaphorical function of a code may change.^[11] Liu Chengyu and Wu Lingli (2011) explored the relationship between code switching and national identity construction, and showed that social factors such as speech convergence and speech divergence, speaker's language attitude and psychological motivation have explanatory power for code switching.^[12]

5 Research Objects and Research Methods

This study takes the corpus of young people aged 18-35 in online communication as the research object. By recording their corpus in online media, and analyzing them by classification, we can understand the phenomenon, characteristics and causes of code-switching in daily life of young people.

6 Current Situation and Characteristics of Code Switching among Youth Groups

Based on corpus analysis, this study finds that in the online discourse of youth groups, vocabulary is the most active level where code-switching occurs. In terms of structural characteristics, intra-sentential code-switching dominates, mainly manifested as embedding national common language vocabulary into native language expressions. Nouns and adjectives are switched more frequently—for example, terms like "night shift" and "civil servant" in work-related topics; "decoration" and "loan" in housing and construction; "set meal" and "takeout" in food-related contexts; "facial mask" and "livestream" in shopping scenarios; "boarding pass" and "consignment" in travel discussions; and "security" and "embarrassment" in emotional expressions. These words carry strong opinionated meanings, enabling precise information transmission, adhering to the principle of linguistic economy, and making expressions smoother and more efficient. Additionally, in shopping-related topics, inter-sentential code-switching in the form of short sentences has emerged, further illustrating the influence of specific semantic fields on code-switching behavior.

In terms of lexical stability, some switched words (e. g., "facial mask," "decoration," "loan") show high-frequency

recurrence in related topics, indicating a significant correlation between specific semantic fields and code-switching. At the pragmatic function level, youth groups' code-switching behaviors have distinct expressive demands, with the core goal of optimizing the fluency and effectiveness of discourse dissemination. Specifically, young people tend to construct discourse systems centered on personal opinions, making vocabulary closely related to psychological states and self-expression (e.g., emotional terms) frequent domains for code-switching. By flexibly switching codes, youth not only enhance the appeal and uniqueness of their expressions but also form relatively stable switching preferences within specific semantic fields. As the main users of internet language, young people actively adopt and spread new words and expressions, achieving communicative purposes such as attracting audience attention and enhancing discourse humor through the flexible use of linguistic symbols.

7 Reasons for Code-Switching among the Youth Group

Through in-depth analysis of the code-switching phenomena in their online media discourse, this study can effectively identify the linguistic characteristics and patterns in youth groups' daily communication to a certain extent. In different registers such as family interaction, friend communication, and work exchanges, young people employ code-switching to achieve goals like information transmission and social communication based on specific communication partners and purposes. Code-switching represents a dynamic choice in language use, with its frequency constrained by multiple factors in individual living environments. Intergenerational relationships form a significant constraint mechanism for language choice in family communication scenarios. As the younger generation, youth subconsciously assess their elders' language competence and cultural cognitive boundaries based on the speech accommodation theory during conversations. To ensure effective information transmission, they actively reduce code-switching frequency. Meanwhile, family communication topics mostly focus on daily life, where non-essential professional jargon is rarely needed, making the native language dominant in maintaining emotional bonds and daily interactions. Among peers, youth integrate national common language vocabulary into daily discourse through code-switching, satisfying both the pursuit of novel expressions and the demand for advanced, humorous communication effects within peer groups. The shared cognitive frameworks and interest focuses among peers further lower the comprehension cost of code-switching, enhancing its communicative effectiveness. The formality of communication contexts also influences code-switching frequency. In formal social settings with ceremonial features (e.g., weddings, banquets), youth tend to use their native language for emotional expression and identity construction. This language choice not only strengthens group belonging and cultural identity but also ensures compliance with social etiquette norms and fosters emotional resonance. The linguistic habits of one's social circle are another key factor: when interacting with frequent code-switchers, speakers unconsciously adjust their language behavior, creating group-wide linguistic convergence.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the information transmission function of language is fully manifested in youth groups' code-switching practices. Young people often demonstrate keen perception and rapid acceptance of new things. Currently, they have fostered a strong atmosphere for learning and using the national common language in both academic and daily contexts. As a primary carrier of emerging concepts, technical terminology, and popular culture, the national common language serves as the main tool for youth to access cutting-edge information. This leads to extensive vocabulary first integrating into their daily communication in the form of the national common language. When facing complex semantic demands in their native language or expressive limitations in specific contexts, youth tend to adopt national common language vocabulary for its clarity and rich connotations, enhancing the precision and appeal of their discourse. Code-switching thus improves the efficiency and accuracy of information exchange, strengthening communicative effectiveness. Ultimately, code-switching results from speakers' adaptation to both contextual variables and psychological realities. Youth's high-frequency use of neologisms, active engagement with trending topics, and emotionally charged construction of personal opinions in online expression are all amplified through code-switching, optimizing discourse dissemination efficiency.

8 Conclusion

With the continuous iteration of digital technology and the development of social culture, the phenomenon of code switching will more widely penetrate into the language life of young people and become an important symbol of language diversity and cultural inclusiveness in modern society. As a kind of language behavior, code switching implies the multiple self-awareness of language users-including not only the recognition of their own cultural identity, but also the willingness to integrate into the mainstream discourse system. The social behavior of code switching formed in daily communication also confirms the practical effect of the national common language promotion policy from the micro level-the active acceptance and daily use of the national common language by youth groups in multi-ethnic areas highlights their recognition of mainstream cultural values and their adaptation to social development trends.

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