An Analysis of Morphological Features of Code-switching in Chinese Netspeak

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Abstract

This paper aims to study the morphological features of code-switching in Chinese Netspeak. Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model is employed to explore the morphological feature of the embedded words, nouns, verbs and adjectives in Chinese Netspeak. The study shows that in matrix Chinese frame model, English nouns, verbs and adjectives all lose their original morphological inflection change and syntax feature and follow the matrix Chinese grammar rules.

Keywords: morphological feature, Chinese Netspeak, Matrix Language Frame Model

1. Previous Studies on Code-Switching

Over the last decades, bilingual code-switching has been studied by linguists and researchers across the world. It has been discussed from the perspective of general linguistics, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. Researchers have employed syntactic approach to explore the constraints and proposed models for code-switching, such as Free Morpheme and Equivalence Constraints (Sankoff & Poplack, 1981), Phrase-structure Congruence Constraint (Woolford, 1983), Functional Head Constraint and Word Order Integrity Corollary (Belazi et al., 1994), and Matrix Language Frame Model (Myers-Scotton, 2002). Theories and models have been built from the perspective of sociolinguistics to explain conversational choices, such as Notion of Contextualization Cues (Gumperz's, 1982), Markedness Model (Myers-Scotton, 1983) and Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1991). From the perspective of psycholinguistics, researchers have also conducted experiments to study issues such as code-switching, the brain and aphasia (Hyltenstam, 1995; Myers-Scotton & Jake, 1995, 2000; Kutas et al., 2009) and code-switching and the mental lexicon (Wei, 2009).

2. Matrix Language Frame Model

Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model is employed in this paper as the theoretical framework for the analysis of Chinese-English code-switched data from Chinese Netspeak. Matrix language is the language of the first major constituent in the sentence. In earlier discussions of the Matrix Language Frame Model, Myers-Scotton (1990) proposed the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic criteria. The matrix language, according to Myers-Scotton, is generally the language of which speakers have the higher proficiency and is generally the more dominant language in a community in terms of the number of domains in which it is the more unmarked choice. Later in 1993, she further argues that the matrix language is the language with the higher frequency of morphemes in a discourse sample in which code-switching occurs. In 1997, after she proposes that the Matrix Language Frame Model should be applied to code-switching within a complement phrase, she modifies that one language involves code-switching is more grammatically dominant than the other in the sense that it sets the frame for the complement phrase with code-switching. This dominant language is called the matrix language (ML) and the other language is the embedded language (EL) in mixed constituents.

Code-switched utterances have an identifiable matrix language and the relationship between the matrix language and the embedded language is asymmetrical. The matrix language dominates a mixed clause in accordance with the following three principles:

1) Morpheme order principle

In ML+EL constituents, which consists of singly occurring EL lexemes and any number of ML morphemes, surface morpheme order (reflecting surface syntactic relations) will be that of the ML.

2) System morpheme principle

In ML+EL constituents, all morphemes which have grammatical relations external to their head constituent (i.e., which participant in the sentence's thematic role grid) will come from the ML.

3) Blocking hypothesis

In ML+EL constituents, a blocking filter blocks any EL content morpheme which is not congruent with the ML with respect to three levels of abstraction regarding sub-categorization.

The first principle indicate that the matrix language determines the order of the elements in ML+EL constituents. The Matrix Language Frame Model marks between content morphemes and system morphemes, and there is a fundamental difference in their distribution. The second principle requires that function morphemes can only be drawn from the matrix language. Finally, the Blocking hypothesis restricts the role of the embedded language by allowing only certain content morphemes of embedded language to occur in mixed constituents.

3. Morphological Features of Embedded Words

The English language demonstrates its grammatical relationship by means of inflectional change. According to Hu Zhuanglin (2001), the morphology of English has two fields: the study of inflections (inflectional morphology), and the study of word-formation (lexical or derivation morphology). Morphological feature here refers to the study of the features of the inflectional morphology. In this paper, the inflectional features of nouns, verbs and adjectives of English in Chinese Netspeak will be discussed since they are mostly used as embedded words and feature inflectional change. Usually nouns have the inflectional affixes as number and case; verbs have six different kinds of changes and adjectives also have the change of classes. According to myers-scotton's Matrix language frame model, the grammatical structure and morpheme come from the matrix language. So the embedded English language follows morphological and syntactic feature of Chinese.

3.1 Morphological Feature of Embedded Nouns

The format of plural in Chinese is "number + quantifier + noun" or "indicator + noun". While in English, plural nouns often have the affix "s" or "es". From the following data, it is not difficult to find that when taking Chinese as the matrix language, there isn't the corresponding English morphological mark to demonstrate the plural conception. The format of the code-switched noun is Chinese "number + qualifier" + English "noun".

    ① 看看我的两个 snowman，一个是 man，一个是 woman，呵呵。
    ② 一字排开的 showgirl，统一着装，粉色假发加脐装, 蔚为壮观。
    ③ 很想念家乡的臭豆腐，总是告诉师傅要多炸会儿，多 sauce。
    ④ 今天早上吃了两个 egg，一杯牛奶。
    ⑤ 一个人的圣诞节在家啃俩 apple 看电视。

The English nouns in these examples "lose" its original plural mark "s" or their plural form. Before the word "showgirl" is the Chinese "一字排开" . In front of the words "snowman" and "Egg" is the quantifier "两个" , and before the word "apple" is the qualifier "俩". From the above examples, it is easy to see that all the embedded English words lose their morphological changes, and follow the grammar principle of Chinese.

The case inflection affix of the noun is frequently used in English, but in the matrix Chinese frame expressions, the case mark "的" appears in the sentence without the English case mark "s" or "of ".

    ① 瞎了 he 的 puppy eye
    ② 最近几件大事, me 的 QQ 升成两太阳了可是天还在下雪, 感觉每天都没有钱
    ③ 花！感觉明年 me 的压力还是很大。
    ④ 我在 hippy 的 blog 里听到过这首歌
    ⑤ 刚刚收到 Alain 的新年 greeting，突然很怀念那个叫做 Gent 的比利时小镇。

In terms of the function of the embedded English nouns, in the sentences of matrix Chinese frame and in terms of the function of the embedded English nounds the embedded English nounds, the inflection changes of nouns can be used as subject, object and attribute in the sentences of matrix Chinese frame.

1)   Embedded English Nouns Used as Subject
    ① CRV 有点旧了,汉兰达或者 RAV4 吧！
    ② Snowman,O(∩_∩)O 哈哈~万圣和圣诞结合~\(≧　≧≧　)/~啦啦啦

③ BEC come on

④ wu li TOP 怎么才第五啊。。

⑤ ~！ME 终于体会到找工厂订货的痛了!! 真 TMD 麻烦,不过衣服总算出来啦，31

⑥ buddy 们还可参加抽奖活动！奖品很诱人哦！

⑦ //@AnaSong:oh,my 嘎,瞧这又 who 过生日啦,最近真是都聚一块了,圣诞 party 生日 party 新年聚会。。。。。同乐一个,顺祝今年二十,明年十八！

2) Embedded English Nouns Used as Object

① 恭喜 me 中了 174 沪元！

② 吼吼吼,刚好正在看 code blue,可惜山 P 一直一张扑克脸,笑一下撒！

③ 这么多经典曲目,听到了 LADY GAGA,混的惊天地、泣鬼神！给力！

④ 请我喝杯 cola 怎么样

⑤ 央视六在播《世贸中心》，喜欢尼古拉斯凯奇的朋友可以看看,这是他第几次演 cop 了？

⑥ 许个小心愿，希望能在新年收到 iPad

3) Embedded English Nouns Used as Attribute

① lady gaga 的 look？So crazy~

② 今天看 NBA 评论员说了一句让我感同深处的话。 "有些事可遇不可求"。。。

③ 下一站 Queen 王菲。。。加油

④ 月饼的 VIP6 很给力 每日噶 qq 视频就靠距啦

⑤ 治好脂肪肝，考他几个证。要是国家旅游局要我,我就去把户口解决了。跟完这个 IPO 项目之后在加薪进爵和另谋高就之间做个选择。

The embedded English nouns can be used as subject, object and attribute, which play a very important role in code-switched sentences. Besides, it is obvious that the embedded English nouns are abundant in Netspeak, among which the proper nouns account for a high proportion and most of the proper nouns are used in their acronym forms.

3.2 Morphological Feature of Embedded Verbs

English verbs have three tenses: past tense, present tense and future tense. The format of the past tense of a verb is "V + ed "; the progressive tense is "V + ing". However, the future tense of verbs is not demonstrated in a morphological way, but is in the format of " modal + V ". In the matrix Chinese frame model, no matter whether the embedded language is a verb or a verb phrase, it loses its original inflectional change and appears in the basic form.

① 平安夜大餐沒 Book 到位只能一風堂吃拉麵 元旦大餐終於提前定到 真不容易 Uluru 偶來啦

② 09 年那次突然袭击的大雪使好多乘客都滞留在候机室。有的在飞机上不得上也不得下,好多航班 delay 了十多个小时呢！

From the meaning of the two sentences we can easily infer that both of the word "book" and "delay" should be used in the past tense as "booked" and "delayed". However, in the code-mixed sentences, both of them remain in their basic form.

① 去睡啦~~night night love~明天还有好多事情做~政治怎么也弄的跟马上会考似的…元旦联欢前要搞定所有的事情~然后好好的玩半天~show 下我的魔术

The word "show" in the example should be in the form of its future tense, but here it is the basic form.

① 抽吧抽吧！只是小心别被 FIRE 啦。FIRE 了也没关系,找 NEW 的单位 INTERVIEW 啦。。HAHAHAHAHA

② 本来该 promote 的同事 都没有 promote。

It is obvious that the words "fire" and "promote" here should use their passive voice. However, before the first "fire", the Chinese word "被" is used to show its passive voice. while before the second "fire", even the word "被" disappears. At the same time, the basic form of the word "promote" shows its passive voice itself.

According to the concord principle, we know that in English the form of a subject should agree with the verb in terms of number in the present tense. However, the embedded English word in the matrix Chinese frame model

seems different. Here is one example:

　　①她经常 complain 周围的人和事。像个老太婆。

The singular form of the subject and the present tense of this sentence require that "s" be added to the verb as "complains", but the verb remains its its basic form.

3.3 Morphological Feature of Embedded Adjectives

The embedded adjective in the matrix Chinese frame model has nothing changed. For example:

　　① 他每次都是玩的最 high 的一个。

　　② 感觉李湘比以前 fat 了好多！

Before the adjective "high", there is the Chinese word "最", and before the word "fat", there is "比" . "high" should use its superlative degree "highest", while "fat" should use its comparative degree "fatter". But both of the two words do not change, but follow the Chinese word principle. From the perspective of syntax, the adjective cannot be used as the predicate in English but can be used as predicate in Chinese. However, things are different in intra-sentential code-switching. Embedded adjectives have mainly two grammatical features:

When adjectives are used as the predicate, there isn't any copula to connect the subjective words.

　　① 气氛确实很 HIGH 啊 把演唱会带到了高潮！

　　② 他看起好 handsome, 但不是我的菜 o 没有很高的 iq，难以 hold me

　　③ Merry Xmas! 圣诞夜和谁过? 一人 OK，两人 SO GOOD，大家聚聚也不错。想要和我一起过，呵呵，回个电，我会让你温暖如火。

In these examples, all of the adjectives are used as the predicates, and the embedded adjectives can be modified by the Chinese adverbs, such as "很", "好" and so on.

　　① 我的#新年计划#剪个 shua 利的头发~一大家子的人吃顿好的（虽然每天都是一大家子人，每天都吃的不赖）~遇见一个或者几个 NICE 的人~

　　② 非常 nice 的微博 里面有很多好玩、有趣的信息啊！

　　③ 最炫最 HIGH 最潮流的夜生活狂欢地！带上家人和朋友,一起感受最炫、最 high、最潮流的岭南文化吧！

The word "nice" "high" in the above three sentences are all used as the attributes. All of them follow the principle of Chinese expression: before the nouns they modify, there is the Chinese "的".

4. Conclusion

In matrix Chinese frame model, nouns, verbs and adjectives in English all lose their original morphological inflection change and syntax feature in English. Instead, these words follow the matrix Chinese grammar rules. All of these phenomena accord with Myers-Scotton's matrix language frame model. And it can be proved that Chinese-English code-switching do not ruin Chinese grammar structure system.

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