

Types and Functions of Code-Switching in the Film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*

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Abstract. This case study analyzes the types and functions of code-switching (CS) used in a film entitled *Everything Everywhere All at Once (EEAAO)*. Based on Poplack's (1980) and Holmes' (2012) researches, the researchers take a qualitative research method and a two-fold approach: counting the frequency of the different code switches with the analysis of whether there is a dominant type and interpreting the functions of CS examples. The result shows that all three types of CS, including inter-sentential, intra-sentential and extra-sentential switching, are used in *EEAAO* with no type that could be defined as a dominant type. As for functions, there are five of seven functions that appear in the CS data of *EEAAO*: solidarity, topic, switching for affective functions, lexical borrowing and metaphorical switching. The result indicates that CS in the film not only can be used as a node for emotional transformation and a thread for sorting out the plot but also as a means of language accommodation, embodying the integration of different cultures and enabling speakers to communicate more efficiently.

Keywords: code-switching; sociolinguistics; film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.

1. Introduction

With the spread of language education in the world, many Chinese and English bilinguals are unconsciously code-switching (CS) between these two languages in their lives, while the concept of CS is still relatively unfamiliar to most people in China. As for cultural works, in recent years, several researchers have analyzed the phenomenon of CS in cultural works, most of them focusing on the analysis of set-pieces, mainly on the types of CS contained in the set-pieces and their effects [1]. The scenes and plots involved in these cases tend to take place in contiguous time frames, with a more limited range of causes and effects. This often leads to a lack of discussion of the video or film itself in the study, and to some extent neglects the influence of the film's overall plot and style on CS.

The researchers want to define this phenomenon more specifically and distinguish the differences between them. The analysis would enable a better classification of this phenomenon and clarify the concept through examples. Besides, the result of the analysis could help people understand the roles of CS that exist in film and TV works. Furthermore, this will help the audience understand the cultural values conveyed in cross-cultural film works. Based on this, the researchers intend to analyze the types of CS used in *Everything Everywhere All at Once (EEAAO)* and whether there is a dominant type. Then the researchers will discuss the functions of CS in the film.

2. Method

2.1. Research Object

This study uses a qualitative research approach. The case the researchers chose for the study is the film *EEAAO*, a Chinese-American film containing numerous CS phenomena, whose text is of high research value.

EEAAO is a science fiction film, involving multiple universes, which means that the plot of the film involves multiple scenes switching, which both creates conditions for the emergence of different

types of CS and at the same time becomes a limitation. Given the different forms of CS, there may be a certain pattern in their location and frequency in this film.

2.2. Research Approach

The researchers take a two-fold approach. On the one hand, they will count the frequency of the different code switches and analyze the reasons behind the differences in their proportional relationship. On the other hand, specific examples were found to analyze the function of CS.

2.3. Research Procedures

The research process will be divided into three parts.

I. Watching the film. The researchers watch the film in its entirety, marking time for the parts where CS occurs.

II. Transcribing the lines of the film. In conjunction with the official transcript, the researchers focus on transcribing the parts where there is a code shift between Chinese and English, adding inflections and corresponding English translations.

III. Classifying intra-sentential, inter-sentential and extra-sentential switching [2].

The final statistics are presented in the form of tables as well as pie charts, with some sentences used as case studies for further analysis.

3. Result

The researchers referred to Poplack (1980) when sorting through the film's CS.

Table 1. Examples of CS in *EEAAO*

Types	Examples
Inter-Sentential Switching	Evelyn: I have to finish all this before阿爸醒來. (I have to finish all this before my father wakes up.)
Intra-Sentential Switching	Evelyn: 我們有兩種白色的哈, 一個是laundromat的, 另外一個是apartment的. 你千萬不要用錯了, 因為錯了就會... (We have two different white paints. One for the laundromat and one for apartment. It has to match or else...)
Extra-Sentential Switching	Evelyn: Alpha你和Alpha公公要我跟她打. But she's too powerful. (Alpha you and Alpha Gong Gong want me to fight her. But she's too powerful.)

Table 1 shows that all three types of CS appear in the film. When identifying the specific types of CS, if there are two types of CS in a sentence, two categories are counted. If a clause is syntactically valid but does not have complete semantics, it is counted as intra-switching instead of inter-switching.

Table 2. Numbers of CS in *EEAAO*

Types	Numbers	Percentage
Inter-Sentential Switching	23	38%
Intra-Sentential Switching	12	20%
Extra-Sentential Switching	25	42%
Total Number	60	100%

From Table 2, it can be seen that the classifications of CS are 60 data in total. Inter-sentential switching has 23 data, accounting for 38% of the total. 12 data are collected for intra-sentential switching with a percentage of 20%. The most frequent category is extra-sentential switching. This type of CS occurs 25 times in the film, accounting for 42% of the total.

According to this statistic, the researchers argue that extra-sentential switching cannot be defined as the dominant type of CS in *EEAAO* due to the lack of its significant percentage advantage. However, this does prove the partial colloquial character of the film language because there are a lot of modal particles CS in the film, which are counted in the extra-sentential switching category.

4. Discussion

4.1. Functions

When analyzing the functions of CS in the film, the researchers refer to Holmes' CS functions (2012). Holmes indicated seven functions: solidarity, status, topic, switching for affective functions, participant, lexical borrowing and metaphorical switching [3].

After analysis, the researchers find that not all the functions are displayed in the data. Status function and participant function make no occurrence. There are some data examples to interpret the other five functions.

4.1.1 Solidarity

Example 1 [00:01:36 – 00:01:39]

Evelyn: I have to finish all this before 阿爸醒來.

(I have to finish all this before my father wakes up.)

Example 1 is a sentence said by Evelyn to her husband Waymond. As they both are Chinese immigrants, their native language is Chinese. By saying “阿爸醒來”, it clearly shows two characters belong to the same ethnicity and Evelyn aims to enhance solidarity.

4.1.2 Topic

Example 2 [01:27:46 – 01:27:58]

Waymond: 啊? 真的嗎? 太棒了. 那你可以在party前把文件送去. Don't forget these cookies. Ms. Deirdre really likes it. 我下去了哈.

(Really? Good job! You can drop off the paperwork before the party starts. Don't forget these cookies. Ms. Deirdre really likes it. I'm heading downstairs.)

It can be concluded that the speaker Waymond changes the language to involve a new topic when speaking to his wife Evelyn in Example 2. At first, Waymond tells Evelyn to deliver the paper. Then by using English, he instructs Evelyn to deliver the cookies to Ms. Deirdre, eventually, he switches back to Chinese to tell Evelyn he's going downstairs. This change of language distinguishes the topic in the conversation, achieving two times changes of topic.

4.1.3 Switching for affective functions

There are two distinct forms of CS that serve affective functions in film, which differ based on the presence or absence of a third person in the conversation [4]. When a third person is present, and both parties are communicating with this individual, CS focuses more on the transmission of emotions, with the speaker seeking to bridge the emotional distance between themselves and the listener through the use of CS [5]. On the other side, when the conversation is strictly between the two parties in a question-and-answer format, CS serves to express emotions, with the speaker's personal emotional changes being an important reason for the switch.

Example 3 [00:07:59 – 00:08:09]

Evelyn: I try to make our lives easier and more simple. 但是你爸... 我真的不知道沒有我他怎麼活.

(I try to make our lives easier and more simple. But your father... sometimes I wonder how he would have survived without me.)

In Example 3, a conversation between Evelyn and her daughter is observed, during which Evelyn switches from English to Chinese with the intention of evoking empathy from her daughter. The

researchers postulate that this instance of CS serves an affective function, specifically one that seeks to narrow the psychological distance between the speaker and the listener

Example 4 [00:31:08 – 00:31:12]

Evelyn: Who... what is happening? 我們還要離婚嗎?

(What is happening? Are we getting divorced?)

In Example 4, the "divorce" conversation involves only Evelyn and her husband, with no third person present. Evelyn's Chinese American family often uses Chinese as their primary language at home, while English is perceived as a more formal and objective language. In this context, Evelyn's CS from English to Chinese serves an effective function by allowing her to express herself more naturally and informally. The CS thus functions as a switching for affective functions.

4.1.4 Lexical borrowing

The researchers have identified two distinct types of lexical borrowing in the film, which can be classified according to their underlying reasons: lexical borrowing driven by usage habits, and lexical borrowing driven by a lack of corresponding words [6]. The former can be further divided into two cases, namely English to Chinese and Chinese to English, taking into consideration the different language usage habits and the actual usage patterns observed in the film.

Example 5 [00: 07: 34 -- 00: 07: 42]

Evelyn: You know two years of meetings, she puts a lien on our laundromat, and you know what your father does? He brings her cookies. 神經病...

(You know two years of meetings, she puts a lien on our laundromat, and you know what your father does? He brings her cookies. He's crazy...)

Evelyn uses the Chinese word at the end of Example 5. “神經病” means “neurotic” in English and is here a tone word used to express anger and mockery of the husband's behavior. The researcher believes that as a native Chinese speaker, particularly in terms of inflections, Evelyn's use of Chinese is more fluid than her use of English, and therefore the Lexical Borrowing here.

Example 6 [00:02:11 – 00:02:17]

Evelyn: 我們有兩種白色的哈，一個是laundromat的，另外一個是apartment的。你千萬不要用錯了，因為錯了就會...

(We have two different white paints. One for the laundromat and one for apartment. It has to match or else...)

From Example 6, Evelyn uses two words in English, which are closely related to her daily life. Compared to her native Chinese, which she has not used for a long time, the English expressions of these two things are obviously more familiar to Evelyn, so she uses English instead of Chinese in her expressions, which is a kind of lexical borrowing here.

Example 7 [00: 07: 10 -- 00: 07: 16]

Evelyn: 不是說好了嗎? 把全部這個google eyes拔下來。No more google eyes!

(I told you to take down all of the google eyes. No more google eyes!)

In Example 7, the lexical borrowing in example 7 is “google eyes”. Google eyes is a proper noun with no Chinese equivalent. Evelyn borrows the English word google eyes to make up for the lack of a Chinese equivalent in the dialogue. this English phrase cannot be replaced, so this function is the lexical borrowing.

4.1.5 Metaphorical switching

Example 8 [02:00:21 – 02:00:52]

Evelyn: But she turned out to be stubborn, aimless, a mess. Just like her mother. But now I see. It's OK that she's a mess. Because just like me, 她找到了一位善良體貼...真正愛她一切的人。

(But she turned out to be stubborn, aimless, a mess. Just like her mother. But now I see. It's OK that she's a mess. Because just like me, the universe gave her someone kind, patient... and forgiving to make up for all she lacks.)

Example 8 shows a shift in whom Evelyn talks to. When she talks to her daughter, Evelyn uses English, but then she speaks Chinese to her father, who is not able to speak English. This switching conveys the importance of the last sentence. For the audience, it also plays an emphatic role, making the audience focus on the last sentence. Thus, this example embodies the metaphorical switching function.

4.2. Influence of Code-Switching in the Film and Its Cultural Significance

Through the analysis above, the researchers noted the role of CS in the film as a node for emotional transformation and a thread for sorting out the plot. In terms of the expression of the character's emotions, the appearance of CS reflects the changes in the characters' emotions, representing the invisible emotional changes with visible linguistic transitions, building a close connection between lines and emotional expressions, and making the lines more powerful [7].

In terms of the film's plot, the film's worldview is a multiverse, which brings about complex time, place, and scene switching. The language elements in the film reflect the characters' upbringing and educational experience, corresponding to the different choices made by the protagonists in different worlds. It can thus be said that speaking with CS becomes a very important part of the character traits [8]. Such character trait corresponds to the theme of the film - Chinese family affection - and returns the plot of the film from saving the world to dealing with the simplest of family problems. The CS serves both to clarify the scene transition and to represent itself as part of the theme expressed in the film.

Moreover, just as the language in which this CS exists is neither purely Chinese nor purely English, this film represents neither purely American nor purely Chinese culture, but a new Chinese-American culture based on both cultures [9]. In other words, the rich CS examples in the film reflect the cultural integration of China and America. In Chinese immigrant communities, these two cultures learn from and integrate with each other to form a mixed culture, which penetrates into every aspect of community lives, such as values, appearance, behavior, language, etc [10]. These changes can be seen as actions taken by marginalized groups to assimilate into mainstream culture.

Code-switching, as a means of language accommodation, can also involve changing from one way of speech to another between interactions or within interactions, including changes in accents, dialects and so on [11]. In the process of CS in *EEAAO*, the audience can experience the diversity of cultures. It not only builds the harmony of verbal communication, but also conforms to the linguistic economy and its tendency towards brevity [12]. It can improve the efficiency and effect of communication in a particular community [13]. In addition, the level of cultural development in a community can even be seen through CS. In *EEAAO*, CS appears in video form and is recorded, which the researchers believe has wider and greater potential research significance.

5. Conclusion

This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the film *EEAAO* and the phenomenon of CS within it, showing that all three types of CS - inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and extra-sentential switching - occur in *EEAAO*, but there is no dominant type of data due to the lack of significant percentage gaps. Holmes' theory divides the functions of CS into seven types, and the researchers find that not all of them are represented in this film, only the solidarity, topic, switching for affective functions, lexical borrowing and metaphorical switching are present.

Every study has limitations, and this study is limited by the fact that a film itself contains a small amount of code-switched text and therefore collects a small amount of data, which can lead to random errors. To address this point, the researchers believe that more films of the same genre should be sought for analysis. Furthermore, considering that the lines in the films themselves are artificially designed, they are likely to be different from the CS that takes place in the natural state. Therefore, it is inevitable that the analysis of the film text will differ from that of the real-life scenario, which requires the researcher to collect a similar corpus and use real-life examples to justify the existence

of CS in films. Based on this case study, the researchers intend to address the research on a larger scale, expanding the scope of research materials on more films of the same genre and enlarging the corpus. Meanwhile, due to the artificiality of the film script, further research can focus more on the reasons for the emergence of CS in films and the implications of its emergence.

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