

A Comparative Analysis of China English and Chinglish from the Perspective of Sociolinguistics

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Abstract: In the process of wide spread and application of English, it is hard to avoid the phenomenon of English globalization and localization. English culture is very different from Chinese culture and these differences gradually form some kinds of English with strong Chinese characteristics, which are China English and Chinglish. China English is widely accepted by people from English countries and some of them even are collected and accepted by Oxford dictionary; however, Chinglish, as a wrong and irregular language, is rejected by people in China. With the development of society, Chinglish will be gradually eliminated by Chinese people. Firstly, this essay will show the definition of China English and Chinglish from different perspectives. In addition, the essay will explain the features and causes of Chinglish and China English using the way of giving examples. Finally, the essay will give a summary of the comparative analysis of China English and Chinese English from the perspective of sociolinguistics.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics; China English; Chinglish; Language Variety; Comparison and Analysis

Introduction

Under the background of cultural globalization, English has become the most widely used and most popular international common language in the world, and it is one of the most important language mediums in the global cross-cultural communication. With the spread of English all over the world, English has absorbed many languages around the world and produces many English varieties. Among these varieties, China English is one of a variety which represents Chinese culture and is integrated with words, sentence patterns and texts with Chinese cultural connotation and Chinese language characteristics. In contrast, Chinglish refers to an inappropriate or even wrong English expression which does not conform to standard English. Some professors argue that although some Chinglish expressions may become China English in the future, it's worth noticing that not all Chinglish can be translated into China English. From the perspective of sociolinguistics, there are political, economic, historical and other reasons which can influence China English (Ling Chong, 2016). This essay will show the definition of Chinglish and China English from different perspectives and different professors to show the differences between Chinglish and China English. In addition, the essay will analyse the features and causes of Chinglish and China English from different reasons. Finally, after the comparison of Chinglish and China English, the essay will show that we should abandon the wrong Chinglish and choose standard China English as the auxiliary medium of Chinese culture output (Qiao chunhua, 2013).

1. Definition of Chinglish and China English

Chinglish and China English are both used by Chinese people. However, most people do not know the differences between Chinglish and China English and people are always confused when they prepare to use them.

1.1 Definition of Chinglish

What is Chinglish? Here are some definitions given by other professors.

Chinglish is misshapen, hybrid language that is neither English nor Chinese but that might be described as English with Chinese characteristics. (Joan Pinkham, 2000). From the perspective of Jia, Chinglish is awkward English that some people who have not mastered idiomatic English. (Jia Delin, 1990)

From the above definitions, we will know the idea that Chinglish is mainly caused by language learners' mother tongue interference. Firstly, Chinglish may be grammatically incorrect. On the other hand, the use of vocabulary in Chinglish may not conform to Standard English rules. Although Chinglish may be understood, it is still unacceptable. Here are some examples.

我很爱你

I very love you.(Chinglish)

I love you very much.(Standard English)

他已经回家了

He have been to home.(Chinglish)

He has been to home.(Standard English)

These two examples both show the wrong grammar and these sentences belong to Chinglish. The adv in the first example is in the wrong place and the use of verb in the second example is incorrect.

请勿打扰:

Don't Bother. (Chinglish)

Do Not Disturb. (Standard English)

坡道路滑注意安全:

To Take Notice of Safe; The Slippery is Very Crafty. (Chinglish)

Watch Out for Slippery Slope. (Standard English)

Although these examples are grammatically correct, but the use of vocabularies does not native and acceptable. These sentences also belong to Chinglish.

1.2 Definition of China English

What is China English? Ge Chuangui (1980) thinks English is the language of the English people. The other people who speak English should certainly follow the idiomatic ways of the English people. However, each nation has its own peculiarities. So far as our nation is concerned no matter whether it is before or after liberation, there are some typical Chinese things to express in written or oral English.(Ge Chuangui , 1980) Afterwards, Jia Guanjie (1997) further points out that China English was an English variety used by the Chinese English learners which was based on Standard English with typical Chinese characteristics. It was unavoidable and useful for spreading Chinese culture.

Among all these definitions, we can see that China English is a kind of English variety which is caused by Chinese culture background and Chinese society. It is greatly influenced by the special thought patterns and the styles of Chinese in many ways. In addition, China English is grammatically correct and is gradually accepted and used by people from other countries. Here are some examples.

Erhu (二胡)

Kongfu (功夫)

Harmonious Society (和谐社会)

Golden Week(黄金周)

we can see from the examples that China English has Chinese characteristics which are unavoidable. However, some expressions are accepted actively used by people from other countries like paper tiger, barefoot doctor. Others in China English have been already listed in dictionaries like Macao, Great Wall etc.

1.3 Features and causes of Chinglish

People universally believe that language, culture and thought interact, each influencing the other two. As mentioned before, language, culture and thought are inseparable elements. "Language is the symbolic representation of a people, and it comprises their historical and cultural backgrounds as well as their approach to life and their ways of living and thinking?" (Deng Yanchang &Liu Runqing, 2001) From the quotation we can see that languages are just like a mirror of culture and thought. Therefore, this essay will analyse the features and causes of Chinglish from the perspective of cultural differences and the differences of thinking modes.

1.4 Features and causes due to cultural differences

Firstly, people in different cultures may perceive the same thing in different ways. Therefore, many English phrases and their equivalents in Chinese are produced differently. There are some examples.“温室” in Chinglish is warm house while in Normative English is greenhouse. English people emphasize the function of the green house which is to keep plants green while the Chinese people consider it from the physical features which is wanner than other buildings. The main character of “挂钟” is hanging on the wall instead of sitting on the desk. The Englishmen believe the place where clocks can be located is the most distinctive character of it. Therefore they have wall clock and desk clock respectively. However in Chinglish it is hanging clock. (Ke Dan ,2012) There are many other examples like “红茶”:red tea vs. Black tea (Normative English), “隐形眼镜”: invisible glasses (Chinglish) vs. contact lenses (Normative English),etc.

These examples show that people in different cultures will have different cognition for some things. This is an important reason for Chinglish and in order not to cause misunderstandings, we have to know the culture behind the language. Secondly, because of culture differences, Chinese people are prone to express things in a negative way, nevertheless, those expressions in English are more positive. Here are also some examples.

禁止吸烟!

Don't smoke!

No smoking.

闲人莫入!

Free people please don't go in!

Staff only.

别管他。

Don't pay attention to him.

Leave him alone.

These examples also show that the cultural differences lead to the different way of thinking. Chinese prefers to express things in a more negative way while English expressions are more positive.

1.5 Features and causes due to different thinking modes

Thinking modes also play an essential part in production of Chinglish. This is also an important reason to cause Chinglish. The essay will explain that the word order and passive voice can show the different thinking modes between Chinese and English.

Firstly, the word order in English and Chinese is quite different as the result of different thinking modes. Here are the examples which will show the different word orders caused by the two completely different thinking modes

她胳膊下夹着报纸进了办公室。

She took the newspaper under her arm and entered the office. (English expression)

She entered the office with the newspaper under her arm. (Chinese expression)

From the two sentences we can see that the first sentence is more suitable and native than the second sentence which is organized in the word order with Chinese thinking mode. In English, the word order is fixed according to the modifying relationship between the linguistic units. Usually modifiers (relative clauses, nonfinite clauses, prepositional phrases, adjectival phrases, etc.) are arranged behind heads. However, in Chinese, the modifier is often located before the head and mostly the subordinate clause is observed before the main clause, too. (Ke Dan ,2012)

Secondly, passive voice is more usually used in English than in Chinese and it also shows the different thinking modes which will cause Chinglish. Here are some examples.

必须提高我们的工作效率

Improvements should be made in our work efficiency. (English expression)

We should make improvements in our work efficiency. (Chinese expression)

From the two sentences we can see that the first sentence uses passive voice and it is more native and shows English thinking mode. However, the second sentence is less native and shows Chinese thinking mode.

2. Features and causes of China English

There are many factors which will influence the form of China English. The essay will prominently analyse political and cultural factors.

2.1 Features and causes due to social politics

Politics affects every aspect of our lives, including language as well. China English is also influenced by politics.

The political discourses in China English always combine with numbers. Because many of the political utterances are too lengthy and complicated to be understood and memorized, these utterances are usually summarized into phrases with numbers. For example, Three Represents (三个代表), Eight Honors and Eight Disgraces (八荣八耻), Four Cardinal Principles (四项基本原则), etc.

2.2 Features and causes due to cultural identity

Chinese people's common identity is greatly influenced by Chinese culture. Raphael Berthele argues that 'a nation is a territory with one culture and one language'. (Raphael Berthele, 2008) we can infer that language and culture are the most significant elements of a

nation's cultural identity. In addition, China English is also influenced by Chinese cultural identity. With the development of economy and the international influence, Chinese people are gradually willing to preserve our specific way of expressing and more and more people who from other countries are prone to accept China English which represents China's own cultural identity.

Garland Cannon (1998:1-12) gave the official Chinese borrowing list. According to him, Chinese had contributed 979 Chinese loanwords to the English vocabulary, which are included in various English dictionaries. He divided them into 19 semantic categories, which are listed in the table below:

Subject	Number
Food, drink and cookery	190
Botany	175
Geography	110
The Arts	100
Religion and philosophy	4
Government and politics	48
Race	34
Social status and profession	34
Language and writing system	28
Dynasty	23
Clothing	17
Entertainment	16
Organization and society	9
Martial Arts	8
Medicine	7
Economy	6
Geology	6
Color	5
Total	979

Table 1 Semantic categories of Chinese words in English vocabulary (Pan, 2004: 126)

3. Summary

Chinese people often use both Chinglish and China English. In fact they really have some similarities that both of them are utilized to express Chinese existences and have the same Chinese features. However, there is a crucial distinction between them. Chinglish is a kind of language which is grammatically incorrect or uses words in a wrong way while China English is a language which has been accepted and even used by people from other countries. To some extent, Chinglish is mainly influenced by cultural differences and thinking modes; nevertheless, China English is mainly caused by politics and cultural identity and it contributes a lot for English vocabularies.

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