

Research on Code-mixing Phenomenon in Social App Little Red Book

Xin Zhang

School of Arts and Social Sciences, Hong Kong Metropolitan University, Hong Kong 999077, P.R.China.

Abstract: Code-mixing is regarded as using two or more languages in daily interaction. The goal of this study is to examine the function of the code-mixing phenomenon in the Chinese social app Little Red Book. With an analysis of the types of code-mixing in user posts, the findings indicate the dominant type of Chinese–English code-mixing is insertion and reasons for the use of code-mixing, driven by the Principle of Economy, availability, specificity and the desire to convey modernity and fashion. As a result, code-mixing in Little Red Book is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by linguistic, social, and cultural factors.

Keywords: Code-mixing; Little Red Book; Insertion; Principle of Economy

1. Introduction

Language, as a medium and fundamental necessity, enables humans to express a diverse range of ideas. Its integral connection to human existence stems from its role as a signifier across numerous aspects of human life. The use of language is extensively adapted to the advancement and real-life requisites within various domains of human life.^[1] The incorporation of one language into another within a sentence is code-mixing, involving the mixing of multiple languages or language variations within speech. Currently, code-mixing has evolved into a global lifestyle choice, particularly among young speakers, facilitated by social media platforms, which are used not only for oral but also written communication. Little Red Book provides an ideal site for observing trendy linguistic practices in the domain of social interaction. It is a popular social networking app in China that mainly attracts Chinese youth users. On the platform, people can record life moments, share lifestyles, and engage based on interests through pictures, text, and short videos. However, an analysis of code-mixing phenomenon on Little Red Book of youth users has not been supported by current empirical studies. The main aim of this paper is to study the function of Chinese-English code-mixing in the social app Little Red Book.

2. Review of Literature

Muysken classifies code mixing into three categories: insertion, alteration, and congruent lexicalization.^[2]

2.1 Insertion

Insertion happens when words or phrases from one language are added into the structure of another language. The following example illustrates insertion code-mixing, where an English adjective is inserted into a Chinese sentence structure.

Example: Chengdu jie tou zhen de hen chill

English: The streets of Chengdu are really chill

2.2 Alternation

Alternation takes place when alternates between languages within or between utterances, allowing for the integration of a different language phrase into a single sentence. This alternation can involve either grammatical or lexical aspects.

Example: Ta de presentation hen impressive, da jia dou hen xi huan

English: His presentation was very impressive and everyone loved it!

2.3 Congruent lexicalization

Congruent lexicalization occurs when two languages have shared grammatical structures that are filled with lexical elements from each language.

Example:Ke yi da pei button down chen shan he bai se ma ku.

English:Can be worn with a button down shirt and white linen trousers

3. Data and Discussion

A common occurrence in written Chinese:the insertion of English elements are preferred often into informal sections of Chinese newspapers in six discourse domains—computing,business,fashion,food,showbiz,because no satisfactory translation equivalents are available.^[3]Little Red Book,as the hottest social app has over 250,000,000 users,with the age group is mainly concentrated in young people aged 20-35 years old,the positioning of it is to be the user's life guide.Thus,code mixing is evident in this platform.Through the phenomenon of code mixing,we can observe how these factors are intertwined in the specific context of social media.

3.1 Motivation for code-mixing in Little Red Book

A Little Red Book user recommended a cocktail bar‘Huan jing chao chill bu tong yu qi ta cocktail ba Fu wu tai du fei chang nice Wo men he le si bei,Ancho Highball,coconut,pepper,la paloma.’[The environment is super chill Unlike other cocktail bars The service is very nice We had four drinks,Ancho Highball,coconut,pepper,la paloma.].Mixed code‘chill’and‘nice’are adjective,used to modify noun.Leung asserts that is quite common that the mixed elements are proper nouns such as personal,place names and names of various products in English mixed with Chinese in advertisements.^[4]This is reflected in this example,four cocktail brand names are left untranslated,using their original language form.

A telling episode from Little Red Book user who wrote a hotel recommendation‘Palm springs gao xing jia bi she ji gan xiao zhong jiu dian Booking:ping fen 9.5’[Palm springs Cost Effective Design Niche Hotel The rating in Booking is 9.5].Takashi elucidates commercial brand names are frequently left untranslated,retaining their original language form.^[5]Li also found that for availability,whether a translation equivalent exists,people would use code-mixing.^[6]In this case‘Palm springs’and‘Booking’are name of proper noun,they remain in English form and mixed with Chinese.A further reason for people use code-mixing is the aesthetic appeal,foreign words can impart an aura of modernity and chicness to a conversation.^[5]For instance,‘Wo men tong guo duan xin qing song check in access code rang yi qie bian de bian jie Liang ge wo shi jun pei you king size chuang Te bie shi jiu dian de brunch Chao hu xiang xiang de mei wei’[We checked in easily via text message Access code makes everything easy Both bedrooms are equipped with king size beds Especially the hotel's brunch.It's unbelievably delicious].The reason for using code mixing is to make it look prestigious because mixing English when someone speaks Chinese looks cooler and attracts other people's attention.^[7]

In a travel guide to Thailand post in Little Red Book,English word like‘OK’,‘nice’and‘Google’are used as mixed code instead of their Chinese counterpart to convey modernity in this foreign country travel guide posts.Li used the Principle of Economy to explain if the English words are shorter than their Cantonese equivalents,speakers tend to prefer inserting them into Cantonese utterances^[3].This phenomenon can also be found in mainland China social app‘Wo shi zai jiu dian booking de’[I booked the car at the hotel].Booking can't be expressed in Chinese with just one word,the use of booking simplifies the speaker's speech.Code mixing is generally regarded as the result of multiple factors such as language contact,social identity,communication needs and psychological cognition.^[8,9]The usage of code mixing depends on the intended language goal of the speakers.

A dress recommendation post from Levi's China in Little Red Book,‘Die chuan OOTW|Zuo hua jie suo Denim Girl yi zhou sui xing Look’[Layering OOTW|Swipe left to unlock Denim Girl's casual look for the week!].The user blend Chinese and English to achieve specific communication goals in title,i.e.attract people's attention.^[7]The five subtitle‘LOOK 1 sui xing vibe LOOK 2 fu gu style LOOK 3 zhong xing feng LOOK 4 jie tou gan LOOK 5 ku gai feel’[LOOK 1 Casual Vibe LOOK 2 Vintage Style LOOK 3 Neutral Style LOOK 4 Street Sense LOOK 5 Cool Guy Feel]also can be explained by the Principle of Economy that user inserting shorter English words into Chinese utterances other than translate it into longer Chinese.This is a recommendation for a stylish outfit.Many English words are used‘Qiu dong die chuan zen me shao de liao denim on denim? CHIC you xiu xian mei la de feng get! Li luo tomboy feng bu fei li da zao gan jing jian yue shao nian die da baggy niu zai ku’[How can layering in autumn and winter be complete without denim on denim?Chic Yet Casual Get Maillard brownish style!Sharp tomboy style effortlessly create a clean and simple teenager Layered baggy jeans]for specificity,as the translation equivalent is not semantically congruent with the denotation of the English expression‘Chic’and‘get’,and directly use‘denim’,‘tomboy’and‘baggy’conveys a sense of modernity and fashion in this post.In addition,with the progress of globalization,the phenomenon of code mixing can be seen everywhere in the field of fashion in Little Red Book.

3.2 Main types of code-mixing in Little Red Book

Since Chinese serves as the first language for the majority of users yet English can be considered their foreign language,the predominant pattern of code mixing is limited to inserting English into Chinese.Thus,simple English words like‘king size’and‘brunch’are

inserted into Chinese sentence structure to create a modern atmosphere.

4. Conclusion

Through the analysis of the selected samples, this paper has reached a conclusion similar to that of previous studies on the motivations behind why language users engage in code-mixing. For proper nouns like brand names, translation is often unnecessary; their direct use leads to the phenomenon of code-mixing. Since the majority of users on Little Red Book are young people, they can understand these mixed English proper nouns while browsing. Additionally, this paper finds that most users speak Chinese as their mother tongue and English as a foreign language, code-mixing mainly involves the insertion of simple English into Chinese. Furthermore, users who share travel guides and fashionable outfits often aim to add a modern and chic atmosphere or attract attention in the headlines of their posts; code-mixing serves this communication need.

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