

The Use of Code Switching in Simultaneous Interpretation

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Abstract

Interpreters, especially simultaneous interpreters, regardless of how well prepared they are for a job, always face a lot of challenges during their interpreting job. The challenge could be a specific term, an idiomatic expression, unknown information, or even a word could be troublesome. Experienced interpreters can handle these challenges successfully using one or a combination of several interpreting strategies and come up with an acceptable equivalent in the target language. Nevertheless, one of the most difficult challenges faced by simultaneous interpreters is the translation of proper names. Due to the complexity of proper names, interpreters must find ways to solve the problem and render the translation in the target language in a comprehensible manner to the audience. There are several possible strategies that can be used to solve quite satisfactorily the challenges of proper names, and one most widely used by simultaneous interpreters is the technique of language or code switching. During the process of simultaneous interpretation, switching languages allows interpreters to translate properly and immediately the speech of a presenter without losing the smooth flow of the speaker's ideas as well as not hindering the overall understanding of the public. Therefore, this paper aims at explaining what code switching is and defining the scenarios in which code switching can and must be applied to achieve an acceptable interpreting outcome.

Keywords : code switching, language switching, simultaneous interpretation, simultaneous interpreter

I.Introduction

Language switching is a common phenomenon among bilinguals as they have two languages that are activated simultaneously (Kroll, Bobb & Wodniecka, 2006; Van Assche, Duyck & Hartsuiker, 2012). During a spontaneous conversation, bilinguals tend to switch from one language to another without making great changes to the structure of a sentence. The reason for changing from one language to another is that some specific terms or phrases are much easier to produce in one language than in another.

Language interpreters who are also bilinguals or even polyglots have an excellent command of two languages or more. These individuals are highly specialized and trained to manage two languages at the same time. When interpreting, interpreters, especially simultaneous interpreters, must render the messages from the source language (SL) into the target language (TL) almost simultaneously as the speaker begins to deliver his presentation. Given the time constraints, simultaneous interpreters must manage to come up with satisfactory solutions when faced with linguistic challenges. The challenge could be a specific term, an idiomatic expression, or unknown information. Sometimes, even a vocabulary could be a headache for the interpreter. Certainly, experienced interpreters can handle these challenges successfully using one or a combination of several interpreting strategies and come up with an acceptable equivalent in the TL. Nevertheless, one of the most difficult challenges faced by simultaneous interpreters is the translation of proper names. Due to the complexity of proper names, interpreters must find ways to solve the problem and render the translation in the TL in a comprehensible manner to the audience. There are several possible strategies that can be used to solve quite satisfactorily the challenges of proper names, and one most widely used by simultaneous interpreters is the technique of language or code switching. During the process of simultaneous interpretation, switching languages allows interpreters to translate the speech of a presenter without losing the smooth flow of the speaker's ideas as well as not hindering the overall understanding of the public.

Therefore, in the following sections, we are going to explain what code switching is and define the scenarios with concrete examples in which code switching can be applied to achieve an acceptable interpreting outcome.

II.Background

What is code switching?

Language switching (also called code switching) is a mechanism of changing languages by the same speaker. Code switching allows rapid switching from one language to another during a speech without significantly modifying the structure of a sentence. This mechanism is widely used by bilingual speakers during a spontaneous conversation and is considered as a feature of bilingual speech. In other words, code switching occurs much more frequently in conversation than in writing.

Examples of code switching in daily conversation are :

- 我不是要 *criticize* 你，只是建議你不要這樣做，但如果你堅持的話，*it's fine with me*，請自行承擔後果。
- 我知道大家最 *concern* 的點就是怕自己辛苦建立起來的檔案被人不小心給 *delete* 掉了！
- What would you like for dinner? *Chaomian* (炒麵) or *wonton* (餛飩)?
- I would like to thank you for your hard work as president of the association, 社長先生。

In the previous section, it is mentioned that simultaneous interpreters encounter many challenges when interpreting from the SL into the TL. Certainly, experienced interpreters can handle these challenges successfully using one or a combination of several interpreting strategies and come up with an acceptable equivalent in the TL. Since there are a great variety of challenges faced by simultaneous interpreters, it's advisable to narrow down the scope of the challenges only to the issue of proper names.

Proper names refer to “a word or a group of words that is the name of a particular person, place, or thing and that usually begins with a capital letter” (Merriam-Webster). The study of proper names is called onomastics (Wikipedia) and onyms are classified into three main categories : anthroponymy (human personal names), taxonomy (biological organisms), and toponymy (names given to places or features of a district, region, etc.). Table 1 shows a more detailed description of each onym.

Table 1 Classification of onomastics

ONOMASTICS		
Anthroponymy	Taxonomy	Toponymy
Human personal names	Naming and classification of groups of organisms	Names given to places or features of a district, region, etc., including the names of planets, countries, cities, towns, villages, buildings, water bodies, mountains, etc.

Starting from onomastics we will try to present the difficulties faced by simultaneous interpreters when they “bump into” proper names. We will ignore taxonomy due to its scarce presence in multilingual conferences.

¹ Therefore, we will concentrate our discussion on anthroponymy and toponymy. It is worth mentioning that the technique of language switching is also applicable to the translation of jargons and special terminology; therefore, jargons and special terminology will also be included for analysis in the present paper.

III.Statement of the Problem

Time is the archenemy of all simultaneous interpreters. When interpreting simultaneously interpreters must render all the messages in the SL into the TL right after the speaker starts delivering his presentation. Under this immense time pressure, ideally, interpreters would have all the equivalents at their fingertips in order to produce an acceptable translation outcome in the TL. However, life is not always rosy for the bilingual interpreters. Sometimes, the vocabulary may get stuck on the tip of their tongue; or, sometimes, the equivalent in the TL is too complicated and confusing; or sometimes, they just don't know the equivalent in the TL thus failing to render a translation of the original messages. Under these circumstances, simultaneous interpreters must come up with feasible solutions to salvage their headaches while maintaining the smooth transmission of the ideas of the speaker at the same time.

One of the headaches confronted by the interpreters is the translation of proper names. To illustrate the problematic nature of proper names, anthroponymy, i.e. human personal names, will be used as the example for the explanation.

One of the most problematic aspect of the personal names resides in the transcription of English names into Chinese and vice versa. Ideally, the transcription of a text should be able to

¹ Throughout the professional career of the author and of the other interpreters, the most common and popular topics are of political, social, economic, commercial, financial and scientific nature.

return to its original text. This mechanism is rather easy for languages like Spanish and English since they both belong to the same linguistic family and they use the same latin alphabets. When interpreters for the language combination of English and Spanish, for instance, come across with personal names, they will leave the names intact and translate them as they are.

However, for languages like Chinese and English, each returning to the SL from the TL has its own obstacles since the letter-sound relations, quite often, are not exactly the same in both languages. To illustrate the above-mentioned difficulties, we are going to present the problems of the phonetic transcription with the following two tables.

Table 2 : Romanization of Chinese names into English

SL (Chinese)	Transliteration (Latin alphabet)	Returnability	Return to SL (possibilities)
王建民	Wang Chienming Wang Jianming	Low	王建民、汪建民 王健旻、汪劍珉
馬英九	Ma Ying-jeou Ma Yingjiu	Low	馬英九、馬櫻玖 馬穎菲、麻膺赳
蔡英文	Tsai Ing-wen Cai Yingwen	Low	蔡英文、蔡瑛雯 蔡鶯玟、蔡穎汶

Table 3 : Transliteration of foreign names into Chinese

SL (English)	Transliteration (Ch. characters)	Returnability	Return to SL
Michael Jordan	麥可•喬丹	High	Michael Jordan
John Mendiguren	約翰•孟迪古人	Medium	John???
Beder McGillivray	貝德爾•麥可極力威	Low	???

In fact, from the above two tables we can see that the problem of transliteration is more complex for translators rather than for interpreters. Nevertheless, it continues being a big problem for the simultaneous interpreters. In practice, speakers tend to transliterate foreign names to facilitate the pronunciation of such names. The problem arises when the interpreter has no list of the personal names of the attendees in advance, therefore, he has to guess the mentioned name to return to the original language basing on the speaker's pronunciation. In fact there are names and surnames that are easy to guess, e.g., Michael Jordan, John, and those that are difficult to guess, e.g., Mendiguren, Beder McGillivray.

Confronted with personal names, what can the interpreters do to shoot the trouble? The answer to this question is quite simple : code switching, on which the technique and application in the process of simultaneous interpretation will be elaborated in the following section.

IV.Application of Code Switching

The mechanism of language switching is not only considered as a feature of bilinguals but also a popular practice among language learners. In fact, language switching not only occurs in daily conversation but also appears as a common phenomenon formed around pop music. Many singers, regardless of their nationality and mother tongue, change or mix languages in songs. Examples of language mixing in songs abound in the world of pop music. Singers like Doris Day (Qué Será, Será), Madonna (La Isla Bonita), Shakira (Waka Waka), Alvaro Soler & Jennifer Lopez (The Same Sun), Pitbull (We Are One), Ricky Martin (Livin 'the Crazy Life), the Little Tigers (Green Apple Paradise), New Formosa Band (The Drumbeat), JJ Lin Jun Jie (Love UU), Leehom Wang (Forever

Love; Kiss),² Wonder Girls (Nobody), etc., all mix languages in the lyrics of their songs. The mixing of languages in pop music today is no longer a new practice and neither constitutes a great barrier for the public to enjoy the beautiful melody and lyrics of the songs.

In the field of conference interpretation, however, code switching is a topic of discussion with people either for or against this mechanism. Conventional scholars used to indicate that people who mixed languages were too lazy or too ignorant to express themselves correctly in a language. Nortier (2011) notes that people who change from one language to another are considered careless, reckless and clumsy because they neither care about nor respect their own languages. Oppositely, Grosjean (2010) says that code switching is often seen as a proof that a person is truly bilingual and that he knows how to choose the language to use basing on specific cultural and personal factors.

The interpreter is, of course, a bilingual person who masters two languages. He is not a lazy or ignorant person who does not know how to express himself correctly in the TL. In the field of simultaneous interpretation there are elements, especially those related to terminology, which may obstruct the smooth transmission of the main ideas of the speaker whereas the task of the interpreter is to unclog those elements so that the speaker's message can be received by the audience in an understandable and satisfactory way. Code switching now is a good tool that allows the interpreter to achieve such a purpose.

What said does not mean that the interpreter can use the technique of code switching whenever and however they want. If code switching can be used at the whim of the interpreter, then any bilingual person could act as an interpreter. During the process of simultaneous interpretation, not every tricky word can be dealt with and solved by code switching. As long as there is an equivalent word or expression in the TL, the interpreter has to ensure that the meaning of the word or expression in the other language be adequately transmitted. However, in practice there are occasions when the term or expression in the SL best expresses the idea of such a term or expression itself; or, the term or expression in the SL is already very familiar to the audience with no necessity for the interpreter to find the equivalent of that term or expression in the TL. When these cases occur, the interpreter can be confident in the application of code switching for the term or expression in question without altering the original idea of the speaker.

To illustrate what has been said above, let's look at the examples below :

1. 美國電信巨擘 *Verizon* 25 日宣布，將以 48.3 億美元現金收購雅虎。
2. *重慶南路* 原名 *府前街*、*文武街*，是台灣歷史悠久的一條書店街。
3. *DNA* 存在於細胞核，是細胞內的遺傳物質。*RNA* 可傳遞 *DNA* 的訊息以合成蛋白質。
4. *SARS* was recognized at the end of February 2003.
5. The subscription of the *Free Trade Agreement* always puts in evidence the problems that also are common to the globalization process as we can mention.

These examples clearly illustrate proper names of streets, places, institutions, companies, scientific terms, etc. Example 3 is a good example of mixing two languages in one sentence : Chinese and English. The example includes “DNA” and “RNA,” both scientific terms are already well known to the general population. Therefore, when interpreting simultaneously it won't be necessary to translate the complete name of “DNA” into English as “Deoxyribonucleic Acid” and “RNA” as “Ribonucleic Acid.” Just the acronyms DNA and RNA will suffice to interpret since both terms are no longer difficult or unknown scientific jargons to the general public. The same thing happens in the reverse translation of Mandarin Chinese. Instead of saying “脫氧核糖核酸” or “核糖核酸,” it is more practical to say DNA or RNA. If simultaneous interpreters translating from English into Chinese come across with those two terms, they are switching languages when they say

² 小虎隊(青蘋果樂園)、新寶島康樂隊(鼓聲若響)、林俊傑(Love UU)、王力宏(Forever Love; Kiss)。

DNA and RNA instead of saying 脫氧核糖核酸 and 核糖核酸.

Example 4 mentions the epidemic Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) that severely affected the international community in 2003 is another good example of code switching. The SARS virus spread rapidly worldwide and all peoples around the world came to know the virus in its English acronym : SARS. Therefore, interpreting simultaneously, it would not be necessary for the interpreter to translate the disease into Chinese as 急性呼吸道症候群.

Applied the technique of code switching in simultaneous interpretation, each of the five examples mentioned above would be interpreted as follows :

1. The American telecom giant **Verizon** announced on the 25th that it would acquire Yahoo for \$ 4.83 billion in cash.
2. **Chongqing** South Road, formerly known as **Fuqian** Street or **Wenwu**³ Street, is a bookstore street with a long history in Taiwan.
3. **DNA** exists in the nucleus, is the intracellular genetic material. **RNA** can transmit **DNA** messages to synthesize proteins
4. **SARS** 病毒確認時間是在 2003 年二月底。
5. 簽訂 **FTA** 常常顯示出全球化進程的共同問題。

From the above examples, we can say that code switching used intelligently would facilitate the interpreters in the transmission of the message to the public, without the need to sacrifice some details for referring the acronyms or terms to the full names. Nevertheless, it will be emphasized again that code switching can not be used at the whim of the interpreters. Based on our empirical experience, the use of code switching for the following proper names is permissible in simultaneous interpretation :

1. Names of persons
2. Names of streets, roads and other ways
3. Names of places including the names of hills, mountain ranges and mountains, lakes and lagoons, streams and rivers, etc.
4. Names of institutions, companies, organizations, etc.
5. Jargons and special terminology of individual profession

V.Conclusion

Interpreters face multiple challenges when interpreting simultaneously and one of the challenges is of linguistic nature. When faced with linguistic problems, simultaneous interpreters need to come up with immediate solutions to the problems in order to avoid interrupting the smooth transmission of the main ideas of the presenter.

One way to deal with linguistic problems during the interpretation process is the use of language switching or code switching to handle problems related to proper names (ie, anthroponymy and toponymy, as well as names of institutions, companies, jargons, special terminology, etc.). The reason for proposing code switching is because this technique or strategy allows the interpreter to render the expression, phrase or term in question into the TL without altering significantly the syntactical structure of the SL as well as keeping the semantic meaning of the original message.

Nevertheless, code switching cannot be used at the whim of the interpreter. As long as there is

³ For the Romanization of Chinese street names, Hanyu Pinyin has been used since it is the standard Romanization system of Taiwan since 2009.

an equivalent word or expression in the TL, the interpreter has to ensure that the meaning of the word or expression in the other language be adequately transmitted. Only used with discretion can code switching be a great tool.

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語碼轉換在同步口譯裡之應用

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摘 要

口譯員，特別是同步口譯員，不管準備多充分，在實際的口譯過程中總會遇到棘手的語言挑戰。挑戰可以是專有名詞、特別的表達方式、不熟悉的知識領域、甚至單字都有可能造成口譯員翻譯錯誤。資深口譯員面對此類挑戰可以運用口譯技巧將困擾詞彙翻譯成譯入語可以接受的表達方式。在諸多的語言挑戰種類裡，最困擾同步口譯員的則非專有名詞莫屬。在翻譯專有名詞時，口譯員必須找尋解決的方式好讓口譯活動順利進行，而口譯員最常使用的技巧則首推語碼轉換或語言移轉。語碼轉換讓口譯員能夠在講者講完後立即翻譯而不影響翻譯的流暢度。因此，本文主要目的在於探討語碼轉換的語境與其在同步口譯裡之應用方式。

關鍵詞：語碼轉換、語言移轉、同步口譯、同步口譯員