

# Code-Switching Characteristics and Motivation Analysis of "Sing Tao Daily (European Edition)"

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## ABSTRACT

As a Chinese newspaper for European Chinese, Sing Tao Daily (European Edition) has a lot of code switching. The usage of various codes on its different pages is counted by using sentence as a unit in this article, which is found the newspaper's code switching has the following characteristics: Firstly, the newspaper mainly focuses on intra-sentential switchings and inter-sentential switchings, with few tag-switchings; Secondly, the code switching frequency of different pages is also different. The frequency of code switching in news pages is low, and the frequency of code switching in entertainment and leisure pages is high, especially in the Hong Kong pages; Thirdly, the code switching of different pages is different. For example, it is mainly conversed between Mandarin and English for the international news, and mainly conversed between Mandarin and Cantonese for the Hong Kong page. In addition, it's believed that many reasons for code-switching strategies used on newspaper are in the purpose of meeting the needs of readers and adjusting the discourse.

**Keywords:** Sing Tao Daily (European Edition), code switching, types of code-switching, motivations of code switching

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Code is a neutral term used by sociolinguistics to refer to language or any variant of language. It is different from "English", "Chinese", "dialects", "Pidgin", etc, which are somewhat emotional. Code switching is the alternate use of two (or more) languages or variants, and is a phenomenon of language contact. Many scholars (Gamboz, 1972; Scotten, 1988; Zhu Wanjin, Wang Runjing, 1997, etc.) have explained and defined code switching. Xu Jiangming (2004) introduced the views of Ovando and Collier, which believed that code switching is the alternate use of two languages; code switching can appear in the form of words, phrases, clauses or entire sentences; Linguists believe that code switching is the creative use of language by people who are proficient in bilingualism. This article adopts the above viewpoints.

Since the 1990s, the European Chinese society has entered a new stage of rapid development. The total population has soared from less than 600,000 in the mid 1980s to 2.5 million in 2008. European Chinese in a multilingual background usually face the problem of choosing the most appropriate language code in their life, so the emergence of code switching is inevitable. The research object of this article "Sing Tao Daily (European Edition)" has multiple language codes such as Mandarin, Cantonese, English, Hokkien, etc and code switching occurs frequently. Code switching is the first step in language contact. This paper hopes that through the analysis of the corpus of "Sing Tao

Daily (European Edition)", people can understand the characteristics of code switching of the newspaper and make a little contribution to the theory of language contact.

## 2. CORPUS ANALYSIS AND CODE CHARACTERISTICS

"Sing Tao Daily" is headquartered in Hong Kong. It is a Chinese international newspaper with a long history and a global distribution network. In addition to being published in Hong Kong, "Sing Tao Daily" also is published in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia. The research object of this article is "Sing Tao Daily (European Edition)". The authors found that as a newspaper for overseas Chinese, it has a lot of code switching.

This article randomly selected the six issues of Sing Tao Daily (European Edition) from WEEK06, 08, 12, 14, 17, and 18 in 2017 as the corpus to analyze the code-switching phenomenon of the newspaper. The newspaper normally has 20 sections, namely: P1 International News, P2 News, P3 UK, P4 Europe, P5 China News, P6 Chinese Society, P7 Cross-Strait, P8-9 Hong Kong News, P10 Hong Kong Current Affairs Magazine, P11 China Current Affairs Magazine, P12 International, P13 Finance, P14 Fantastic, P15 Lan Kwai Fong, P16 China Entertainment/Health, P17 God of Cookery/Ancient and Modern Talk, P18 Sports, P19-20 Entertainment. These 20 sections can be summarized as international news (P1-P4, P12), Mainland China news (P5-6, P11), Hong Kong news (P8-10, P13), Taiwan news (P7), and Mainland China entertainment

(P16-P18), Hong Kong Entertainment (P19-20), Column (P14-15) six categories.

This article counted the number of occurrences of code conversion in different pages of these six newspapers in sentence units. The table is as follows. Since the

newspaper has 20 sections in one issue, this article only selected one page from each of the six categories and listed the total number of code switching for each edition.

**Table 1** The statistics of code switching in the six sections of WEEK06-18

LAYOUT WEEK	P3	P6	P7	P8	P14	P16	P19
06	29/125(0.008)	0 (0)	5/92(0.054)	8/82(0.098)	123/162(0.759)	1/108(0.009)	29/75(0.387)
08	10/119(0.084)	3/115(0.026)	10/82(0.122)	23/72(0.319)	47/147(0.320)	1/115(0.007)	44/78(0.564)
12	18/109(0.165)	7/110(0.064)	3/84(0.036)	20/105(0.190)	94/171(0.549)	0 (0)	33/42(0.786)
14	24/103(0.233)	23/57(0.404)	2/79(0.025)	19/99(0.192)	51/156(0.327)	6/108(0.056)	23/74(0.311)
17	21/103(0.204)	1/115(0.009)	7/79(0.089)	43/90(0.478)	88/167(0.527)	0 (0)	20/56(0.357)
18	29/129(0.225)	9/108(0.083)	20/71(0.282)	7/73(0.096)	66/149(0.443)	1/118 (0.008)	34/61(0.557)

From Table 1, we can see the following characteristics:  
Note: X/Y, X is the number of occurrences of code conversion, Y is the total number of sentences in the version (with title), and the percentage is in the bracket.

P7 in WEEK14 can be viewed backwards. P6 is Taiwan leisure section, and P7 is Mainland leisure section. P6-P7 in WEEK18 are international news, not news from the Mainland and Taiwan.

**2.1. From a General Perspective, the Frequency of Code Switching from High to Low is: Hong Kong (P8, P14, P19)>International (P3)>Taiwan (P7)>Mainland (P6, P16)**

In the news pages, the code switching frequency from high to low is: P8 (Hong Kong News)>P3 (International News)>P7 (Taiwan News)>P6 (Mainland China News), that is, the code switching frequency of the news pages in Hong Kong is the highest, and the code switching frequency of the news pages in the Mainland is the lowest. What needs to be pointed out is that P6 in WEEK14 is not a traditional Chinese social section, but Ching Ming—Taiwan, and P7 is not a cross-strait Taiwan section like other issues, but a special section of Ching Ming—Mainland. Therefore, the two sets of data of P6 and

**2.2. Code Switching Frequency of News is Lower than That of Entertainment**

From Table 1, we can see that the code switching frequency of the Hong Kong news page is higher than that of other news pages, but compared with the code conversion frequency of the Hong Kong entertainment page, the conversion frequency of the entertainment page is higher.  
From the comparison of P6 (Taiwan leisure category) in WEEK14 and P7 (Taiwan news category) in other sections, it can also be found that the conversion frequency of leisure category is greater than that of news category. The code switching frequency of P6 (Mainland News) and P16 (Mainland Leisure and Entertainment) are almost the same, and they are very low.  
Therefore, the code switching frequency of the entertainment and leisure sections of the newspaper are

generally greater than that of the news sections, which is because entertainment reports are more relaxed, and the language is more flexible than news.

### 2.3. Language Codes for Different Layouts are Different

The authors counted the language codes of these six newspapers and found that the international news sections(P1-P4, P12) are mainly the conversion between Mandarin and English, and the conversion between Mandarin and Cantonese occasionally occurs. For example:

(1) “工會已經下令在Central、Victoria、Northern、Jubilee和Piccadilly綫工作的夜鐵司機,就是否支持目前的工作條件、超時工作和薪資進行投票,表決是否進行罷工。” (WEEK08,P3)

(2) “Topshop雖然沒有強調這款牛仔褲的「實穿性」,但是認為可在化妝派對上派上用場,並表示此牛仔褲將成為話題。” (WEEK18,P12)

(3) “馬克龍稍後抵達工廠時受到職工嘲噓” (WEEK17,P4)

Example (1) and (2) are code switching between Mandarin and English, and example (3) is code switching between Mandarin and Cantonese.

The Hong Kong page (P8-10, P13, P14-15, P19-20) is mainly the conversion between Mandarin and Cantonese, and also includes conversion between Mandarin and English, as well as conversion between Cantonese and English. For example:

(4) “老友「慈父G」有一對非常可愛仔女” (WEEK17,P14)

(5) “以我所知,他們(警方)每個月都要交數給老頂(上司),所以就到處掃細場。” (WEEK06,P10)

(6) “不少歷史大領袖,也只是Rule by Common Sense,以常理判斷去處理國家大事,毋須扮高深也!” (WEEK08,P14)

(7) “剛出生兩星期的Avner跟哥哥Jacques同樣擁有混血兒英俊美貌,人仔細細已有一頭濃髮。” (WEEK14,P20)

(8) “旺角灣仔勁多所謂home game,抽水外,更有得買保險,目的都是多抽水玩壞手。” (WEEK06,P10)

Example (4) (5) is the conversion between Mandarin and Cantonese, (6) is the conversion between Mandarin and English, (7) has both English and Cantonese codes, (8) is the code conversion between Cantonese and English.

Taiwan News (P7) has a low frequency of code switching, and the only few code switches are mainly between Mandarin and Hokkien. For example:

(9) “宜蘭縣清明習俗「臆墓棵」,邀請學童扮演牧童到墓園說好話,再分給祭品,希望牧童不要讓牛隻破壞先人的墳墓,表達慎終追遠之意。” (WEEK14,P6)

(10) “千萬不要在墓地脫鞋打赤腳,因為腳底的湧泉穴是人體的大穴,而且光腳踏過不乾淨的墳墓掩埋土有可能將邪氣導入人體。” (WEEK14,P6)

### 2.4. Main Types of Code Switching are Inter-sentential Switching and Intra-sentential Switching, with Few Tag-switchings

Poplack (1980) distinguished three types of code switching: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag-switching. Xu Daming (2016) introduced that inter-sentential switching is a sentence-based conversion that occurs at the boundary of two sentences or clauses. It usually occurs in the conversation of the speaker. A sentence or clause is in another language and conforms to the grammar rules of the two languages. Intra-sentential switching is limited to the conversion within clauses or phrases, and is mixed with the conversion of vocabulary. Tag-switching means that the additional components of a sentence are expressed in a different language.

Judging from the statistics of the code switching of the six issues of newspapers, the code switching of the Hong Kong page is frequent, while the frequency of other pages is low. Therefore, Table 2 only lists the number of different conversion types in the Hong Kong section (P8-10, P13, P14, P19-20). We can see that the newspaper is mainly intra-sentential switching, followed by inter-sentential switching. There's not many tag-switchings.

Table 2 Statistics of code switching types on WEEK06-18 Hong Kong page (P8-10, P14-15, P19-20)

WEEK Conversion Type	06	08	12	14	17	18
Intra-sentential switching(times)	225	144	182	167	220	259
Inter-sentential switching(times)	38	16	55	15	11	24

Tag-switching(time s)	5	2	0	1	2	1
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Here are examples of these three conversion types:

- (11) “香港綠色建築議會夥拍機電工程署,率先試行替五幢私營建築物重新校驗中央冷氣和供水裝置,尋找最為「慳水慳電」的設定水平。” (WEEK08,P9)
- (12) “鮑姐獲提名角逐金像獎「最佳女主角」,她睇好惠英紅。” (WEEK14,P19)
- (13) “談及香港面對困難,他更一度哽咽:「我愛香港,唔想睇到本來引以為榮的香港,今日香港的GDP跌至只佔中國兩個幾巴仙,點解唔可以做好啲?」” (WEEK12,P9)
- (14) “感謝大家對Avner送來的祝福。好友送上這份甜蜜心意,來分享我們一家的喜悅! Our second little bundle of joy has arrived! Kathy,Julien and Jacques are joyfully welcoming little Avner into our family!” (WEEK14,P20)
- (15) “又送禮品,又送機票,又現金回贈,為乜?” (WEEK6,P14)
- (16) “呢呢,下星期又放大假,阿G立即找我求救。” (WEEK17,P14)
- Examples (11) and (12) are intra-sentential switchings, (13) and (14) are inter-sentential switchings, and (15) and (16) are tag-switchings.

### 3. MOTIVATION OF CODE SWITCHING

#### 3.1. Meeting the Needs of Readers

The quality of a newspaper mainly depends on the satisfaction of its readers. Therefore, the language in the newspaper should be able to cater for the needs of readers. As an independent variable in language, code switching can help newspapers transmit signals to its readers. "Sing Tao Daily (European Edition)" positions itself as a newspaper for the European Chinese middle class. The language of the newspaper must not only conform to the characteristics of the newspaper, but also meet the needs of European Chinese. Since the reader of the newspaper, the Chinese in Europe, is in an environment with frequent language contact, most Chinese must master at least two or more language codes in order to communicate normally. This is reflected in the fact that the newspaper has multiple language codes such as Mandarin, English, Cantonese, and Hokkien, and its code switching phenomenon is very frequent.

Since the Chinese in Europe come from various dialect regions, "Sing Tao Daily (European Edition)" does not have a large Cantonese component like "Sing Tao Daily (Hong Kong Edition)". The same piece of news has a lot of Cantonese in Sing Tao Daily (Hong Kong Edition), but it is changed to Mandarin in Sing Tao Daily (European Edition). For example:

- (17) “囡囡的靚仔樣昨日終於曝光,由宣布太太有喜伊始,大家最關注BB似蘇永康還是蘇太Anita。” (Hong Kong Edition)

- (18) “兒子的帥樣昨日終於曝光,由宣布太太有喜伊始,大家最關注孩子像蘇永康還是蘇太Anita。” (European Edition, WEEK12, P20)

There are many other language adjustments, which show that one of the motivations for the code switching of the newspaper is to meet the needs of different readers.

#### 3.2. Adapting to the Discourse Adjustment of Different Sections

From the differences in the code switching of different sections, we can see that the code switching of the newspaper also reflects the characteristics of different pages and adapts to the discourse adjustment of different pages. The main languages for code switching of different pages are different. International news is mainly Mandarin and English. Hong Kong Current Affairs, Entertainment, etc. use Mandarin and Cantonese. The code switching of the cross-strait section is mainly the conversion between Mandarin and Hokkien.

In addition, the news sections use more classical vocabulary, and the entertainment pages are more spoken. For example:

- (19) “新任議會將在6月13日重開,但英女王文誥演講 (Queen's Speech) 要到6月19日才會進行。” (WEEK18,P3)
- (20) “同學希望家居服務可以做到價錢相宜,同時通過意見回饋、獎勵計畫,令年輕的耆英服務長者。” (WEEK17,P8)

### 4. CONCLUSION

In summary, we can see that the code switching frequency of Sing Tao Daily (European edition) is high, whose code switching is mostly between Mandarin (or standard Chinese) and Cantonese and English. Due to the different content of different pages, the situation of code switching is also different. The conversion frequency of news pages is lower than that of entertainment and leisure pages, most of which are conversions between Mandarin and English; it frequently switch between Mandarin and Cantonese on entertainment and leisure (especially Hong Kong entertainment) pages. Based on the situation of each page, the type of conversion is mainly intra-sentential switching, followed by inter-sentential switching, and the phenomenon of tag-switching is rare. In addition, the authors analyzed that many reasons for the newspaper uses code-switching strategies are mainly to meet the needs of readers and adapt to different pages adjusted by the different discourse.

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