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Two Word Orders or One: An Investigation of Code-Blending in HKSL-Cantonese Bimodal Bilinguals

Liyanage Sumudu Sulochana Perera

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
lsum8688sulo@gmail.com

Bimodal bilingualism is one of the rarely explored areas in bilingualism. It allows simultaneous production of two languages, which distinguishes it from unimodal approach. This paper attempts to make some adjustment of Grosjean's language mode theory to adapt it to bimodal bilingualism. The study attempts to identify whether bimodal bilingual adults will be able to produce code-blends with different and even contradictory word-orders, if so whether it occur frequently or rarely. Meanwhile, if in the code-blends, one language follows the other's word order, will bimodal bilinguals prefer to follow a particular language? If so, which language do they prefer? The limited researches taken in this field are focused on production of two languages of deaf people and CODA. The hypothesis is two languages cannot be produced following two correct word orders. Two subjects were taken with gender balance. Subjects were asked to produce two languages simultaneously assuming that subjects are talking to one Cantonese monolingual and one HKSL monolingual at the same time. Therefore, two structures that have contradictory word orders in HKSL and Cantonese were chosen: modifiers and negations are used as parameters. The experiment task contained two parts: question answering and picture description. Data was transcribed through software called ELAN, and transcribed into HKSL, Cantonese pinyin and English glossary. HKSL native signer was consulted to generalize the negations and modifiers in sign languages more accurately. According to the data, when languages of two modes are produced simultaneously, word order of one language usually follows that of the other (92.31% and 84.44%); and both of the two subjects' HKSL word orders follow Cantonese ones to a larger extend (73.08% and 84.44%). Their Cantonese rarely follow HKSL (19.23% and 00.00%). Both of them, however, occasionally produce two languages in different but correct orders (7.69% and 15.56%). Finally, the data was converted into Excel sheets for analysis. The results show that word order of one language always follows that of the other. Different but correct word orders are rarely observed. Further research with more subjects and other parameters or from different perspectives are expected.

Key words: Bimodal Bilingualism, CODA, Code-Blend, HKSL, Pinyin, Unimodal