

English in Hong Kong Cantopop: language choice, code-switching and genre

BRIAN HOK-SHING CHAN*

ABSTRACT: Code-switching research has focused on spontaneous conversation, and code-switching has often been seen as a consequence of bilinguals attending to and extending the “macro” status and functions of the two languages in society, attitudes towards these languages, and their cultural connotations, for instance, the “we-code” vs. “they-code” distinction. In the Hong Kong context, code-switching to English has been primarily considered as quoting “Western” concepts and ideas, conveying referential and connotative meanings absent in Cantonese. Investigating a corpus of planned discourse, namely, Cantonese popular songs (i.e. Cantopop) in Hong Kong, this paper finds that the status and functions of English in Cantopop are more variable and flexible, beyond a mere symbol of “Western” culture or identity. Nonetheless, these functions can be attributed to the properties of the pop song genre, namely, Cantopop as poetic text, media text, and a product of pop culture; in particular, code-switching fits into the rhyming scheme, marks text structure, indexes prior texts, and conveys alternative identities.

INTRODUCTION: CODE-SWITCHING IN ASIAN POP MUSIC

Why do bilinguals alternate between two languages in a communicative situation rather than adhere to one language? What are the communicative effects conveyed by the use of two or even more languages in discourse? These questions have continuously intrigued linguists. Various answers have been proposed, leading to a sizeable literature on code-switching¹ – “the use of more than one language in the course of a communicative episode” (Heller 1988: 1). Presumably, a communicative episode includes both spoken and written discourse in various genres. Most of the code-switching literature focuses on spoken data, in particular those data drawn from spontaneous conversation (e.g. Auer 1984; 1998; Gumperz 1982; Li Wei 1994; 2005; Myers-Scotton 1993). Nonetheless, written code-switching has existed for many centuries, as evidenced by its occurrence in ancient texts (Aslanov 2000; Watt 1997), and some researchers have paid attention to code-switching in written data or planned discourse such as poetry and novels (Kachru 1989; Callahan 2002; 2004), advertising (Bhatia and Ritchie 2004; Martin 2002) and pop song lyrics (e.g. Bentahila and Davis 2002; Kachru 2006; Lee 2004; 2006; Moody 2006; Sarker and Winer 2006).

The differences between code-switching in written or planned discourse and observed code-switching in spoken data bear empirical and theoretical exploration, and some such distinctions are outlined here. For instance, in spontaneous conversation, bilingual speakers may engage in code-switching to highlight their social roles and negotiate their relationship with other participants, which Myers-Scotton (1993) captured as “marked code-switching”. Alternatively, bilingual speakers may code-switch to mark off various conversational moves such as “dispreference”, that is, turning down a request or an offer (Li Wei 1994; Li Wei

*Department of English, University of Macau, Av. Padre Tomas Pereira, S.J., Taipa, Macau, China. Email: bhschan@umac.mo

and Milroy 1995). The communication of these intentions crucially depends on the face-to-face conversational context which bilingual speakers share, and the ad hoc, two-way interaction which these speakers engage in. Neither of these seems to characterize planned discourse such as written texts or media texts, where the writer and the reader/audience do not share the immediate context in interaction.

Another pervasive observation regarding spoken data is that code-switching is triggered because speakers are much more familiar with certain concepts or terms in another language, presumably because these code-switched words or phrases are more frequently used in a speech community and hence more accessible. In the case of lexical gap, these code-switched expressions simply do not have any appropriate equivalents in the usual language of the speakers (Baker 2001; Gibbons 1987; Grosjean 1982; Li 2000). However, explanations of this sort seem less pertinent in written code-switching. Given more time to formulate the message, the writer may translate these terms and avoid code-switching, often in compliance with the generally more formal style of writing. Some research has compared data of spoken code-switching and those of written code-switching, and it was concluded that written code-switching indeed assumes quite different functions. McClure (2000) and Montes-Alcalá (2000) suggest that written code-switching appears to be more of an identity marker and stylistic device, whereas in spoken conversation code-switching seems to serve a wider range of functions.

Differences between spoken code-switching and written code-switching, however, are relative or gradient rather than absolute or clear-cut, and code-switching may have some similar functions in both types of data. For instance, code-switching has been found to mark off quotations in spoken conversation (Gumperz 1982) and novels (Callahan 2002; 2004), which may well be a consequence of the fact that quotations are a common feature in both genres. Since orality (i.e. properties of spoken discourse) and literacy (i.e. properties of written discourse) are two ends of a continuum (Tannen 1982), some written genres may show typical properties of spoken discourse (e.g. instant messaging), while some spoken genres may show typical properties of writing (e.g. public speech, scripted news reports). Given this continuum, the range of analysis of code-switching may be narrowed to focus on a particular genre, treating the spoken-written (or spontaneous-planned) dimension as one of its essential attributes alongside others such as discourse purpose and text structure (Swales 1990). For instance, a code-switched English phrase or sentence may function as an attention-getter in an advertising text (Martin 2002) or a pop song (Lee 2004), assuming that attention-getting is an important purpose of the two genres or, in general, of media texts. Spontaneous conversation may also be treated as a genre of its own (Warren 2006). In this light, code-switching due to lexical gap, familiarity, or frequency as often suggested in the code-switching literature can be recast as a discourse strategy in response to the genre which imposes real-time pressure on bilingual speakers to express ideas quickly and precisely. Such factors as frequency, familiarity or lexical gap as general motivations for code-switching need not apply across the board to all written (or even spoken) genres.

In addition to serving discourse functions related to various genres, code-switching conveys pragmatic inferences by virtue of the symbolic values of the two participating languages (Gumperz 1982). The question is to what extent these symbolic values derive from the cultural values and/or social identities commonly associated with the two languages in a bilingual speech community at large – in other words, the dominant “language ideologies” in that community (Woolard 1998). In some studies, these language ideologies extend to

code-switching in a fairly direct manner, and these languages convey different connotations and speaker attitudes correspondingly. The often-quoted distinction between “we-code” and “they-code” is a case in point. Looking at spoken data of Hindi–English, Spanish–English, and Slovenian–German, Gumperz (1982) proposed that in code-switching one language acts as the “we-code” whereas another acts as the “they-code”. The “we-code” conveys a sense of personal involvement and solidarity, whereas the “they-code” carries a more detached, impersonal or objective tone. Whether a language acts as “we-code” or “they-code” apparently hinges on its “macro” functions in a particular speech community and the ethno-linguistic identity of the speakers. In Gumperz’ (1982) data, Hindi, Spanish, or Slovenian, the home language of the speakers, acts as the “we-code”, whereas English or German, the second language of the speakers, acts as the “they-code”. In many bilingual or multilingual communities, however, the relationship between language, culture, and identity is much more complex and dynamic. Speakers use and switch languages in various ways to highlight aspects of their multi-faceted identities and personae (Sebba and Wootton 1998; see also Li Wei 2005). Under these circumstances, direct mappings of “we-code”/“they-code” onto the speakers’ native/second language would be too simplistic, and the distinction is far from adequate in helping us get to the gist of code-switching in discourse. More rigorous study into the speakers, the context, and the text is needed to determine with greater precision the cultural values and identities which different languages symbolize at various points of a conversation or text.

Most recently, there has been a rapid growth of interest in code-switching in pop music around the world. Most studies have discussed data which involve English in an Asian context (Kachru 2006; Lee 2004; 2006; Moody 2006; Moody and Matsumoto 2003; Pennycook 2003; Stanlaw 2004), but there are also works on other language pairs (Bentahila and Davis 2002; Davis and Bentahila 2006; 2008) or other contexts (Omoniyi 2006; Sarker et al. 2005; Sarker and Winer 2006). These studies shed light on the two issues mentioned above. In what ways does code-switching serve discourse functions related to the genre of pop song? In particular, pop song lyrics appear to be a well-defined genre which, compared to spontaneous conversation, has a distinctive form (i.e. pop songs have a regular text structure which consists of stanzas and a chorus, and the lines fit into a rhyming scheme which matches the music) and purpose (i.e. pop songs aim at personal consumption, mass production, and commercial profit – Burton 2005; Frith 2001). The second issue is to what extent code-switching conveys pragmatic inferences or connotations based on the symbolic values commonly attached to the two participating languages in a speech community. Studies into the use of English in Asian pop music place the question in even sharper focus: How far does English convey a sense of “Western-ness”, “globality”, “modernity”, “individuality”, “otherness” and so forth? In contrast, how far do the Asian languages convey a sense of “Eastern-ness”, “locality”, “conservatism”, “collectivism”, “us-ness” and so forth? Lee (2004) suggests that the mixing of English into Korean pop serves a range of functions – from discourse strategies, such as attention-getting and rhyming, to the expression of sexual desire and resistance to norms and mainstream values. It is actually possible to express similar content in Korean without resorting to English, but these songs have been deemed “socially inappropriate” (Lee 2004: 438) and censored on television (pp. 436–7). There is a sense that Korean and English are linked to two different sets of symbolic values derived from stereotypes of the Korean culture and the Western culture respectively: Whereas the Korean language seems to symbolize the traditional,

local culture and moral standards, the English language, in contrast, is associated with the freedom of expressing personal desires and critical attitudes of mainstream beliefs. In some Korean pop lyrics, the juxtaposition of the two languages signals a dual stance of the singer towards either his cheating lover or his love affairs (Lee 2004: 438–42); that is, the Korean lines suggest a more introvert, tolerant, reserved attitude, whereas the English lines carry an assertive, acrimonious, or accusatory tone. Such “double-voicing” through code-switching (Rampton 1998) was taken as reflecting “South Korean youth’s battle with their unsettling identities” (Lee 2004: 446). In other Korean pop songs, English conveys a sense of “globality”, as the language seems to render the songs appealing to audiences of other nationalities, in particular those in Japan and other Asian cities (Lee 2004; 2006). Such symbolism of languages manifested in Korean pop may not be evident in pop music in other areas. In Hindi film music, for instance, the mixing of English and Hindi instils humour and playfulness, but the two languages do not seem to invoke specific values or images of their own (Kachru 2006). Kachru (2006: 224) contends that “[u]nlike a ‘high’ code needed only for the serious purposes of identity construction [. . .], it (*i.e. English*) is used just as any other language to express ‘ordinary’ meanings[. . .]”. In Japanese pop, the cultural values and social identities that English symbolizes appear insinuated and variable (Moody 2006; Pennycook 2003; Stanlaw 2004). In his discussion of the music of Rip Slyme, a well-known Japanese hip-hop group, Pennycook (2003) cautions against a straightforward equation between English and globality and between Japanese and Japanese-ness. The function of the English lines may be more mimetic, for instance, mimicking the American rappers’ style (Pennycook 2003: 515–16), or more symbolic, but even in the latter case singers do not necessarily put on a global or Western identity. Instead, the English lines may be performed with a heavy Japanese accent and hence communicate a subtle sense of Japanese-ness (Pennycook 2003: 526–7). In a similar vein, Moody (2006) (also Moody and Matsumoto 2003) notes that some English words are nativized or blended into Japanese to the extent that their origin or “English-ness” becomes ambiguous. Moody (2006) further suggests that this process of “code-ambiguation” reflects an ongoing change in which the Japanese ethno-linguistic identity has become less distinct. Stanlaw (2004: 102) argues that “[t]he English words used are often creative and critical Japanese (not American or British) poetic devices which allow songwriters, or even some poets, an access to a wider range of allusions, images, metaphors and technical possibilities than is available from ‘purely’ Japanese linguistic resources”. Although Stanlaw (pp. 101–2, 125–6) maintains that English words in Japanese pop are more aptly described as “nativization” rather than “importation” or “borrowing”, in some examples English does appear to infer a sense of non-Japanese-ness or Western-ness, or, alternatively, to act as a “they-code” or “language of the other”. In what Stanlaw (pp. 104–7) calls an “audacious device”, English downplays the weight of feelings and emotions supposedly too intense to be expressed in Japanese, such as grief after break-up, and the English lines allude to “Western-style romance” (Stanlaw 2004: 104–5) which is not to be taken so seriously. There is also an example in which a female singer explicitly proposes to her male lover, an act presumably too daring for a woman in Japanese culture. The song is written and sung totally in English to circumvent the audacity (Stanlaw 2004: 139–41).

This paper presents a preliminary analysis of a corpus of Cantopop (Cantonese popular songs) lyrics produced in Hong Kong which contain English elements of various lengths (*i.e.* words, phrases, sentences, and even paragraphs). There are two main analytical questions. First, what are the discourse functions of English and code-switching,

in particular those functions pertaining to the specific genre of pop song lyrics? Secondly, what cultural values or social identities does the English language convey? As will be shown in the following analysis, many of the discourse functions of English in Cantopop (e.g. rhyming, attention-getting, marking line divisions) have been echoed in other pop music data in works mentioned above. This work aims to add to a growing corpus of cross-linguistic data on the functions of code-switching within the pop song genre. In this paper, the communicative effects of English in Cantopop are construed in a continuum of symbolic functions (i.e. the identities or cultural connotations of the English language) and/or discourse functions (i.e. functions of code-switching within the text of the lyrics). These discourse or textual functions are closely related to the nature and properties of the pop song genre, more precisely, pop-song lyrics as essentially written texts (although they are sung in the spoken medium) or planned discourse (vs. spontaneous conversation), as poetic texts, as media texts, and as a product of pop culture.

The paper presents a critical summary of the literature on Cantonese–English code-switching in the Hong Kong context, and this is followed by a brief introduction to the Cantopop corpus. Finally, some examples from the corpus are provided, to illustrate a range of the discourse functions of English and code-switching in Cantopop.

RETHINKING MOTIVATIONS OF CANTONESE–ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING IN HONG KONG

Since Gibbons' (1979; 1987) pioneering works, there has been substantial interest in Cantonese–English code-switching in the Hong Kong context, illustrated not only in monographs and articles by linguists and scholars (e.g. Li 2000) but also in dissertations and theses (e.g. Chan 2003; Fung 2003). In this literature, a variety of factors have been proposed as to why Hong Kong bilinguals resort to code-switching, but one factor stands out as particularly important. Whereas Cantonese remains the usual language spoken by Hong Kong Chinese, these bilingual speakers code-switch to English for those expressions whose meaning cannot be fully conveyed in Cantonese. In the following, this explanation will be referred to as the “lack of equivalence” argument. Gibbons (1987) observed that university students switch to English when the academic terms in Cantonese are generally unknown or less familiar, or when the English expressions do not have exact counterparts in Cantonese, for instance, *friendly*, i.e. the case of lexical gap (Gibbons 1987: 85). Luke (1998) suggested that English words are mixed in informal conversation because the Cantonese counterparts sound too formal or literary in style. For instance, the word *form* is often mixed in Cantonese instead of the more formal counterpart *biu2-gaak3/表格* (‘form’) (Luke 1998: 154). These instances are called “expedience code-mixing”, which refers to the use of English expressions in informal talk among Cantonese speakers out of convenience (i.e. expedience). When the code-switched English expressions do have counterparts in vernacular Cantonese, Luke (1998) suggests that code-switching or code-mixing is more deliberate, motivated by the speaker’s intention to convey a “Western” orientation. These instances are called “orientational code-mixing” (Luke 1998), whereby speakers project a certain image or identity (i.e. they show to listeners that they are Westernized, educated, modern, etc.).

The lack of equivalence argument has been elaborated, strengthened, and given much more weight with many illustrations in a series of works by Li (1998; 2000; 2001) and by Li and Tse (2002). Inspired by the insight that translations are hardly equivalent in meaning (Snell-Hornby 1988), these papers put forward the view that Hong Kong bilinguals code-switch to English because the English expression has no Cantonese word or phrase which is equivalent in meaning (also called the “availability” motivation: Li 2001; Li and Tse 2002), even though some Cantonese translation with similar meaning may be available. The Cantonese translation may convey a different style, as has been suggested by Luke (1998) in what he calls “expedience code-mixing”; it may also carry very different connotations (Li 2000; 2001; Li and Tse 2002) and even referential meaning (Li 2001; Li and Tse 2002). A further consideration is that a potentially available Cantonese translation is simply not in current use (Li and Tse 2002). For instance, the often-code-switched phrase *keep fit* implies “frequent exercise” and even “getting slim”, whereas the Cantonese translation, *bou2 ci4 gin6 hong1/保持健康* (‘keep fit or healthy’), does not (Li 2000: 310). More importantly, the latter phrase sounds unfamiliar in Cantonese, and it seems that Hong Kong Chinese do not really use that expression in everyday speech. It is in this light that Li (2000) questions the validity of “orientational code-mixing” (Luke 1998), which presupposes the existence of Cantonese equivalents. What is more, Li and Tse (2002: 181) propose that identity construction or negotiation plays an insignificant role in motivating Cantonese–English code-switching of Hong Kong bilinguals.

Despite the examples illustrating the “lack of equivalence” argument, the theoretical and empirical basis of the argument is not without flaws. First and foremost, the meaning of a word or phrase itself is fuzzy and fluid, varying across contexts, a point Li (2000: 310–11) observed. For instance, the English term *Y2K* may mean ‘Year 2000’, ‘a computer bug’, ‘an imminent attack of that computer bug’, etc.² Furthermore, it is the speakers who assign meaning(s) to words and expressions in different contexts. In the case of bilingual speakers, they may – or may not – associate translation equivalents, if available, with different contexts or connotations. In the past, many secondary school teachers in Hong Kong lectured in English in accordance with the medium-of-instruction policy and the language of the textbooks, and then they code-switched to Cantonese to explain the English content, as some students did not understand English well (Lin, 1996).³ In particular, teachers provided Cantonese translations for the key concepts in English, and in this case these Cantonese translations were indeed intended to be equivalents of the English terms.

In mass media, translations are often intended as “equivalents” or “near-equivalents” of corresponding English items for particular contexts, even though these translations may sound awkward or imply different meanings in spontaneous conversation. For instance, when a speaker engages in code-switching in television interviews, the English words or phrases are most often replaced by Chinese “equivalents” in the subtitles in accordance with the Standard Chinese literary norm. In radio channels which are supposed to be essentially Cantonese-speaking, hosts and guests alike often present Cantonese translations immediately after they have code-switched to an English word or phrase. These translations are meant to be equivalents to the English items and a method of “medium repair” (Gafaranga 2000). This medium repair may be initiated by the same speaker (e.g. example (1) below) or a collaborating host (e.g. example (2) below), showing an awareness that Cantonese should be used in the programme.⁴

(1) (Context: T, the host, has been talking about the radio programme itself.)

- T 1 Hai6 jat1 go3 internet culture, zik1-hai6 **wu6-lyun4-mong2** **man4-faa3** ge3
 COP one CL internet culture that is internet culture
 2 zit3-muk6⁵
 programme
 ‘(It) is a programme about internet culture.’

(From 原林部落, a programme of Radio Television Hong Kong, Radio 2, broadcast on March 23, 2006)

(2) (Context: The two hosts were talking about a photo a woman put on her weblog, which shows her half-naked.)

- 1 T: keoi5 hai6 bei2-gaa3 giu3-zou6 artistic
 It COP compare call artistic
 ‘It (i.e. the photo) is comparatively (i.e. compared to pornography) artistic’
 2 J: **ai6-soet6-sing3** ge3
 Artistic PRT⁶
 Artistic (in Cantonese)

(From 原林部落, a programme of Radio Television Hong Kong, Radio 2, broadcast on April 11, 2006)

Moreover, an English term may be used not because it means something different from the Cantonese translation equivalent, but because the English language itself conveys certain communicative effects. Lee (2000), who worked on code-switching in Hong Kong fashion magazines, observed that there is perhaps very little meaning difference between *Leather Jacket* and the Chinese item 皮褸 (‘leather jacket’), but the former was used as the title of a feature article because the English font looks attractive (i.e. what Lee (2000) calls the “aesthetic function” of English or code-switching), and somehow conveys a sense of “classics” or “Western-ness” which fits into the image of this particular fashion item (what she calls the ideological function). Elaborating on the ideological function of code-switching, Lee (2000) adds the example of brand names which are always in English or other Western languages, including local brands in Hong Kong. She found that the writers of the magazine articles were hardly aware of code-switching; they were just “quoting” the English names under the influence of the ideology that a product that is fashionable comes from the West and should be represented in English.

These data do not refute the lack of equivalence argument, but they indicate that the idea needs to be contextualized in terms of genres which impose specific requirements on language use. In classroom or the radio shows mentioned above, speakers do need to provide Cantonese translations of the English terms they have introduced. Teachers aim to make the lecture understood among students whose mother tongue is Cantonese, whereas the radio hosts are obliged to show obeisance to the language policy of the radio channel. On the other hand, these discourse purposes are not inherent in spontaneous conversation. In fact, it seems that lack of equivalence characterizes code-switching in spontaneous conversation. The argument is based on observations and reflections on mostly spoken, conversational code-switching (Gibbons 1987; Li and Tse 2002; Luke 1998). In written genres or planned discourse, the style is generally more formal; there is more time for the writer or speaker to come up with translations, if desired, and code-switching is apparently

less appropriate. Although lack of equivalence has also been claimed to motivate written code-switching in the Chinese press (Li 1996; 1998; 2000; 2001), this material consists of advertisements, newspaper columns, and quotations in interviews where a more oral or conversational style has been in place (Li 1996: 34, also see sample texts on pp. 186–9).⁷ Even in conversational code-switching, lack of equivalence may be due to factors prone to variation with different speakers and contexts, other than just a lack of translation equivalents in English and Cantonese. An English term may be more familiar or accessible to a bilingual at the time of speaking; the Cantonese equivalent, if available, may be more familiar to another speaker or more accessible to the same speaker at another time.

Apart from lack of equivalence, other motivations or functions that have been proposed to explain code-switching in Hong Kong may well be genre-specific too. In particular, some motivations seem to be typical of written genres or planned discourse. Li (2000) pointed out that bilingual punning is a motivation of code-switching in Hong Kong. He cited a number of Cantonese slogans in which the code-switched English word *fun* is used to convey its sense in English and simultaneously the meanings of various Cantonese words it is homophonous with, for instance,

- (3) 着 數 有 得 **FUN**(分)
 zoek6-sou3 jau5 dak1 **fan1**
 offer exist obtain **fun (sharing)**
 “There is an offer to **share** and it is **fun**”
 (Li 2000: 315).

This motivation is often associated with planned discourse, such as poetic texts, rather than spontaneous conversation. Punning is a well-thought-out manipulation of words; that is, a speaker does not always come up with all these skilful puns in real-time conversation. Moreover, this kind of bilingual punning as illustrated in Li’s (2000) examples conveys its effects by the juxtaposition of the English alphabets and the Chinese characters. The Cantonese-speaking listeners may not get the English sense if these slogans are spoken when *fun* just sounds a Cantonese word. The recurrence of punning with *fun* in this set of unrelated slogans or advertisements illustrates intertextuality, a typical feature of media texts (Fairclough 1992; 1995), whose objective may well be attention-getting, assuming that the readers have come across prior texts which include the same pun on *fun*.

Another function of code-switching which seems to vary in different genres is identity construction. Based on speakers’ reflections of their code-switching behaviour in everyday interaction, Li and Tse (2002: 181) concluded that identity negotiation (which presupposes identity construction – i.e. speakers projects a certain identity) plays an insignificant role in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, enacting a common cultural identity seems to be a crucial function of code-switching in electronic communication (Fung and Carter 2007; Ho 2006).

The following Cantopop excerpt illustrates how language choice is better explained by genre-specific considerations rather than by lack of equivalence. Deviating from the usual practice in fashion magazines (Lee 2000) or spontaneous conversation (Li and Tse 2002), where English proper names are always chosen over written Chinese or Cantonese, they are indeed translated and pronounced in Cantonese below (i.e. words underlined below), resulting in no switching. The language choice serves to communicate poetic effects in the pop song text within the specific cultural context of Hong Kong (e.g. the **bold** syllables below rhyme with each other).

(4) 給愛麗斯 (For Alice/Für Elise)(2002)

Singer: Eason Chan (陳奕迅)

Composer: Chan Fai-Yeung/Beethoven (陳輝陽/貝多芬)

Lyricist: Lam Chit (林夕)

(Excerpt: the opening lines)

1 給 愛麗斯 但 你 卻 是 愛美斯

kap1 oi3-lai6-**si1**, daan6 nei5 koet3 si6 oi3-mei5-**si1**'For Alice but you are really Amice'

2 華 麗 動 人 又 理 智, 嫌 我 長 得 不 標 緻

waa4-lai6 dong6-jan4 jau6 lei5-**zi3** jim4 ngo5 zoeng5 dak1 bat1 biu1-**zi3**

'(You're) elegant, touching and rational, and you loathe me for being not handsome enough'

3 愛美斯 祝 你 愉 快 找 你 的 湯 告 魯 斯

oi6-mei5-**si1** zuk1 nei5 jyu6-faa13 zaau2 nei5 dik1 tong1-gou3-lou5-**si1**'Amice, (I) wish you happy and you'll find your Tom Cruise'

[Two lines skipped]

4 才 有 這 麼 多 心 機 作 個 愛麗斯 一 起

coi4 jau5 ze2 mo1 do1 sam1 gei1 zok3 go3 oi3-lai6-**si1** jat1 hei5

'So I have thought so much and made up an "Alice" with me'

The choice of Cantonese translations rather than English names is clearly related to properties of the pop song genre; more specifically, many poetic effects and inferences would be lost if these names were pronounced in English. First and foremost, the rhyming with the syllable [si] (i.e. “**si1**”—the rhyming syllables are **bold** above) would be lost without the Cantonese translations, since in English the sound would be just a syllable-final [s] consonant without the [i] vowel (i.e. *Alice*, *Amice*, *Tom Cruise*). Secondly, the whole Cantonese phrase 給愛麗斯 (‘Für Elise’) is popular and well-established in Hong Kong on account of the famous piano piece by Beethoven, and parts of that piece can be heard at the beginning and the end of the song, as well as in the chorus. Using the phrase as the title and the opening (and also the music) may very well be intended to raise the attention of the audience, by virtue of its implicit reference to that prior text that audiences are supposed to be familiar with. Nonetheless, putting the name *Alice* in English would very much destroy this intertextuality. In addition, *Alice* would not sound authentic, since the original phrase is German rather than English. Third, 愛美斯 (‘Amice’) (ll. 1, 3) sounds like a translation of an English name instead of a Cantonese one which consists of two syllables, but it is not quite certain what the English original is. *Amice*, as adopted in the glosses above, sounds close but it seems to be uncommon. On closer scrutiny, this name is a pun. The first two syllables, ‘愛美/oi3-mei5’, literally mean ‘love beauty’ in Cantonese, which suggests that Amice takes great care of her appearance and could only be matched with an attractive male as her boyfriend. The inference fits into the context, in which the male singer chases after a girl named Amice (l. 1). Amice, however, is not satisfied with the look of the singer (l. 2b), and he can only wish her to be happy and to find somebody handsome enough for her liking, that is, her *Tom Cruise* (l. 3). To take revenge on Amice and make her jealous, the singer made up somebody named 愛麗斯 (‘Alice’) who fell in love with him (l. 4). The punning on 愛美 (‘love beauty’) would be lost, should 愛美斯 (‘Amice’) be pronounced in English as *Amice*, although it is not crystal clear whether 愛美斯 (‘Amice’) is exactly a Cantonese translation of an English name. There may be other “weak” inferences (i.e.

indirect, not obvious) which the Cantonese translation 愛麗斯 ('Alice') conveys. For instance, the girl might well be very pretty, an inference drawn from this translation being used as the name of the female character in the animated cartoon show *Popeye the Sailor Man*, the Cantonese version of which was broadcast on Hong Kong television in the 1970s. The English name *Alice* would not convey this inference, since it was not used in the cartoon show and the original English name of that character is *Olive* (*Oyl*) rather than *Alice*.

The conveyance of inferences through poetic forms (i.e. punning, rhyming, parallelism, lexical choice, etc.) is a part of poetic effect (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 217–24, where the inferences are called “weak implicatures”; see also Pilkington 2000). The readers or audiences are encouraged to probe into the implicit, multiple meanings intended in the text through emotional involvement, active connotations and subjective imagination, although it cannot be ascertained whether some of these meanings (or inferences/implicatures) are indeed intended by the writer.

CANTOPOP: A BRIEF SURVEY OF ITS HISTORY AND LANGUAGE

Cantopop is a combination of Cantonese lyrics and more Western melodies (i.e. departing from the “pentatonic” norm of those melodies reminiscent of traditional Cantonese operas) and music background (i.e. the adaptation of rhythm and styles of Western pop songs, with basic instrumentation such as (electronic) piano, keyboard, guitar and drums). Virtually all studies locate the date 1974 as a turning point, after which Cantopop rose to prominence (Ho 2003; McIntyre et al. 2002; Wong 2003, and also works cited in these studies). During that year, the female singer Sandra sang the theme song –啼笑姻緣 ('A marriage with tears and laughter') – for a Cantonese television drama series broadcast on Television Broadcasts Ltd. The television dramas were huge successes, since they were free entertainment in the 1970s, and this bolstered the popularity of many more Cantonese theme songs in television dramas (McIntyre et al. 2002: 29). In the same year, Sam Hui performed in a TVB show singing Cantonese songs that he wrote (composing the melodies and writing the lyrics); since then he has produced many more hits and become a legend in Hong Kong culture. Concomitantly, Radio Two of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), the public broadcast station, started to promote Cantonese songs (Ho 2003: 147). Cantopop dominated Hong Kong culture in the next two decades, when the pop music industry witnessed an unprecedented boom (Wong 2003)⁸ which, aided by the mass media (i.e. television and radio), produced superstars and pop idols such as Alan Tam, Leslie Cheung, Anita Mui, the Four Heavenly Kings (Jacky Cheung, Andy Lau, Leon Lai, and Aaron Kwok), and, more recently, Joey Yung, Eason Chan, and Joe Ku, among others. There has been a downturn in record sales in the 2000s, and, interestingly, McIntyre et al. (2002) and Wong (2003) diverged in their forecasts regarding Cantopop. The former study is optimistic: the authors think that Cantopop will survive the cultural influence and assimilation from mainland China, whereas the latter anticipates an imminent revival of Mando-pop (i.e. Mandarin pop), produced in Taiwan and the mainland, at the expense of Cantopop.⁹

The emergence of a local Hong Kong culture, of which Cantopop is an integral part, and a local “Hong Konger” identity in the 1970s is not mere coincidence. The underlying reason was that Hong Kong had been a British colony, leading to its political and economic separation from mainland China. The immediate reasons, as McIntyre et al. (2002)

summarized in detail, are dramatic political, economic, and demographic changes that took place in the 1960s. Politically, after the riots in 1969 incited by supporters of Communist China, the colonial government of Hong Kong implemented new policies which fostered a sense of local identity in contrast with a Chinese identity, including the “Clean Hong Kong” campaign and the promotion of Cantonese-language broadcasting (television and radio). In terms of demographics, there was a huge influx of immigrants from China in 1960s. Following the economic boom in 1970s, a new generation of youth emerged. Unlike those in the previous generation for whom Hong Kong was treated as a transit port for subsequent immigration to other countries, this new generation was born and raised in Hong Kong and came to treat Hong Kong as home, with a sense of belonging. Economic prosperity in the 1970s and 1980s also provided the capital and demand for the entertainment industry.

The existence of a local “Hong Konger” identity has been evidenced by many ethnographic surveys in which respondents claim that they are “Hong Kongers”. Many of these Hong Kongers also claim that they are Chinese as well. In data presented by Bolton and Luke (1998: 168), for instance, 29.7 per cent of the respondents claimed that they were Hong Kong Chinese; 40.5 per cent of respondents claimed that they were Hong Kong citizens; 20.1 per cent of respondents declared that they were Chinese; and only 8.7 per cent of subjects chose the label of British Hong Kong. The majority of Hong Kong people do seem to identify themselves as “Hong Kongers”, but they may or may not consider themselves as Chinese, whereas least people conceive themselves as British Hong Kong(ers). The “Hong Konger” identity is hence not identical to a “Chinese” identity: the two identities are different, and yet they may overlap with each other. The “Hong Konger” identity nevertheless seems very different from a “British” or a “Westerner” identity. In sum, “Hong Konger” is a local identity to be distinguished from “Chinese” or “British”, yet there is scant evidence to suggest that it is a hybrid identity of “British” and “Chinese” (Chan 2007).

The main concern of scholarly interest in Cantopop lyrics has been the ways in which the rise and decline of Cantopop and the lyrics reflect the social, cultural, and political developments of Hong Kong society in the past three decades (Ho 2000; 2003; McIntyre et al. 2002; Wong 2003). However, few works have looked into the language of Cantopop in the light of sociolinguistics or pragmatics, apart from a few recent master’s dissertations on code-switching (mainly Cantonese–English) in Cantopop (Chan 2003; Fung 2003).

The language of Cantopop is characterized by its hybridity. Cantopop is sung in Cantonese pronunciation, but in terms of grammar and lexis the language is essentially Standard Written Chinese (McIntyre et al. 2002: 227; Wong 2003: 133–4) or a more formal style of Cantonese which Luke (1998) calls “High Cantonese”. Vernacular Cantonese does occur in some songs, but its presence is marked and often felt to be humorous.¹⁰ Secondly, as indicated in the corpus, English appeared in the very early songs in the 1970s,¹¹ and has assumed more presence ever since in terms of its form in a single song (i.e. one single word to a whole paragraph). Here comes the paradox. On one hand, Cantopop conforms to the general literary norm in Chinese communities – that is, Standard Written Chinese, the more prestigious and formal variety, is used; and yet, on the other hand, it contains an increasing amount of English or code-switching which is not consistent with this norm or style. While Cantopop is a hybrid genre in many ways (e.g. Cantonese lyrics and Western music, Cantonese pronunciation and Standard Chinese lexis and grammar), which potentially allows for code-switching, the formation of a Standard Chinese norm and the prevalence of English in Cantopop still call for an explanation. In particular, English has been used as a “High” language for outgroup communication, and the motivation of learning English is

basically instrumental rather than integrative (Li 1999). Cantopop, however, is a symbol of Hong Kong culture and identity, and the use of English in Cantopop is not quite consistent with its macro status and functions in Hong Kong. One possible explanation is that the English elements are deliberately included to convey certain rhetorical or communicative effects, in a way similar to vernacular Cantonese, which is often used to convey a sense of humour or a particular image of the singer (see above and note 10). What is interesting is that, in general, English seems to be used even more frequently and extensively than vernacular Cantonese, which appears less and less frequently in recent songs.

ENGLISH IN CANTOPOP: CODE-SWITCHING AND THE POP SONG GENRE

A corpus of Cantopop with English elements was collected randomly from website archives¹² in 2004. The songs were included in records released from 1970s to 2003. Random sampling was intended to include pop songs which involve various singers, composers, lyricists, themes and styles, so that code-switching patterns irrespective of these factors may be uncovered. In this section, the discourse functions of English and code-switching in Cantopop are illustrated by a sample which includes earlier songs and more recent ones. All the songs cited in this paper have been double-checked with alternative sources, such as albums and music television (MTV) clips on YouTube.

As discussed in the preceding section, the language choice of Cantonese translations is deliberate, with a view to conveying poetic effects such as rhyming and inferences, and attracting audiences by virtue of intertextuality. These effects are due to the “poetic” nature of the pop song genre: words have to fit into a certain melodic and rhythmic structure, and language form (i.e. patterns of sound and sentence structure) helps to convey “poetic effects” and/or “inferences”. Inferences are also communicated, albeit indirectly, by intertextual references to prior texts. These prior texts are mostly other media texts such as television programmes, movies, and pieces of music. Likewise, it may be deduced that the choice of English in Cantopop (thus resulting in code-switching) creates poetic effects and intertextual links, conveying inferences or implicatures. This hypothesis is supported by the following examples from the corpus.

Example (5), from Sam Hui, shows a code-switched English word, *friend*, which nearly rhymes with Cantonese words in the following lines.¹³ All the rhymed syllables are the final word in the lines (**bold** words/syllables below):

- (5) 跟佢做個 friend (Take her as a friend) (1983)
 Singer/Lyricist/Composer: Sam Hui (許冠傑)
 (Excerpt: the opening lines)
- 1 跟 佢 做 個 **friend**
 gan1 keoi5 zou6 go3 **friend**
 ‘Take her as a friend’
- 2 驚 都 咪 駛 驚
 geng1 dou1 mai3 sai2 **geng1**
 ‘There’s nothing to fear’
- 3 我 要 執 得 好 正
 ngo4 jiu3 zap1 dak1 hou2 **zeng3**
 ‘I’ll dress myself up’

4 著 靚 衫 反 起 領

zoek3 leng3 saam1 faan2 hei2 **leng5**

'I'll put on nice clothes and put up the collars'

In this case, the Cantonese translation *pang4 jau5/朋友* ('friend') would not make the rhyme; also, the two syllables would disrupt the melodic or metrical structure. In addition, the code-switched English word suggests a number of inferences with reference to the context; it does not exactly mean a 'friend' but a 'girlfriend' the singer intends to date, and perhaps the singer is also telling himself that it is no big deal if the girl turns him down – she is just a friend, after all. Code-switching here serves to highlight a word, hinting at some special, additional meaning intended – the idea of “metaphorical code-switching” (Gumperz 1982). Moreover, the code-switched word *friend* fits into the conversational, vernacular Cantonese style in which this song is written. For example, the pronoun *keoi5/佢* ('s/he') should be *taa1/她* ('s/he') in Standard Written Chinese, but *pang4 jau5/朋友* ('friend') sounds much more formal; this is a case of mimicry of expedience code-mixing (Luke 1998: see above).

In example (6) below, another song from Sam Hui, the English words (proper names this time) also rhyme with the Cantonese words in surrounding lines. The English syllables *Kong* and *Bond* in line 3 rhyme with *dong1/嚙* and *tong4/糖* in line 1, *long5/朗* in line 2, and *dong3/檔* in line 4 (i.e. **bold** syllables below).¹⁴

(6) 最佳拍檔 (Best Partners) (1982)

Singer/Lyricist/Composer: Sam Hui (許冠傑)

(Excerpt: the opening lines)

1 你 名 叫 叮 嚙 個 樣 似 蜜 糖
nei5 meng2 giu3 ding1-**dong1** go3 joeng2 ci5 mat6-**tong4**

'Your name is "Ding Dong" your face is like honey'

2 平 易 近 人 清 新 開 朗
ping4 ji6 gan6 jan4 cing1-san1 hoi1-**long5**

'[You're] friendly, refreshing and bright'

3 我 名 叫 King **Kong** 個 款 似 James **Bond**
ngo5 meng2 giu3 King **Kong** go3 fun2 ci5 James **Bond**

'My name is King Kong; my appearance is like James Bond's'

4 最 佳 拍 檔
zeoi3 gaai1 paak3-**dong3**

'(We're) best partners.'

In this case, however, rhyming is arguably not the chief motivation for choosing the code-switched English items. The Cantonese translations, such as *gam1 gong1/金剛* ('King Kong') or *zim1 si6 bong1/占士邦* ('James Bond') (the latter is familiar to Hong Kong Chinese) also rhyme, and in the latter case *bong1* even rhymes better than *Bond* (see notes 13 and 14). What renders *King Kong* more appropriate is intertextuality: It is the name of the male character in the movie – *Ace Go Places* (最佳拍檔)¹⁵ – of which example (6) is the theme song. The male character happened to be played by Sam Hui as well in that movie. As for the second instance, the use of Cantonese, namely, *zim1 si6 bong1* ('James Bond'), would disrupt the melodic or metrical structure, since *zim1 si6* ('James') take two syllables rather than one. The two proper names here are metaphorical expressions implying

characteristics of people with their respective intertextual origins: *King Kong* alludes to the giant ape in a series of American movies,¹⁶ and in this Hong Kong movie suggests the strength of the male character. *James Bond*, on the other hand, alludes to the famous British spy “007” portrayed in movies as well, and suggests that the male character is handsome. In this connection, we can see further that the two proper names are in contrast. Whereas the singer is as strong as *King Kong*, his appearance is more like *James Bond* rather than the ugly ape (l. 3). In a sense, code-switching of *James Bond* highlights this contrast: By code-switching the two proper names, *King Kong* and *James Bond* are foregrounded as contrastive focus, whereby the latter cancels a possible inference or implicature of the former, namely, ‘King Kong is ugly’. Code-switching here marks information structure (i.e. background vs. foreground information, given vs. new information), a function which has seldom been touched on in the code-switching literature (but see B. Chan 2003; 2004, where code-switching is viewed as primarily a “textualization cue” which marks parts of a text with different textual status). Example (7) below is another illustration, and a more recent song, in which two English lines are foregrounded by code-switching and the contrast of meaning between these two lines is highlighted:

(7) Lonely Christmas (Song title in English) (2002)

Singer: Eason Chan (陳奕迅)

Composer/Lyricist: Lee Chun-Yat (李峻一)

(Excerpt: opening lines of the chorus)

1 Merry Merry Christmas

2 Lonely Lonely Christmas

3 人 浪 中 想 真 心 告 白

jan4 long6 zong1 soeng2 zan1 sam1 gou3 baak6

‘(I) want to tell you my feelings in the crowds’

4 但 你 只 想 聽 聽 笑 話

daan6 nei5 zi2 soeng2 ting1 ting1 siu3 waa2

‘but you just want to hear some jokes’

The song describes the male singer having broken up with his girlfriend on Christmas Day. *Merry Christmas* (l. 1), a formulaic phrase, sounds like what most people would say and what the singer would hear on this day, but *Lonely Christmas* (l. 2) is what the singer is really feeling right now.

The form of poetic texts includes regular patterns of not only sounds (e.g. rhymes or rhyming scheme) but also sentence structure of the lines. In example (8) below, the English *I believe* alternates with a clause in Cantonese, a complement of ‘believe’ in grammatical terms in line 1, with elaboration in line 2. The same sentence structure and code-switching pattern repeat in line 3 and 4, constituting parallelism.

(8) I believe (song title in English) (2002)

Singer: Barry Yip (葉文輝)

Composer: Kim Hyung-Seok/Shin Seung-Hoon¹⁷

Lyricist: Yan Kin-Keung (甄健強)

(Excerpt: the opening)

- 1 I believe 誰 亦 有 動 過 真 心
soei4 jik6 jau5 dong6 gwo3 zan1-sam1
'I believe you and I have moved our hearts'
- 2 竟 然 可 留 下 結 局 最 傷 心
ging2 jing4 ho2 lau4 haa6 gik3-guk6 zeoi3 soeng1-sam1
'astonishingly, we had ending most heart-breaking'
- 3 I believe 誰 亦 有 為 愛 犧 牲
soei4 jik6 jau5 wai6 oi3 hei1-sang1
'I believe you and I have sacrificed for love'
- 4 是 否 就 能, 能 令 你 做 最 開 心
si6 fau2 zau6 nang4, nang4 ling6 nei5 zou6 zeoi3 hoi1-sam1
'(but,) is that enough to make you happy?'

The pattern of repetition or parallelism is a well-known one in poetry, anaphora (Leech 1969: 80).¹⁸ The repeated element (a), here expressed in English, is followed by the varying element (b), here expressed in Cantonese, and the pattern (ab) is repeated. In addition, the English *I believe* is also the name of a popular Korean popular song on which this Cantopop is based. Again, English in the title and the opening of the song here serves as an “eye/ear-catcher” via intertextuality. Furthermore, given this piece of information, we can see that *I believe* is a prior text, which is exploited in this excerpt: the English stretch serves as theme which carries given information, whereas the Cantonese parts serve as rheme which introduces new information. The delineation of given and new information is another way in which code-switching marks information structure, apart from contrastive focus as already discussed in examples (6) and (7) above.

Whereas the English elements in example (5) to (7) above mark highlighted or foregrounded information against the backdrop of Cantonese, in example (9) below, English marks background information in line 2, this time from the back-up voices (transcribed in brackets) in contrast with the main voice singing in Cantonese.

(9) 天才白癡錢錢錢 (Genius, idiot, money, money and money) (1974)

Singer: Sam Hui (許冠傑)

Composer: Sam Hui (許冠傑)

Lyrics: Sam Hui/Sit Chi-Hung (許冠傑/薛志雄)

(Excerpt: first and second stanzas)

- 1 成 日 要 錢 多 (錢 錢 錢 錢)...
seng4 jat6 jiu3 cin2 do1 (cin1 cin1 cin1 cin1)
'[You] always want to have much money (money, money, money, money)'
[3 lines skipped]
- 2 貧 賤 拗 頸 多 (No money no talk, No money no talk)
pan4 zin6 aau3 geng2 do1, (No money no talk, no money no talk)
'In poverty there would be lots of quarrels (between husband and wife)'
- 3 生 仔 都 諗 過 (No money no talk, No money no talk)
sang1 zai2 dou1 nam2 gwo3
'Having a baby, you need to consider carefully'
- 4 阿 女 嗆 肚 餓 (No money no talk, No money no talk)
aa3 nei2 aai3 tou2 o6
'Imagine your daughter was crying and hungry'

- 5 屋租都要拖 (No money no talk, No money no talk)
 uk1 zou1 dou1 jiu3 to1
 ‘And you had to delay paying rents’

The song depicts somebody who strives to earn more money for his family, most probably from the perspective of an average worker in 1970s, when the Hong Kong economy started to boom. The back-up voices strengthen or amplify the main voice rather than presenting disagreement. Here, a distinctive property of lyrics texts is exploited, namely, the optional coexistence of the main voice and the back-up voices. What is more interesting is that the English parts in line 2, in speaking of the importance of *money*, are also a paraphrase of the back-up voices in line 1, thus presenting a case of elegant repetition/variation. Moreover, the English phrase *No money no talk* does not sound idiomatic, but it closely parallels the Cantonese phrase *mou5 cin2 mou5 dak1 king1/冇錢冇得傾* (lit. ‘no money, no can talk’, i.e. ‘There will be no discussion without money’). This pidgin-like expression¹⁹ repeated again and again creates a “chatterbox” style, instilling a sense of humour which illustrates the ludic function of code-switching (Kachru 2006).

Example (10), written about three decades later, follows a very similar pattern in which the back-up voices sing in English supporting the main lines.

- (10) 第一類接觸 (Encounter of the first kind)²⁰ (2002)
 Composer: John Williams/Cheung Gai-Tim (張佳添)
 Lyrics: Wong King-Pei (黃敬佩)
 Singer: Eason Chan (陳奕迅)
 (Excerpt: Opening lines of the chorus)
- 1 我 穿 梭 時 空 (from Alabama to Macau and Okinawa to Lantau)
 ngo5 cyun1-sol si1-hung1
 ‘I’ve travelled through time and space’
- 2 似 千 里 尋 凶 (from Argentina to Iran and Barcelona To Iraq)
 ci5 cin1-lei5-cam4-hung1
 ‘Like tracking down a murderer in a thousand miles’
- 3 我 消 息 靈 通 (from California to Guangzhou and Yokohama to
 Cheung Chau)
 ngo5 siu1-sik1 ling4-tung1
 ‘I’ve got reliable information’
- 4 明 日 就 要 抱 起 你
 ming4-jat6 zau6 jiu3 pou5 hei2 nei5
 ‘Tomorrow, (I’m going to) hold you’
- 5 我 想 起 都 失 控
 ngo5 soeng2 hei5 dou1 sat1-hung3
 ‘I can’t control myself when I think of this’

The singer has been desperately wandering around and looking for a girl he came across before. The English lines are metaphorical in illustrating almost exaggeratedly how obsessed the singer has been with the unidentified girl, rather than literally telling where he has been. An interesting point is that in these lines some proper names are Chinese places, namely, *Macau* (the ex-Portuguese colony near Hong Kong) and *Lantau* (where

Hong Kong international airport is now located) in line 1, *Guangzhou* (the major city in Guangdong province adjoining Hong Kong), and *Cheung Chau* (another outlying island of Hong Kong apart from Lantau) in line 3, which might well be more appropriately represented in Cantonese. The choice of English, leading to borrowing from Cantonese, may well be intended to preserve the form of code-switching, that is, main lines in Cantonese vs. back-up in English. Moreover, the representation of Chinese place names in English, coupled with the quick tempo in which the English lines are sung and the rhyming of these place names (e.g. *Alabama* and *Okinawa*, *Macau* and *Lantau* in line 1, as observed in Fung 2003), generates a comical atmosphere, conveying a “chatterbox” style similar to that of the English lines in example (9). Again, example (10) illustrates the ludic function of code-switching (Kachru 2006).

Another very common pattern in Cantopop is that Cantonese switches to English at the opening of the chorus (or refrain). The chorus itself is supposed to be highlighted information which expresses the key ideas of the whole song, the elated emotion or feeling of the singer, often repeating again. Code-switching adds emphasis or salience to the chorus where the English lines carry the main thrust of the lyrics. Example (7) above, in which the two English lines are code-switched for contrastive focus, is an illustration of this pattern. Example (11) below is another illustration in which the code-switching pattern is also reminiscent of the above examples in various ways. Like examples (5) and (6) above, English words rhyme with Cantonese ones, according to the rhyming scheme which involve the last words of the phrases (i.e. **bold** words below which end with [ɪŋ]). Like example (8) above, English marks the first halves of the lines, followed by Cantonese which carries the second halves, forming parallelism. Moreover, the repeated element (a) is encoded in English, whereas the varying element (b) is encoded in Cantonese, fitting into the poetic pattern of anaphora (Leech 1969).

(11) 我來自北京 (I came from Beijing) (1992)

Composer: Keith

Lyricist: Lau Cheuk-Fai (劉卓輝)

Singer: Leon Lai (黎明)

(Excerpt: The opening lines of chorus)

- 1 I, I, I was born in **Beijing** 不 知 命 運 是 誰 定
 bat1 zil ming6 wan6 si6 seoi4 **ding6**
 ‘(I) don’t know who decides (my) destiny’
- 2 I, I, I was born in **Beijing** 示 愛 不 便 說 清
 si6 oi3 bat1 bin6 syut3 **cing1**
 ‘(I) don’t want to talk about my love clearly’
- 3 I, I, I was born in **Beijing** 偏 偏 浪 漫 熱 情 任 性
 pin1 pin1 long6 maan6 jit6 cing4 jam6 **sing3**
 ‘(I’m) romantic, passionate and uninhibited’
- 4 I, I, I was born in **Beijing** 沒 法 一 夜 說 清 一 生 背 景
 mut6 fat3 jat1 je6 syut3 cing1 jat1 sang1 bui3 **ging2**
 ‘(I) can’t tell you all my past in one night’

The song depicts the male singer approaching a girl, who somehow has not decided to accept him. In this excerpt he is trying to tell the girl more about himself. Interestingly, the English lines tell the background of the singer in reality: Leon Lai, one of the Four

Heavenly Kings who enjoyed huge popularity in the 1990s, was indeed born in Beijing, and he came to Hong Kong in his teens. Given that the Cantonese language symbolizes a local “Hong Konger” identity, that is, somebody who is born and raised in Hong Kong (Hyland 1997; Lai 2001), English articulates a different identity, one alternative to the majority of “Hong Kongers”. However, this identity is very unlikely to be a Western or anglicized one, since an ethnic Chinese born in Beijing such as Leon Lai is hardly considered a “Westerner”.

Example (12) below is a much more recent song from another singer and lyricist, and yet it shares many similarities with example (11). Again, the last words of the English lines rhyme with those of the Cantonese lines (i.e. **bold** words below, the rhyme being [ei] in this case). Code-switching overlaps with the chorus, and English is used for self-expression of the singer. Coincidentally, the singer Hins Cheung is not a local “Hong Konger” either: He was born and raised in Guangzhou (i.e. Canton), and came to Hong Kong to pursue his career as a singer. What is more, he always identifies himself as a “Guangzhou person” (*Guangzhou ren/廣州人*) rather than a “Hong Konger” (*Hoeng1 gong2 jan4/香港人*) in public in pop chart award ceremonies.

(12) My way (Cantonese version) (song title in English) (2005)

- Singer: Hins Cheung (張敬軒)
 Composer: Hins Cheung (張敬軒)
 Lyricist: Wu Fong-Fong (胡芳芳)
 (Excerpt: opening lines of the chorus)
- 1 I will find my **way**
 2 I want a different **way**
 3 我 那 用 去 歎 氣
 ngo5 na5 jong6 heoi3 taan3 **hei3**
 ‘I don’t need to sigh’
 4 高 溫 載 我 起 飛
 Gou1 wan1 zoi3 ngo5 hei2 **fei1**
 ‘I’ll fly in high temperature’

The song is in a sense autographical, as the singer recollects his childhood memories. The chorus as excerpted in (12) declares that the singer is determined to keep his faith, to develop his own character, and to face difficulties himself. This content recalls the well-known Frank Sinatra classic “My way”, to which the English title “My way” of example (12) supposedly alludes. In this context, it is more likely that the English lines in (12) serve as a symbol of an “individual” and “self-assertive” identity (Lee 2004) rather than the singer’s origin as a person from “Guangzhou”. Again, English does not symbolize a “Westerner” identity but deviance – a refusal to succumb to pressure and challenges.

In examples (11) and (12), English diverges a long way from the earlier Sam Hui songs (examples (5), (6), (9) above, and also example (10) from Eason Chan), where it sounds funny and humorous, or those songs in which English marks background information (i.e. examples (9) and (10)). Examples (11) and (12) are also different from example (7), although the English 1st person pronoun, *I*, is also used there. In example (7), the English phrase *I believe* looks more of an attention-getter by virtue of its intertextual link to the Korean-pop with the same name. In examples (11) and (12), the English lines are meant for declaring the identity of the singers. Presumably, the variation and change of the forms

and functions of English in Cantopop fit into another property of pop songs. Pop songs are a product of pop culture, in which novel ways of expression are continuously sought and different identities are portrayed, often in opposition to dominant ones (Burton 2005).

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to provide a general understanding of the functions of Cantonese–English code-switching in a corpus of Cantopop. It is suggested that those motivations that have been proposed to explain Cantonese–English code-switching – in particular, lack of equivalence – are insufficient to account for the Cantopop data. First, these motivations fail to capture the fact that code-switching may serve functions closely related to the pop song genre (i.e. its form, text structure, and discourse purpose). Secondly, these motivations overlook the multi-functionality of code-switching; more specifically, any instance of code-switching may be motivated by more than one reason, and it may communicate a series of effects.

From a corpus of Cantopop which contain English elements, I have shown examples in which the choice of Cantonese translations (i.e. no code-switching, as in (4)) or English elements (i.e. resulting in code-switching, as in (5)–(12)) is closely related to the properties of the pop song genre. In particular, pop song lyrics are poetic texts, and code-switching acts as a poetic device whereby English words fit into the rhyming scheme and rhyme with Cantonese words (5, 6, 11, and 12). Alternatively, code-switching marks parts of pop song lyrics in ways which reflect the text structure of these lyrics, such as line divisions (8 and 11), the entry of chorus (7, 11, and 12), and the division between the main voice and the back-up voices (9 and 10).

English conveys various functions and meanings in this sample of Cantopop. English words may mimic vernacular Cantonese with code-switching (example 5), or convey inferences by recalling some other media texts, such as other songs or movies (6, 8, and 12). The English lines may be foregrounded information (5, 6, 7, 11, and 12), but they can also carry background information (9 and 10). English may be used for serious expression of the singers' self, feelings, and desires (7, 11, and 12), but it may convey a sense of humour and playfulness (9 and 10). English may be symbolic, showing the singer differentiating himself from others (11 and 12), but it may function as primarily a poetic device (5–10).

Notwithstanding the variety of genre-related functions it plays in Cantopop, English does not often appear to convey identity-related meanings in this genre. Where identity is seemingly conveyed, as in examples (11) and (12), English does not index a “Westerner” or anglicized identity which is commonly associated with the language in Hong Kong society (Lee 2000). The dissociation between English and its common connotations appears to reflect some degree of indigenization or nativization of English such that it is not necessarily seen as “a language of Westerners” or “a language of others”. Nevertheless, we may notice that pop songs are part of pop culture, in which mainstream representations and ideologies (including language ideologies) may be challenged or subverted (Burton 2005).

The overall picture of Cantopop as presented here resembles that of pop music in other areas (Davis and Bentahila 2008; Lee 2004; Sarker and Winer 2006), in which code-switching acts as a poetic device but the languages may or may not index identities. Even though English may be used to project identity or other symbolic values, these meanings are not necessarily related to a “Westerner” identity or a “Western” culture (Pennycook

2003). Further research on Cantopop is needed to provide a more in-depth understanding of the role of English in identity construction and other issues such as globalization and sub-types of pop music (hip-hop, rap, etc.) – topics which have already been taken up by researchers working on code-switching in pop music (Bentahila and Davis 2002; Davis and Bentahila 2006; Lee 2006; Omoniyi 2006; Pennycook 2003; Sarker et al. 2005; Sarker and Winer 2006).

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NOTES

1. In this paper, I use “code-switching” as a cover term to refer to both intersentential and intrasentential alternation of languages, following e.g. Gumperz (1982), Heller (1988), Milroy and Muysken (1995), Myers-Scotton (1993, 2006).
2. The fuzziness of word meaning is well established in semantics, as expounded in prototype theory and, more recently, cognitive linguistics (Taylor 1995). The ways in which word meaning is conveyed in different contexts has been dealt with in lexical pragmatics (Wilson 2004).
3. Code-switching by secondary school teachers has been considered the culprit responsible for the declining English standards of Hong Kong students, and it has been officially banned by the Hong Kong government (Li 1999; Lin 1996).
4. Transcriptions of Cantonese in this paper follow Linguistic Society of Hong Kong (1997).
5. COP = copula verb; CL = classifier.
6. PRT = sentence-final particle.
7. Lock (2003) gives an account of the symbolic meanings of different language choices, including code-switching, in Hong Kong advertisements, although these advertisements are large ones found on MTR (Mass Transit Railway) platforms instead of those in the Chinese press. Wu (2000) discusses the functions of orality features in Hong Kong newspaper, in particular, the use of vernacular Cantonese, but she does not address the issue of code-switching.
8. This dissertation, written by a well-known lyricist before his passing away, is accessible electronically for research purposes on the library website of the Hong Kong University (<http://library.hku.hk>). It is written in Chinese.
9. The Mandarin pop songs were actually dominant alongside English pop songs in the 1960s (e.g. songs of the Beatles, the Bee Gees, Simon and Garfunkel, the Carpenters), before the rise of Cantopop.
10. A detailed account of the use and functions of vernacular Cantonese in Cantopop is beyond the scope of this paper. Briefly, Sam Hui’s early songs tend to use Cantonese when the theme is non-romantic and humorous, with the lyrics normally depicting the lives of an average, underprivileged worker in the 1970s – a use that somehow “exploits” and fits into the “vernacular” status of the language. Some other lyricists have occasionally put more Cantonese lexis into the songs without conveying a particular “style”, but the practice has not been well received (Wong 1997).
11. This is in contrast with English in Korean pop, which has appeared more recently (Lee 2004: 429).
12. The website archives consulted include the following: <http://www.coolmanmusic.com>, <http://www.boxup.com>, <http://www.lesliecheung.cc/album/discography.htm>, <http://www.leonnation.com/licd.htm>, and http://www.geocities.com/starlightxpres/alb_cantoB5.htm.
13. There is actually a difference between the rhyme in *friend* (i.e. [ɛnd]) and the rhyme of the Cantonese words (i.e. [ɛŋ]) in their final consonants. Nonetheless, there are no consonant clusters in Cantonese, and hence [nd] does not contrast with [ŋ].
14. *Bond* (1. 3) sounds close to a rhyme, although the coda is different from that of the Cantonese words, [nd] instead of [ŋ]. There is no consonant cluster, such as [nd], in Cantonese. See note 13 above.
15. The movie was released in 1982 by Cinema City Film Productions (新藝城影業有限公司).
16. The classic movie *King Kong* was released in 1933 by RKO Radio Pictures (directors: Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack). There have been a number of sequels, the latest one being released in 2005 by Big Primate Pictures and Universal Pictures (director: Peter Jackson).
17. This Cantopop is a rewrite of a Korean popular song, hence Korean composers.
18. This sense of anaphora in poetics is to be distinguished from another sense used in linguistics, meaning pronouns referring to elements in previous text.
19. A similar English expression which can be traced to influence of Chinese or Cantonese is *Long time no see*.

20. Fung (2003) translated the title aptly as ‘Close encounters of the first kind’, but she did not mention that the song has its intertextual links to the Stephen Spielberg movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and the first three lines in this excerpt are actually fitted into the theme from its soundtrack music composed by John Williams– the five notes *re me do do so*.

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