ON DETERMINING MATRIX LANGUAGE OF CODE-SWITCHING BETWEEN SOUTHERN MIN AND MANDARIN

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ABSTRACT
This paper asks whether there is a universally applicable code-switching model. To answer this question, Myers-Scotton’s (2002) Matrix Language Frame model was tested with Southern Min/Mandarin code-switched data. The results showed that the two criteria (i.e. the morpheme order principle and the system morpheme principle) proposed to identify the matrix language in this model were found inapplicable. This is because Southern Min and Mandarin share most of their morphosyntactic structure and have a limited amount of inflectional morphology. To solve this theoretical problem, one supporting theory of the matrix language frame model (i.e. the uniform structure principle) and other possible criteria were also tested, but they were not successful. With the re-introduction of an additional criterion (i.e. the morpheme counting principle) to identify the matrix language, this study proposes a revised version of the matrix language frame model which was applied to re-analyze the Southern Min/Mandarin code-switched data. The results show that the matrix languages of 92.63% of the Southern Min/Mandarin bilingual clauses (340 in total) were unambiguously identified. This suggests that unlike

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the original model, the revised version of the matrix language frame model is able to cover a wider range of code-switched data (i.e. both typologically similar and different language pairs). With the empirical success of the original matrix language frame model reported in the previous literature and the success of additional principle proposed to particularly analyse code-switched data of a typologically similar language pair (Southern Min and Mandarin), this study argues that the revised version of the matrix language frame model is universally applicable.

KEYWORDS
Mandarin  Southern Min  Code-switching  The Matrix Language Frame Model

1. INTRODUCTION

Code-switching behaviour is one of the most common results of language contact and has been studied by scholars from various disciplines. Two frequently asked research questions in the study of code-switching are: (1) Why do people switch between different codes? (2) How do people code-switch? Linguists (e.g. Fishman 1965; Heller 1992) who want to answer the why question often investigate the relationship between code-switched utterances and certain extra-linguistic variables (e.g. social settings and role relations, ethnic or political factors, etc). Practitioners of the conversational analysis approach (e.g. Gumperz 1982; Auer 2005; Li Wei 2005) discuss this question by investigating the conversational functions and social meanings of code-switching.

Researchers who intend to answer the how question believe that code-switching is rule-governed and apply major syntactic theories, such as government theory (DiSciullo, Muysken, and Singh 1986), a null theory (Mahootian 1993), or a minimalist programme approach (Macswan 1999; 2000), to examine the grammatical structures of code-switched utterances and to investigate how switched elements occur in a given discourse. However, most of these syntactic approaches either were found to have theoretical problems or were rejected by reported empirical code-switched data. Among various structural approaches, the Matrix Language Frame model proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993/1997; 2002) is
probably the most prominent one. As Myers-Scotton (2006: 249) argues, 
‘the matrix language frame model is generally supported across various
sets of code-switched data reported in other studies, with only a few
apparent exceptions…We stress the universality of support, no matter
which languages are involved’. This model has achieved great empirical
success when being tested with code-switched data involving different
language pairs e.g. Swahili/English (Myers-Scotton 1993/1997),
German/English (Fuller and Lehnert 2000), Mandarin/English (Wei 2001),
Spanish/English (Jake, Myers-Scotton, and Gross 2002), Tsou/Mandarin
(Wang 2007), etc. What these language pairs have in common are that
they are all typologically different languages (in terms of their word order)
and arguably at least one of the participating languages has
a comparatively complex system of inflectional morphology.

The aim of this study is to test the matrix language frame model with
reference to the Southern Min/Mandarin code-switched data. Mandarin and
Southern Min are two typologically very similar languages which share
most of their syntax (both are SVO languages) although they differ
significantly in phonology and vocabulary. Both are isolating languages and
only have a very limited amount of inflectional morphology. To my
knowledge, the matrix language frame model has not yet been tested by
typologically similar language pairs of such kind. The linguistic nature of
these two languages may pose some interesting challenges. By testing this
model with Southern Min/Mandarin data, this study aims to answer the
question: Is there any universally applicable code-switching model?

2. THE MATRIX LANGUAGE FRAME MODEL
2.1 A Bilingual Clause as the Basic Unit of Analysis

The term code-switching has been studied and defined from
various perspectives. A distinction is generally made between
intra-sentential code-switching (i.e. switches that occur within a clause or
sentence) and inter-sentential code-switching (i.e. switches that appear
between clauses or sentences). The matrix language frame model
specifically looks at intra-sentential code-switching and uses a bilingual
clause, namely a clause that contains one or more morphemes from more
than one language, as the basic unit of analysis. Examples of a bilingual
clause are provided in (1) and (2):

ZABRODSKAJA, Anastassia. 2009. Evaluating the matrix language
frame model on the basis of a Russian-Estonian codeswitching

普通話与閩南話的語碼轉換：主題語判定理論之探討
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提要
本研究之目的在于寻找一个能适用于各种不同语言特性之语码转换
(code-switching) 理论。为达此目的, 我们利用普通话及闽南话之语码
转换语料, 来测试 Myers-Scotton (2002) 所提出的「主体语结构模式理
论 (The Matrix Language Frame Model)」。但测试结果发现, 该理论中
用来确认主体语的两项指标: 「词序原则 (the morpheme order
principle)」及「系统词素原则 (the system morpheme principle)」皆无法
适用于普通话及闽南话的转换语料。由于此两种语言在句法结构上有
极高的相似性, 且在屈折型态学 (inflectional morphology) 上的特性亦不
明显, 因而凸显出该理论无法处理句法、型态相似的语码转换语料的
缺陷。本研究尝试采用结构一致性原则 (the uniform structure principle)
及其他的替代方案, 但都无法有效确认普通话及闽南话转换语料的主
体语。因此, 我们在该理论的原有基础上稍作修正, 加入另一个确认
主体语的指标: 「词素计算原则 (the morpheme counting principle)」来
分析相同语料。分析结果显示：在总数 340 个包含普通话及闽南话的
双语子句中, 有 92.63%的子句之主体语能被清楚确认。由于现有的文
献指出, 原有的「主体语结构模式理论」已成功通过许多在句法、型
态上差异性大的语码转换语料的检测, 本研究所提出的修正版本更强
化了该理论, 使其亦能涵盖语言结构具高度相似性的语料。因此, 我
们认为本研究所提出「主体语结构模式理论」修正版本, 可适用于各
种不同语言所构成的语码转换语料。

关键词
普通话 闽南话 语码转换 主体语结构模式理论