

A Discourse Analysis of Code-Switching in *Falling Leaves* and *Luoyeguigen* (落葉歸根)

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This study examines two language versions of Adeline Yen Mah's autobiography, namely, an English version, *Falling Leaves*, and a Mandarin Chinese version, *Luoyeguigen* 落葉歸根. Unlike many other translated autobiographies, the writer herself translated her English work (*Falling Leaves*) into Chinese for Taiwanese readers. Thus, this study can examine how the writer intentionally code switches between Chinese and English to reveal her different identities to readers in Taiwan, on the one hand, and to readers in the United States, on the other. Three phenomena are analyzed in detail and compared across the two versions of the autobiography: 1) frequency of code-switching, 2) different patterns of code-switching, and 3) different functions of code-switching. The preliminary results of this study suggest that code-switching offers a meaningful approach to examine other genres, such as autobiographies and other written texts where a writer may reveal different identities depending on their readers.

1. Introduction

This study investigates how Adeline Yen Mah, a Chinese American writer, utilizes Chinese-English code-switching in her autobiography *Falling Leaves* (written in English) and 落葉歸根 *Luoyeguigen* (written in Chinese) to reveal her cultural and ethnic identity. Many Chinese American writers (i.e., Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan) have vividly illustrated the reality of the Chinese immigrant community through incorporating Chinese-English code-switching in their works. However, it seems that researchers have not shown enough interest in examining the use of Chinese-English code-switching in Chinese American literature.

The closest code-switching study of Chinese American literature is Li (2004), who analyzed the Pidgin English-English code-switching of a Chinese American writer, Maxine Hong Kingston (Li 2004). Li (2004) claims that Maxine Hong Kingston uses Pidgin English-English code-switching in Chinese immigrants' speech so that she can capture the life of Chinese immigrants. Furthermore, Pidgin English-English code-switching helps her demonstrate how Chinese immigrants construct their Chinese American identity. The findings of Li (2004) are valuable because it is the first code-switching study of a Chinese American writer. There is a need to expand Li's (2004) study to Chinese-English code-

switching because it is more commonly used in Chinese American literature than Pidgin English-English code-switching. Furthermore, her study only used code-switching theory and did not fully apply discourse analysis, which provides data of writers' code-switching intentions. Discourse Analysis is able to reveal significant changes of relationships between characters. Therefore, it will be meaningful to investigate Chinese American writers' Chinese-English code-switching with discourse analysis.

2. Adeline Yen Mah and the Story of *Falling Leaves* and 落葉歸根 *Luoyeguigen*

Since this paper analyzes the code-switching by Adeline Yen Mah and how code-switching helps to reveal her identity, it is important to first discuss her language and family background. Adeline Yen Mah was born in Tianjin, China on November 30, 1937. She was born into a wealthy and prestigious family. Most of her adolescent years were spent in Shanghai where she attended missionary schools to learn English at an early age. She graduated from a high school in Hong Kong and then went to the United Kingdom to study medicine. After receiving a Medical Doctoral (MD) Degree, she worked at a hospital in Hong Kong. One year later, she immigrated to the United States where she was hired for a medical position. Based on her educational background and her life in the U.K. and in the U.S., she can be considered as bilingual with multicultural background.

Yen Mah's first book, *Falling Leaves*, was published in 1997 and became a New York Times best-seller. This book sold over a million copies world-wide and has been translated into eighteen languages. In 1999, the Chinese version of *Falling Leaves*, 落葉歸根 *Luoyeguigen* was published in Taiwan. *Chinese Cinderella*, the Chinese children's book version of *Falling Leaves*, was published in 1999 sold over a half of million copies world-wide. It received an award from the Children's Literature Council of Southern California in 2000 for Compelling Autobiography. It also received the Lamplighter's Award from the National Christian School Association in June 2002, for the contribution to Exceptional Children's Literature.

Falling Leaves is about the journey of an unwanted daughter and how she overcomes many hardships in her life to realize her dreams. Adeline Yen Mah's own mother died after giving birth to her. Because of this, she is considered as "bad luck" and tormented by her siblings as well as mistreated by her father. Shortly after her mother's death, her father remarried a beautiful, young Eurasian woman (whose father is French and mother is Chinese) who was cruel and manipulative. She treated all five of her stepchildren badly, but saved her real hatred for Adeline. Yet, Adeline's Aunt Baba and Grandfather emotionally supported and guided her so that she could focus on her studies. During her adolescent years, her family moved from Tianjin to Shanghai, and then from Shanghai to Hong Kong in order to escape the civil war between the Communist party and the Nationalist party. After she graduated from high school, she went to the United Kingdom and became a doctor. After a one year internship in Hong Kong, she got a job in the United States.

In the U.S., she struggled with her job and her marriage. In the hospital, she was a minority among minority (being Asian female doctor). At home, she lived with a controlling husband. Despite her husband's abusive behavior toward her and her son, she tried to save her marriage. She divorced him, however, upon advice from family. Later, she met her current husband and tried to reconcile with her father and stepmother. However, her stepmother forged her father's will and excluded her from other family members. At the end of her book, Adeline found her father's real will after her stepmother's funeral was finally able to reconcile with her late father.

3. Methodology and Research Questions

For this study, I applied the definition of Winford's (2003) code-switching to analyze the use of code-switching and how it reveals the writer's identity. Many scholars have debates on the definition of code-switching. Winford (2003) explains that code-switching is the alternating use of relatively complete utterances from two different languages, alternation between sentential and/or clausal structures from the two languages, and the insertion of (usually lexical) elements from one language into the other. Depending on the purpose of code-switching studies, scholars may further separate the code mixing from the code-switching. However, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the function of code-switching in relation to the writer's identity. Therefore, I applied Winford's (2003) broad definition of code-switching to analyze the language of the writer in two autobiographies.

This paper also draws three theories from discourse analysis theories: functionalist paradigms (Hymes 1974), discourse theory (Gee 2005) and contextualization cue (Gumpurz 1982). Functionalists study the use of the speech in acts and events rather than the grammar of the speech. They understand the speech community as the matrix of code-repertoires or speech style (Schiffrin 1994). According to the functionalist paradigms, I consider the speech community of *Falling Leaves* as the writer and American readers, and that of *落葉歸根 Luoyeguigen* as the writer and Taiwanese readers.

Based on my definition of two speech communities of Adeline Yen Mah's autobiography, I applied Gumpurz's (1982) contextualization cue and Gee's (2005) discourse analysis theory to studying the Adeline Yen Mah's use of code-switching. Gumpurz (1982) explains that contextualization cues (as the constellations of surface features of message form) are the means by (a) which speakers signal and listeners interpret what the activity is, (b) how semantic content is to be understood, and (c) how each sentence relates to what precedes or follows. Gee's (2005) discourse analysis theory further elaborates the contextualization cue in relation to the identity. Gee (2005) states that discourse involves (a) situated identities; (b) ways of performing and recognizing characteristic identities and activities; (c) ways of coordinating and getting coordinate by other people, things, tools, technologies, symbol systems, places, and times; and (d) characteristic ways of social interactions.

Gee (2005)'s understanding on the relationship between discourse and identity matches the social constructionist view of the identity in which I use in this paper. The social constructionist defines that the identity (1) takes place in concrete and specific interaction occasions, (2) yields constellations of identities instead of individual monolithic constructs, (3) does not simply emanate from the individual, but results from processes of negotiation, and contextualization that are eminently social (4) entails discursive work (Fina et al 2006 p. 2). The social constructionist and Gee (2005) claim that the identity is not a set of attributes of speakers. Both argue that identity is constructed through social interaction and negotiation processes.

Based on the above framework, this paper investigates 1) how Adeline Yen Mah utilizes code-switching in her two autobiographies; 2) how the patterns of code-switching is different from *Falling Leaves* and *落葉歸根 Luoyeguigen*; and 3) how different and similar code-switching patterns in two autobiographies help reveal her identity if there is a difference of the use of code-switching between the Chinese and English versions.

4. Findings

There are a total of fifty-one English Chinese code-switching¹ in *落葉歸根 Luoyeguigen* while 110 code-switching occurred in *Falling Leaves*. Also, the code-switching in *Falling Leaves* is not limited to English and Chinese code-switching. There are three French English code-switching and one Cantonese English code-switching. There are two unique patterns of code-switching in Mah's works. One pattern is the use of Chinese family terms in both versions. In her Chinese version, she mainly used Chinese family terms for elders AND her siblings. However, in her English version, she mainly used Chinese family terms for elders but not for her siblings. The other pattern is that the listeners of code-switching narrations and conversations are different in both versions. In the English and Chinese versions of her autobiographies, most of code-switching occurred when she narrated her story. However, in her English version, the code-switching also appeared when the characters have conversations, which is different from her Chinese version. The code-switching patterns used in the Chinese version are the insertion of English proper nouns such as a person's name and the titles of schools or movies. Therefore, most of code-switching is intrasentential code-switching in her Chinese version. Additionally, unlike the literary works from other Chinese American, she uses Chinese idioms written in Chinese characters for her chapter titles and code-switching.

4.1 *落葉歸根 Luoyeguigen*

The Chinese version of the autobiography does not have many code-switching compared with her English version. The code-switching is used when she states the

¹When the same code switching appear multiple times in the same context, it is counted as one.

names of places, her siblings English names, medical terms, and the names of songs and movies.

Example 1:

...發現並提煉出麻黃葉的精華，也就是麻黃素 (Ephedrine)。

(Mah 1999, p. 18)

Example 2:

...後來三哥為他們的臥室起了個綽號叫“聖殿” (Holy of Holies)。

(Mah 1999, p. 52)

As the two examples showed, it seems that Mah cannot find the suitable words in Chinese so she borrowed English words to express her thoughts. Also, the English insertion is limited to the proper nouns. For this reason, her Chinese English code-switching in her Chinese version does not have metaphorical functions (e.g., revealing her bilingual and bicultural identity).

I also analyzed the speakers and the listeners when she uses English Chinese code-switching in her Chinese version. Besides the code-switching in siblings' names which her stepmother used, other code-switching does not involve with the change of situation or change of characters or writer's emotions.

Type of CS words	Example	Speaker	Listener	Change of Situation/Emotion
Name of sibling	Lydia, Gregory, Edgar, James, Adeline	Adeline, (once), Parents	Adeline and reader	New stepmother and change of the writer's status
Name of Place	School names Place in U.K. and U.S.	Adeline	Reader	N/A
Name of Medicine	麻黃素(Ephedrine), CAT	Adeline	Reader	N/A
New cultural items	Gone with wind, Singing in the rain	Adeline	Reader	N/A

Table 1: Code-switching patterns in *落葉歸根 Luoyeguigen*

In the case of using English names of the writer's siblings, Mah uses them when her parents call their children's names. Her father previously did not give them English names even though they were attending missionary schools. However, after the arrival of her stepmother, her parents started calling their children's names in English. This indicates

that the change of her father's attitude toward his children. However, as the youngest child in her family, the writer uses Chinese family terms such as 大哥 dage (the eldest brother), 二哥 erge (the second elder brother), 三哥 sange (the third elder brother) and 姐姐 jiejie (the elder sister). By not using their English names, the writer reveals that she is following the Chinese custom when she interacts with her family members. It also illustrates that the writer situated herself as an obedient Chinese daughter despite of her parents' ill treatment.

4.2 *Falling Leaves*

Different from her Chinese version, Adeline Yen Mah uses more Chinese English code-switching in her English version. First, she uses Chinese idioms for the titles of thirty-two chapters². Secondly, she uses Chinese family terms for those who are older than her such as 爺爺 Ye Ye (grandfather) and 娘 Niang (mother for stepmother) except for her siblings. Yet, in her English version, after the chapter five, she calls older brothers and older sisters' names in English. Third, when she describes her emotions such as sadness and conflicts with family members, she uses Chinese English code-switching. Lastly, she inserts Chinese words for the name of places and Chinese cultural items (e.g., food name and political units) in English utterance. The function of the insertion of Chinese proper noun is the same as that of English insertion in Chinese version. She cannot find the appropriate terms in English so she borrows Chinese words in her narration.

The chapter titles in Chinese idioms have many functions in the English version of Adeline Yen Mah's autobiography. First, it signals the reader about the mood of following chapters and how she situates herself in the story of Chinese idioms. Later, she uses the idioms again within her narration or indirect quotes of characters to explain how her Chinese idioms should be interpreted. Appendix 1 shows how Adeline Yen Mah utilizes Chinese idioms for the titles of chapters and in her narration. One pattern of Chinese English code-switching is that Chinese idioms are used in her narration for explaining her emotion, such as sadness and anger towards her family members. For instance, except the title of chapter thirteen 有何不可? *You he bu ke?*, chapter twenty-one 天作之合 *Tian zuo zhi he*, and chapter thirty-two, 落葉歸根 *Luo ye gui gen*, the meanings of Chinese idioms are related to sadness and negative meaning. She also uses these idioms for the negative situations such as fighting between family members. Furthermore, the chapters deal with the struggle among family members.

Another interesting finding in her use of Chinese English code-switching is that the chapters involving negative changes in her life (e.g. chapter six, seven, and seventeen) contain most of the Chinese English code-switching. In chapter six, the writer describes her first struggle between her siblings and her stepmother. Edgar and James, her older

² Please refer to Appendix 1.

brothers, encounter an unfair situation but they realize that they cannot do anything to change their stepmother's treatment.

Example 3:

As we stood side by side mourning her, James glanced at my tear-stained face and murmured sympathetically, 'It won't be like this all the time. Things are bound to get better ... *Suan le!*' (Mah 1997 p.63)

In example 3, the writer uses code-switching in a metaphorical way. Twice she uses the Chinese sentences "*Suan le* (Let it be!)" to describe their hopeless life. In the chapter seven, when her father scolds at his first-born son about his misbehavior, he yells at his son "胡說八道 *Hu shuo Ba Dao!* (Don't talk nonsense eight ways!)" However, the reality is that the parents are mistreating their own children. Specifically, the father only listens to his young, new wife and emotionally neglects his children. Adeline Yen Mah metaphorically uses the Chinese phrase "胡說八道 *Hu shuo Ba Dao!* (Don't talk nonsense eight ways!)" and vividly describes her father's abuse.

In the chapter seventeen, the writer narrates her conflict between her and her first husband. She uses the phrase "嫁雞隨雞， 嫁狗隨狗 *Jia ji shui [sui] ji, jia gou shui [sui] gou* (marry a chicken, follow a chicken; marry a dog, follow a dog)" and "夫妻相敬如賓 *fu qi xiang jing ru bin* (husband and wife should respect each other like honored guests)" in her husband's speech to reveal his personality.

Example 4:

(Mah): 'what's this, a dictatorship? Are we husband and wife or mater and slave? Why can't we talk things over in a calm and logical way?'

(Mah's first husband): '嫁雞隨雞， 嫁狗隨狗 *Jia ji shui [sui] ji, jia gou shui [sui] gou* (marry a chicken, follow a chicken; marry a dog, follow a dog)' (Mah 1997 p.161)

Example 5:

Byron and I kept our distance. This was how he wanted the marriage to be. Heart-to-heart conversations made him acutely uncomfortable. He often quoted the Chinese proverb 夫妻相敬如賓 *fu qi xiang jing ru bin* (husband and wife should respect each other like honored guests). (Mah 1997, p. 163)

These two phrases in examples 4 and 5 mean that a wife has to follow no matter how badly her husband treats her. Her first husband is not a responsible person and only asks her to perform a wife's duty according to the Chinese tradition. By using these two Chinese phrases, Adeline describes her husband as a male chauvinist.

In *Falling Leaves*, she uses family terms in Chinese, such as Ye Ye (grandfather), and Niang (mother-stepmother). However, she does not use Chinese family terminology for her siblings after chapter five. This does not match with her use of family terminology in her Chinese version. One possible reason is that she follows the speech style of American readers. Another possibility is that she wants to feel free in criticizing her sibling's behavior in English. From chapter twenty-four to chapter thirty-one, she discusses how her siblings betray her in order to receive their father's inheritance. If she uses the Chinese family term to indicate her siblings, she needs to situate herself in the Chinese family culture, which does not allow her to criticize them.

5. Conclusion

I expected the same amount of Chinese English code-switching in her Chinese and English versions of the autobiography at the beginning of this study. However, Mah only used Chinese English code-switching for the proper nouns such as place names and medical terms in her Chinese version. One of the possible reasons is that the speech community (the writer and Taiwanese readers) does not allow many code-switching patterns in the Chinese autobiography. According to Hymes' (1974) functionalist paradigms, the speech community is the matrix of speech style. In order to follow the matrix of speech style, the writer uses less code-switching in the Chinese version than the English version. Another reason is that her story deals with her family and their conflicts. Since her family's first language is Chinese, they mainly use Chinese in their communications. Therefore, in order to reflect the reality, the writer may not use Chinese English code-switching in her Chinese version except proper nouns.

On the other hand, Adeline Yen Mah utilizes Chinese English code-switching in the English version. Unlike the speech community in Taiwan, the speech community in the U.S. views the code-switching as one rule of Chinese American writer's linguistic repertoire. She uses Chinese idioms as her chapter titles and her narration to show her changes of emotion and situations. The Chinese idioms have two functions in her discourse: the situated identity (Gee 2005) and the contextualization cue (Gumperz 1982). The first function is that it allows Mah to situate herself in the Chinese culture. By identifying herself to the Chinese culture, she can reveal her Chinese identity to the American readers. The second function is that it signals the readers to expect the change of situation and emotion. Furthermore, it shows how each chapter is related to each other.

This is a very preliminary study; as a result, there are a number of limitations of this study. One limitation is that I did not cross-check with the writer's intention of code-switching with the writer. I assume that the writer considers the readers to use different code-switching patterns in Chinese and English versions. In order to improve upon this paper, an interview with the writer would be desirable. Nevertheless, this study can serve to explain the function of Chinese English code-switching in *Falling Leaves*. It also shows how the writer reveals her Chinese identity by locating herself in the Chinese culture through the use of Chinese English code-switching in *Falling Leaves*.

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Appendix 1: Code-switching in *Falling Leaves*: Chinese idioms in chapter titles and utterance

Chapter	Title	Meaning	Speaker/Listener	The Change of Situation/Emotion
1	門當戶對 <i>mendanghudai</i>	Appropriate door fist the frame of the correct house	Adeline Yen Mah to the reader	Grandfather's marriage
2	點鐵成金 <i>Dian tie cheng jin</i>	Converting iron into gold	Adeline Yen Mah to the reader	Description of her father's ability
3	如影隨形 <i>Ru ying sui xing</i>	Inseparable as each other's shadows	Adeline Yen Mah to the reader	Marriage of her biological mother and her father
4	秀色可餐 <i>Xiu se ke can</i>	Surpassing loveliness good enough to fast upon	Adeline Yen Mah to the reader	Description of her stepmother

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	小巧玲瓏 <i>xiao qiao ling long</i>	petite, vivacious and interesting	Adeline Yen Mah to the reader	description of her biological mother
5	一場春夢 <i>Yi Chang Chun Meng</i>	An episode of a spring dream	Adeline Yen Mah to the reader	The feeling of Aunt Baba after her grandmother's funeral
6*	家醜不可外揚 <i>Jia chou bu ke wai yang</i>	Family ugliness should never be aired in Public, it means Adeline is ugliness in the house	Father to Adeline	Father scolds Adeline because her friend came to her house.
7*	緣木求魚 <i>Yuan mu qiu yu</i>	Climbing a tree to seek for fish	Grandfather to Aunt Baba	Grand father's complaint about stepmother
8	一視同仁 <i>Yi shi tong ren</i>	Extend the same treatment to all	Aunt Reine to Adeline	Aunt Reine's nice personality
9	人傑地靈 <i>Ren jie di ling</i>	Inspired scholar in an enchanting land	Adeline to the reader	Describing her lonely life in boarding school
10	度日如年 <i>Du ri ru nian</i>	Each day passes like a year	Grandfather to Aunt Baba	Describing his loneliness in Hong Kong
11	自出機杼 <i>Zi chu ji zhu</i>	Original ideas in literary composition	Father to Adeline	Father's recognition of Adeline's talent
12	同床異夢 <i>Tong chuang yi meng</i>	Same bed, different dreams	Adeline to the reader	The conflict between father and her sister
13	有何不可? <i>You he bu ke?</i>	Is anything impossible	James (second older brother) to Adeline	Life in the U.K.
14	一琴一鶴 <i>Yi qin yi he</i>	One lute, one crane	H.H (friend who went back to PRC) to Adeline	Hardship during the cultural revolution

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15	釜中游魚 <i>Fu zhong you yu</i>	Fish swimming in a cauldron	Adeline to the reader	Her life in Hospital in Hong Kong (loneliness)
16	匹馬單槍 <i>Pi ma dan qiang</i>	One horse, single spear	Father to the Adeline	Adeline is handing to the U.S.
17*	嫁雞隨雞 <i>Jia ji sui ji</i>	Marry a chicken, follow a chicken	Husband to Adeline	Argument between Adeline and her husband
18	種瓜得瓜 <i>Zhong gua de gua</i>	You plant melons, you reap melons	Father to Adeline	Father's advice about divorce.
19	心如死灰 <i>Xin ru si hui</i>	Hearts reduced to ashes	Adeline to the reader	Sad feeling about parents and her stepsister
20	腹中鱗甲 <i>Fu zhong lin jia</i>	Scales and scales in her belly	Adeline to the reader	Describing disloyal Miss Chen
21	天作之合 <i>Tian zuo zhi he</i>	Heaven-made union	Adeline to the reader	Happiness of finding right person for her
22	四面楚歌 <i>Si mian chu ge</i>	Besieged by hostile forces on all sides	Father to Adeline	Father describing his situation
23	粗茶淡飯 <i>Cu cha dan fan</i>	Coarse tea and plain rice	Aunt Baba to Adeline	Aunt Baba's negative feeling toward Adeline's stepmother
24	飲水思源 <i>Yin shui si yuan</i>	While drinking water, remember the source	Lydia (the oldest sister) to Adeline	Lydia shows her appreciation for Adeline's help
25	一刀兩斷 <i>Yi dao liang duan</i>	Let's sever this kinship with one whack of the knife	Adeline to Lydia	Adeline's anger toward Lydia
26	無風起浪 <i>Wu feng qi lang</i>	Create waves without wind	James (second older brother) to Adeline	James is indicating they can't do anything about their stepmother

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27	近朱者赤，近墨者黑 <i>Jin zhu zhi chi, jin mo zhi hei</i>	Near vermilion, one gets stained pink, near the ink, one gets stained black	Gregory (first older brother) to Adeline	Indicating James is stepmother's side
28	酒肉朋友 <i>Jiu rou pengyou</i>	Wine and meat friends	Father's friend to Adeline	Stepmother has no one around her
29	無頭公案 <i>Wu tou gong an</i>	Headless and clueless case	Lydia to Adeline	Lydia is upset because of Adeline
30	開門揖盜 <i>Kai men yi dao</i>	Opened the door to salute the thief	Adeline to the reader	Her feeling toward Lydia
31	掩耳盜鈴 <i>Yan er dao ling</i>	Steal the bell while covering your ears	Adeline to James	Confront him with her father's real will
32	落葉歸根 <i>Luo ye gui gen</i>	Falling leaves return to their roots	Adeline to the reader	She found her peace in her mind

“*” indicates the chapter has more than three Chinese English code-switching utterance.