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ELJAN MAYIS SALIMLI

Khazar University, English Language and Literature Department, MA student

elcanselim@gmail.com

LANGUAGE SWITCHING IN ENGLISH-FRENCH HUMOROUS DISCOURSE

SUMMARY

The main aim of this article is to explore the role of code-switching in bilingual humour that combines English and French. First, the paper looks at the global spread of bilingualism and how code-switching is used in various contexts. It is noted that bilingual individuals often switch between languages during communication, and such switching is strategically employed for humorous purposes, too. Then the paper highlights that this type of humour is often built on language play, including puns based on phonetic and semantic differences. Furthermore, the article demonstrates how code-switching is used to generate comedic effects in English-French humorous discourse through examples. The study shows that bilingual Anglo-French humour, by making use of code-switching, creates multilayered jokes that rely on linguistic confusion, phonetic ambiguity, and learners' misinterpretations. These jokes play on the audience's ability to understand both languages, which makes the humour richer. Ultimately, the article concludes that code-switching serves as a key device in bilingual humour, enhancing its effectiveness by emphasising contrasts between languages.

Keywords: code-switching, bilingual humour, English-French comedy, Anglo-French humour

Introduction

Today, bilingualism is a recognised means of communication in many countries, where two languages are officially used nationwide. For example, in Canada and Belgium, both French and English have official status. Countries like Switzerland and India are multilingual. In Switzerland German, French, Italian, and Romansh are official languages. Even if not officially recognised, bilingual communities are widely spread in different parts of the world. In such regions, using two languages has become a normal part of daily life. For instance, in Tabriz, Borchali, and Derbent, people commonly use Azerbaijani Turkish along with Persian, Georgian, and Russian, respectively [7, p.149].

In most bilingual communities, there are no fixed or official rules about which language to use. Speakers must choose a certain language whenever they talk. They can also switch from one language to another or mix them, even in very short

sentences [9, p.96]. When bilingual or bidialectal speakers switch between different languages or dialects depending on whom they are talking to or where they are, it is called code-switching [1, p.83].

Sometimes people switch their codes to create a comedic effect. For example, in Norway, Standard Norwegian is used in schools, but children might tell jokes in their local dialect. In Paraguay, Guaraní is seen as more suitable for telling jokes and humorous stories. So, a Paraguayan might discuss a serious political issue in Spanish, but they switch to Guaraní for a humorous point. Similarly, Fijians switch from Fijian to Hindi for jokes. Hindi is not typically used among Fijians, which is why even the switch itself creates humour [2, p.39].

Vaid also supported the idea that code-switching can be very crucial in humour production. In multilingual communities, playing with the sounds and rules of language is common, and being bilingual may even encourage this creativity. Bilinguals can enjoy language play in ways that monolinguals cannot. They can switch between languages, mix them, and use associations between the two languages to express different identities or escape from difficult situations [6].

Bilingual humour is a special kind of humour. It is defined as the funny effect that happens when two languages interact in certain ways. It emerges through the combination of words from different languages in unexpected and humorous ways. People use mimicry and mispronunciation and misunderstanding to show how words sound similar or have ambiguous meanings. The purpose behind this type of humour can be either deliberate or unintentional. When someone misinterprets a word from one language through its meaning in another language, they create unintentional humour. Accidental humour emerges from unexpected language meanings and double meanings that occur in the language. Signs located in areas where non-native English speakers live frequently display these examples. Some forms of humour rely on incorrect pronunciation and grammatical errors. The term accent humour describes this phenomenon. The use of dialect humour occurs when a person's regional accent leads to communication breakdowns [6, pp.157-158].

Bilingual humour includes not just set-piece jokes and riddles, but also a wide range of funny observations, stories and incidents found in published works, TV and radio broadcasts. Anglo-French humour is a special form of bilingual humour. Its main areas include code-switching, language errors, self-repair strategies, Franglais, puns, and literal translations [5].

The field of monolingual humour research has received extensive attention across multiple perspectives, yet bilingual humour between English and French remains relatively understudied. This paper explores the use of code-switching in bilingual comedy that combines English and French.

Code-Switching in Humour

Several studies have investigated code-switching in different mediums of bilingual humour. For example, Kawwami examined the use of code-switching in stand-up comedy shows aired on Metro TV in Indonesia. The research demonstrated that intra-sentential switching between Indonesian and English occurred most frequently because it helps explain meanings and improve audience understanding while generating humorous effects [3].

Likewise, Vizcaíno examined humorous code-mixed airline advertisements from Vueling to understand how Spanish colloquial expressions become humorous through the addition of English and French. The author demonstrated how formal linguistic humour functions through structural and phonetic deviations according to theories of incongruity and multilingual advertising. The seemingly globalised advertisements maintain Spanish cultural identity through their code-switching method, which embeds foreign elements within recognisable local frames [8].

More recently, Lamabelawa and Nurhamidah studied the code-switching behaviour of Emily Cooper in Season 1 of “Emily in Paris” by identifying different switching types and social reasons for her English-to-French language shifts. The authors showed that Emily used different types of switching to demonstrate her cultural adaptation and social bonding in the French environment [4].

These studies demonstrated how code-switching functions as a creative and strategic communication tool across television, comedy, and advertising to build meaning and establish audience connections and cultural identities through multilingual expression.

Switching between English and French in Bilingual Comedy

Leeds gave the following joke as an example which illustrates how code-switching serves to create humour through its use [5, p.140]:

Student: “Miss, can we do French now?”

Teacher: “Mais oui.”

Student: “Sorry, may we do French now?”

The joke uses inter-sentential code-switching when the teacher responds with the French phrase “Mais oui,” which means “Of course.” The student misinterprets the code-switch because he fails to recognise that the French phrase “Mais oui” matches the request to start French class instead of correcting his modal verb usage between “can” and “may.” The student’s incorrect understanding of the code-switch leads him to correct his English statement without noticing the French language transition. The comedic effect emerges from this situation because code-switching generates a humorous effect through linguistic confusion. This multilayered example demonstrates how bilingual humour depends on language alternation to create unexpected effects, which serve as a fundamental component of comedic mechanisms.

Another joke from Leeds' paper shows how French-English phonetic similarities enable code-switching to generate humour [5, p.141]:

Teacher: "Où est le pain, Tommy?"

Tommy: "Le pain is in my knee, Miss."

The joke presents a typical case of phonetic misinterpretation and semantic confusion which occurs in bilingual learning situations. The teacher poses this question ("Où est le pain?" – "Where is the bread?") as a basic French prompt. Tommy uses the English word "pain" instead of the French word for bread in his humorous response. Tommy uses intra-sentential code-switching when he combines French and English words in his statement "Le pain is in my knee." This example demonstrates how code-switching creates humour by utilising the multiple meanings and homographic properties of the word "pain" across different languages. The joke demonstrates a phonetic pun through the use of similar sounds between languages, although the words have different meanings. This particular joke demonstrates how code-switching produces humour by using language differences and learner mistakes which appear often in bilingual comedic speech.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the given examples, switching between English and French is effective in making jokes in bilingual humour that combines these two languages. It is a way for people to play with the sounds and meanings of words. For speakers who can understand both languages, it is a mix of both which creates more layers of humour that make the jokes cleverer and funnier.

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ELCAN MAYİS OĞLU SƏLİMLİ İNGİLİS–FRANSIZ YUMORİSTİK DİSKURSUNDA DİLLƏR ARASINDA DƏYİŞMƏLƏR XÜLASƏ

Bu məqalənin əsas məqsədi ingilis və fransız dillərinin birləşməsindən əmələ gələn ikidilli yumorda dillərin çarpazlaşması hadisəsinin rolunu araşdırmaqdır. Əvvəla, dünyada ikidilliliyin yayılması və dillərin çarpazlaşmasının müxtəlif kontekstlərdə necə istifadə edildiyinə nəzər salınır. Bildirilir ki, ikidilli şəxslər ünsiyyət zamanı tez-tez dillər arasında keçid edirlər və bu cür keçidlər bəzən məqsədli şəkildə yumoru tətikləmək üçün də istifadə olunur. Məqalədə daha sonra vurğulanır ki, bu tip yumor çox vaxt fonetik və semantik fərqlərə əsaslanan dil və söz oyunları üzərində qurulur. Bundan əlavə, məqalədə nümunələr vasitəsilə dillərin çarpazlaşmasının ingilis-fransız yumoristik diskursunda gülməli təsir oyatmaq üçün necə istifadə edildiyi göstərilir. Tədqiqat göstərir ki, dillərin çarpazlaşmasından istifadə etməklə ingilis-fransız ikidilli yumoru çoxşaxəli zarafatlar ortaya çıxardır. Bu zarafatlar dil çaşqınlığına, fonetik qeyri-müəyyənliyə və dil öyrənənlərin səhv başa düşmələrinə əsaslanır. Eyni zamanda, belə zarafatlar auditoriyanın hər iki dili anlama qabiliyyətinə əsaslanır və bu da yumoru daha zəngin edir. Nəhayət, məqalə belə nəticəyə gəlir ki, dillərin çarpazlaşması ikidilli yumorda əsas vasitə kimi çıxış edir və dillər arasındakı fərqlərdən ustalıqla istifadə edərək onun təsirini artırır.

Açar sözlər: dillərin çarpazlaşması, ikidilli yumor, ingilis-fransız komediyası, ingilis-fransız yumoru

ЭЛДЖАН МАИС ОГЛУ САЛИМЛИ ПЕРЕКЛЮЧЕНИЕ ЯЗЫКОВ В АНГЛО-ФРАНЦУЗСКОМ ЮМОРИСТИЧЕСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ РЕЗЮМЕ

Основная цель данной статьи – исследовать роль переключения кодов в билингвальном юморе, объединяющем английский и французский языки. В первую очередь рассматривается глобальное распространение билингвизма и то, как переключение кодов используется в различных контекстах. Отмечается, что билингвальные носители языка часто переходят с одного языка на другой в

процессе общения, и такие переходы могут целенаправленно использоваться для создания комического эффекта. Далее в статье подчеркивается, что подобный тип юмора часто основан на языковой игре, включая каламбуры, построенные на фонетических и семантических различиях. Кроме того, с помощью примеров демонстрируется, как переключение кодов используется для создания юмористического эффекта в англо-французском дискурсе. Исследование показывает, что англо-французский билингвальный юмор, используя переключение кодов, создает многослойные шутки, основанные на языковой путанице, фонетической двусмысленности и неправильном толковании со стороны изучающих язык. Эти шутки опираются на способность аудитории понимать оба языка, что делает юмор более насыщенным. В конечном итоге в статье делается вывод о том, что переключение кодов служит ключевым инструментом в билингвальном юморе, усиливая его выразительность за счёт акцентирования различий между языками.

Ключевые слова: переключение кодов, билингвальный юмор, англо-французская комедия, англо-французский юмор

Rəyçi: fil.ü.f.d., Milana Abbasova