



Code-switching in the Context of Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle from Perspective of Sociolinguistics

Tang Jun^{1,2}

¹Department of Foreign Languages, Inner Mongolia Honder College of Arts and Sciences, China.

²Philippine Christian University Center for International Education, Philippine

*Correspondence: kkkdddsss@163.com

Abstract: Code-switching is a common phenomenon when speakers change from two or more languages or language varieties during communication. It serves as a communication strategy to achieve speakers' communicative purposes. This paper discusses code-switching cases from perspective sociolinguistics to explore the motives and implication of code-switching. Two theories, Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle, are adopted in the study and both offer good explanations for code-switching from different perspective. The maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relation and the maxim of manner under Cooperative Prince principle explain the mechanisms by which people interpret conversation implicature by using code-switching. Six maxims of Politeness Principle are discussed to explore the motives of code-switching from another angle: the tact maxim, the generosity maxim, the approbation maxim, the modesty maxim the agreement maxim, and the sympathy maxim. The study finds that code-switching happens due to the speaker's because of speakers' purposes from communication convenience under social rules. The study helps readers better understand the practical motives and importance of code-switching; meanwhile, it provides more insights to the research of code-switching.

Keywords: Code-switching, language, conversation, Cooperative Principle, Politeness Principle, sociolinguistics

Introduction

The development of modern society makes the interaction among countries closer and closer, and much focus is put on the phenomenon of bilingualism or multilingualism. Different countries and nationalities have their own language systems, so it is inevitable for people from different countries to code switch in communication. According to a survey in "Multicultural America: A Multimedia Encyclopedia.", More than half of the world's population is bilingual or multilingual: "56% of Europeans are bilingual, while 38% of the population in Great Britain, 35% in Canada, and 17% in the United States are bilingual^[1]". Under certain conversational context, speakers can choose different language varieties according to different communication environments, and skillfully perform code-switching to achieve the communicative purpose and information

transfer. In current society, there are few people who master only one language variant^[2]. When a person lives in a foreign country, he or she must learn to speak the foreign language to communicate with local people for work or study purpose. Code switching is a hot topic in the field of linguistic research, and current research on code switching can be classified into sociolinguistics-related research^[3], grammar research, and psychological research. As people learn and study a language to communicate, it is necessary to study code-switching from a socio-linguistic perspective.

Code-switching is a common phenomenon when speakers change from two or more languages or language varieties during communication; however, there is no unified official definition yet. It is more than a change between two languages. To understand its definition, scholars and researchers all over the world have studied it from different

[Received 11 Oct 2021; Accepted 04 Feb 2022; Published (online) 31 March 2022]



Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

perspectives by using various approaches. Most scholars agree that code-switching is a language phoneme that occurs when a speaker switches from one form to another in interactions including changes in accent, dialect, language. Code-switching is a sociolinguistic concept that describes the use of more than one language or grammatical system, usually by multilingual speakers or writers, during a single conversation or written text (Gumperz)^[4]. Poplack (2001) holds that code-switching is the combination of two or more languages in the context of a discussion by bilinguals or multilingual between speakers involved, within a particular group of people or even in a specific topic or theme^[5]. According to Niley, C (2006), code-switching is broadly defined as any sign system used by people in the process of communication, and such sign systems include languages, dialects, corpora or domains^[6]. He claims that code-switching is a term that refers to a situation in which languages or codes are used interchangeably and is the most common phenomenon. When the speakers use different languages or dialects simultaneously, the human brain will unconsciously switch from one way to another between transmitting and receiving messages in a conversation. Code-switching among multicultural individuals creates a dual communication system. People can maintain their identities with their in-group but can still acquire tools and gain access needed to function in a larger dominant society^[7]. Judging from the above different definitions, we may find that the core of code-switching is about the change between languages, moreover, code-switching involves adjusting one's way of expressing himself, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and career opportunities.

In the context of a multilingual environment, one is usually confronted with the problem of choosing the most appropriate language code for different communicative purposes. If necessary, one tends to switch or even mix two codes. Therefore, code-switching is a common phenomenon and an essential research topic in sociolinguistics.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, researchers have been focusing on code-switching from a sociolinguistic perspective^[8]. Most of the early studies were conducted from a sociological or sociolinguistic perspective, when sociolinguistic approaches were mainly used to reveal the intrinsic links between code-switching and social factors such as race, gender, age, and socioeconomic status.

Linguistic study

The code-switcher will convey the implicature beyond the words consciously or unconsciously. Further research on this phenomenon were conducted from linguistic study. According to Gompers's theory of contextualization, "code-

switching has a pragmatic cue function"^[9]. With the help of code-switching, speakers can convey implicature and listeners can interpret the implicature.

Bell's (2011) Audience Design theory suggested that the language style is what the speaker does with language in relation to others^[10]. He found that the same broadcaster switched the language style between the national station and the local station, and the reason for the two distinctive styles was the different audiences.

Zhou Guoguang's (2015) code-value theory provides a good theoretical framework for studying the pragmatic meaning of code-switching^[11]. Each coded word has a unique code value, and it is this code value that makes the code suitable for a particular context and meets a special communicative need. The code values can be divided into four categories: semantic value, relational value, affective value, and stylistic value, and each type of value has its own strengths and weaknesses.

The pragmatic functions of code-switching were discussed by some scholars with different theories: Giles's ^[12]Speech Accommodation Theory, Sperber & Wilson's ^[13]Relevance Theory, and Verstehen's ^[14]Adaptation Theory. Auer ^[15] explored the pragmatic functions of code-switching from Discourse Wheel Theory.

2. Structure Study

The question of when and where bilinguals can switch codes in a conversation is an important research topic in code-switching. Code-switching usually happens in the middle of a sentence, but sometimes code-switching happen in other part of a sentence. To understand why and how it works, some linguistics started research on the structure of code-switching.

Gumperz (1982) designed a series of methods to test the appropriateness of conversion, and investigated what restrictions there are on code-switching. The results show that code-switching is subject to linguistic rules and some structures cannot be code-switched within a sentence^[16].

Myers Scotton's (1993) Matrix Language- Frame Model made a significant contribution to the sociolinguistic study on code-switching. She refers to the language that determines the grammatical structure of the mixed components as the Matrix Language, and the languages involved in code-switching as the Embedded Language. She argues that codes represent a set of rights and obligations, and code-switching has two main purposes: to make unmarked and marked choices^[17].

3. Psychological study

Bilinguals can switch frequently between two languages. How does their brain operate in both

language systems? Is the brain loaded with one conceptual system or two? How thoughts and language correspond and match? Based on the above questions, some studies were conducted from psychological perspective.

Janet Nicol's proceedings "One Mind, Two Languages: Bilingual Language Processing's" discusses about the research in bilingual studies: How does the brain of a bilingual person process language? Most scholars prefer 1+2, i.e., one conceptual system plus two linguistic systems^[18].

Green's inhibitory control model explains the code-switching mechanism in the brain. A language both competes with other languages to raise its activation state and inhibits potentially competing languages. When a language is in the high activation state, it is easily to be exported, and when it is in the low activation state, it is inhibited^[19].

Future research on code-stitching will need the assistance of sciences and technology. Sociolinguists, cognitive psychologists, and neuroscientists have joined together to study the characteristics of brain activity in bilinguals. According to Abutalebi^[20], scholars have analyzed bilingual activity in the brain by positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI).

From the above literature review, we may find that much research has been done on code-stitching. Yet there are much more to do in sociolinguistics since few research has been conducted from mechanisms of Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle. In conversation analysis, many research use Cooperative Principle as the assumption that participants in a conversation normally attempt to be informative, truthful, relevant, and clear. The concept of Cooperative Principle was first introduced by H. Paul Grice in his article published in 1975 "Logic and Conversation"^[21]. It was widely accepted and used in the analysis of social linguistic phenomena. Politeness, on the other hand, is one of the major social constraints on human interaction regulating participants' communicative consideration the feelings of the others. It is one of the most effective strategies to build a good interpersonal relationship during a conversation. The Politeness Principle put forward by G. Leech encourages a speaker to express himself politely, honestly, makes the listeners feel comfortable respected^[22]. Important as the two theories are, there are few researches on the code-switching under the prescriptive of these two theories.

III. Reasons to Code-switching

Many reasons can explain why people code-switch during conversation. The main two reasons are to amplify and emphasize and add expression and personality (Figure 1^[23])

. From a cross-culture perspective, people code-switch after speaking an accent to activate stereotypes or change perceptions. In the southern part of the United States, for example, a person who speaks a southern accent or black English will be perceived as not well educated or having a lower socioeconomic status compared to a speaker who speaks a standard American accent. If a speaker feels that his/her accent is likely to lead other people to form negative impressions, the speaker tends to consciously change his/her accent with much practice and effort. If the speaker can speak without the southern accent, they can switch very quickly between the native accent when talking to the friends or family members and their modified accent when talking to the people in a more formal or professional context.

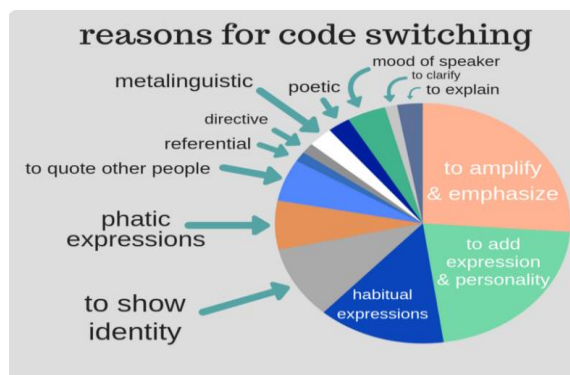


Figure 1, reasons for code-switching

Code-switching can be well explained from the perspective of sociolinguistics. Howard Giles, a professor of linguistics at the University of California, USA, put forward the theory of Communication Accommodation that people tend to adjust their way of expression when they try to emphasize or minimize the social difference between the others they speak to. According to Verschueren (2000), "using language must consist of the continuous making of linguistic choices, consciously or unconsciously, for language-internal and language-external reasons"^[24]. Language-internal or external reasons refer to some perspectives like linguistic reality, social conventions, and mental motivation.

Human beings are social creatures - not occasionally or by accident but always. Sociability is one of the people's lives as both cause and effect^[25]. It is the fundamental nature for human beings to interact with others as it provides people the necessary information to carry out daily activities. A speaker's behavior bears intended social meaning in each speech context, so he will act according to social norms in response to the context. In the case of code-switching, if a

person starts to switch from one language or variant to another, he is likely under the constraints of social rules or the speech context. One's choice of code-switching is not necessarily autonomous, and the two aspects are the external factors driving people to code-switch: Cooperative Principle and Politeness Principle.

IV. Code-switching under Cooperative Principle

In daily conversations, people usually attempt to be informative, relevant, and precise, but it also happens that people imply the hidden meaning by using unrelated words. To explain the mechanisms by which people interpret conversation implicature or to explain why people often mean more than what they say, social linguists start to explore the answer. H. Paul Grice, an eminent philosopher and linguist who researched the ways people derive meaning from languages, put forward the concept of the Cooperative Principle in his article "Logic and Conversation," published in 1975. In his book, "Studies in the Way of Words," published in 1989, Grice outlined four main maxims of conversation, which describe how people communicate when they want to make sure that others appropriately understand them [26]. There are four maxims of the Cooperative Principle as follows (Figure 2[27]).

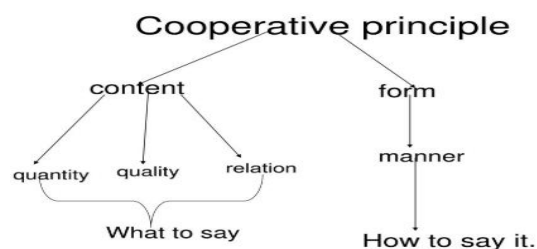


Figure two: four maxims of Cooperative Principle

The Maxim of Quantity: This maxim requires that speakers make their contribution as informative as required; speakers should not make their contribution more informative than is required.

The Maxim of Quality: This maxim requires speakers to make their contribution one that is true, which means they should not say what they think to be false or say that you lack adequate evidence.

The Maxim of Relation: It means what speakers say to others should be relevant to the topic.

The Maxim of Manner: This maxim requires speakers should speak in a well-ordered way, in a straightforward and

perspicuous way. Speakers should try to avoid obscurity, ambiguity, or unnecessary prolixity.

Under the framework of the Cooperative Principle, it is easy to understand why and how speakers code-stitch.

Example 1:

When Chairman Mao Zedong met Dr. Kissinger sent by then U.S. President Nixon in 1971 on a secret visit to China, the two had the following conversation:

Chairman Mao: "I know that some people think I am learning English, and I know a few English words, but I don't understand grammar."

Dr. Kissinger: "You invented an English word."

Chairman Mao: "Yes, I invented The English word "Zhi Laohu", the Paper tiger."

The above conversation took place under the background when US wanted to establish a diplomatic relationship with China in the 1970s[28]. It was because of Dr. Kissinger's visit to China that the top leaders of the two countries broke the ice and developed formal diplomatic relations. In the conversation, the two speakers followed the four maxims of the Cooperative Principle and Chairman code switched by saying "Zhi Laohu", a Chinese word that he invented himself. On the one hand, the sudden switch of the language made it impossible for Dr. Kissinger to understand, so Chairman Mao added the English word to it; on the other hand, Chairman Mao confirmed his English learning by switching from the two languages[29].

Example 2:

The following conversation takes place at the office of a Pakistan company. The manager is asking the secretary about the visiting schedule for the coming week.

Manager: Has the visiting schedule been decided?

Secretary: Han G, sir.

Manager: What is the first stop of the visit?

Secretary: We will arrive at the dairy company and meet the general manager tomorrow morning.

Manager: Can we finish the visit and come back by 1 PM?

Secretary: In Shallah.

The secretary switched the language from English to Urdu, an Indo-Aryan language spoken mainly in Pakistan and India. The secretary answers the first question by saying Urdu "Han G, sir," which means "Yes, sir," following the four maxims. He is unconsciously switching the language since the manager enjoys a superior position, and the Urdu expression "Han G, sir" shows much more respect to the manager. The secretary's switching also reflects that he follows The Maxim of Manner by using polite words. When the manager asks about the time to return, instead of saying "I hope so", the secretary switched again to the Urdu word "In Shallah.", which means if that is what God want to happen. Because there is no such similar expression in English and both speakers are Muslims, whose daily life is much influenced by their religion, the secretary code switched for the second time. Urdu words related to Islam bear a more complicated meaning than the English expression, but they are an inevitable part of Muslims' lives. Therefore, it happens in Pakistan that people code frequently from English to Urdu in their daily lives.

Example 3:

At an interview.

A: What languages are you capable of speaking?

B: I can speak French, English and some Chinese.

A: 你在哪里学的汉语? (Where did you learn your Chinese)

B: 我在中国工作过两年。(I used to work in China for two years)

A: Where was it ?

B: I spent one year in 上海 (Shanghai) and another year in 杭州.(Hangzhou).

B is very cooperative when answering the questions raised by A. His answer provides relevant and proper amount information as expected, and his reply is brief and orderly, meeting the above four maxims. It is interesting to see how B replies when A switches to Chinese questions. While following the four maxims, B switched immediately to prove that he is capable of speaking Chinese. Of course, B could have answered the question in English, but the result will not be as good as the code-switching choice since there is no need to explain his language ability further. When A switches back to English from Chinese, B replies with English but the words of places he used to work are still Chinese, indicating that his working experience is true, and

he knows the areas well. Example 3 shows that the speakers try to test and prove their language ability and code-switching provides the best strategy to meet the needs of the two speakers.

V. Code-switching under Politeness Principle

Politeness is a common phenomenon of international human communication. Geoffrey Neil Leech, a British linguist, put forward the Politeness Principle in 1983 to explain how politeness works in interpersonal communication and how it is achieved^[30]. He studied Grice's Cooperative Principle and thought Grice's four maxims proper when figuring out the difference between the sense and the force of a countenance. Still, he considered that Grice's theory could not explain why people choose politeness in a conversation. He put forward the six maxims to support the Politeness Principle: the Tact maxim, the Generosity maxim, the Approbation maxim, the Modesty maxim, the Agreement maxim, and the Sympathy maxim. Code-switching takes place in accordance with the above maxims.

Example 4

In the classroom

Teacher: Today we will talk about the local delicacy in your hometown. Can you name some of them in your city, Xiao Ming?

Xiao Ming: Yes, madam. The most famous one is "牛肉干", but "麻花" is also very famous. "牛肉干" means Dried Beef Stick and "麻花" means Fried Dough Twists. They are not typical western food, so you may never hear them before.

This Tact maxim states, "Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other^[31]." This maxim requires the speakers try to make the other feel comfortable and bring benefit to others in communication. Xiao Ming replies to the question with two names of the local delicacy by using the Chinese word. Realizing the two names may confuse the teacher, he explains the Chinese meaning and adds some more information. Since the name of the food does not exist in English and he must answer honestly, he offered a brief explanation for a better understanding. Therefore, his code-switching behavior meets the requirement of the tact maxim.

Example 5

In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited US and US President Barack Obama welcomed him at the South Lawn of the White House in Washington DC. President Obama delivered the welcoming speech at the arrival ceremony (Figure 3^[32]).

President Obama: Good morning. Ni hao. On behalf of Michelle and myself, President Xi, Madame Peng, members of the Chinese delegation, members of the White House. And on behalf of the American people, welcome to the United States.

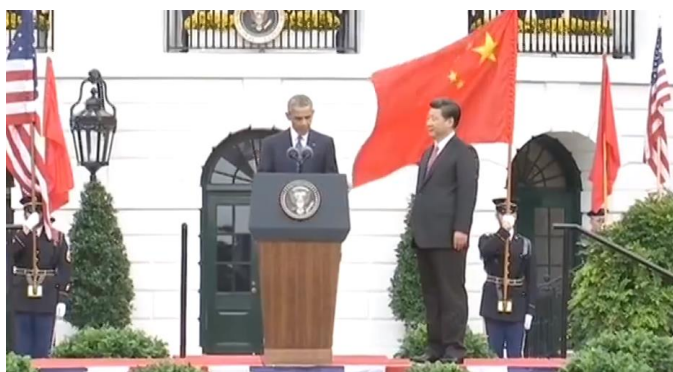


Figure 3 President Barack Obama greeted Chinese President Xi Jinping at the arrival ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington DC, the United States, Sept 25, 2015 .

Leech (1983) stated that the sympathy maxim means "minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other^[33]." This maxim can best exemplify why President Obama's code switched. The sympathy maxim requires him to maximize sympathy from President Xi. By greeting President Xi with "Ni hao", the Chinese word for "hello", President Obama shortens the distance between them and leaves Xi a good impression on his friendliness and hospitality. President Obama's code-switching is also a subtle sign that Obama's government welcomes an excellent and cooperative relationship with China. President Obama could have greeted Xi with "hello", but in doing so, his welcome would be a cold official greeting showing less hospitality.

Conclusion

Code-switching is a common but complicated language phenomenon, and it is the result of many factors. The reasons people code-switch and the ways how people code switch are far more numerous than the examples discussed above. The use of code-switching, whether consciously or unconsciously, is necessary for building harmonious interpersonal relationships. It is a strategy and a means used in linguistic communication, behind which lies the motivation of the language user. As the interactions among people of the world keep expanding in more multinational contexts, the expectations for code-switching study and research are sure to increase. Cooperative Principles and Politeness Principles are two major theories in linguistics, yet the application of these two theories to code-switching haven't been done so far. This study is a new attempt to the current research. With the help of these two theories, a better understanding of code-switching from social linguistics can be achieved. Code-switching is not a phoneme of language itself; it occurs with the constraints of social rules and it bears implicature to be interpreted carefully. Of course, the study is a limited one due to a specific perspective was taken. With the advancement of the future science and technology, a joint research in sociolinguistics, cognitive psychology and neurology will offer new insights to code-switching.

References

- [1]. Colin Baker, Colin and Sylvia Prys Jones. Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education. Multilingual Matters, 1998.
- [2]. The Monolingual Mindset as An Impediment to the Development of Plurilingual Potential in Australia[J] . Clyne Michael. Sociolinguistic Studies . 2008 (3)
- [3]. Priming of Code-Switches in Sentences: The Role of Lexical Repetition, Cognates, and Language Proficiency [J] . Gerrit Jan Kootstra, Janet G. Van Hell, Ton Dijkstra. Bilingualism: Language and Cognition . 2012 (4)
- [4]. Gumperz, J J. (1977). "The Sociolinguistic Significance of Conversational Code-Switching." RELC Journal, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 1-34.
- [5]. Poplack, S. (1988). Contrasting Patterns of Code switching in Two Communities, in Code switching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives, ed. M. Heller, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 48, 215-244
- [6]. Nilep, C (2006). Code- Switching in Sociocultural Linguistics. Colorado Research in Linguistics. Vol. 19. Boulder: University of Colorado.
- [7]. George Yancy, (2011). "The Scholar Who Coined the Term Ebonics: A Conversation with Dr. Robert L. Williams," Journal of Language, Identity, and Education 10, no. 1 (2011): 41 - 51.

- [8]. Huang Niya, Yu Dongming, Jonathan Culpeper, Michael Haugh. A Review of "Pragmatics and English Language" [J]. *Modern Foreign Languages*. 2016(01)
- [9]. George Yancy, (2011). "The Scholar Who Coined the Term Ebonics: A Conversation with Dr. Robert L. Williams," *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 10, no. 1 (2011): 41 - 51.
- [10]. Bell A. (2011). Back in style: reworking audience design [C//In ECKERT P, RICKFORD J R. (eds) *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 139-69.
- [11]. Zhou Guoguang, (2015). Code Values and Code-switching in Mandarin. [J] *Language and Writing Applications*, 67-7
- [12]. Giles H, J. (1991). *Accommodation Theory: Communication, Context, and Consequence*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1-68
- [13]. Sperber D, Wilson D. (1995) *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* M. Oxford: Blackwell, 2nd edit.
- [14]. Verschueren, J. (2000). *Understanding Pragmatics* [M]. Beijing: Foreign Languages Teaching and Research Press.
- [15]. Auer P. (1998). *Codeswitching in Conversation: Language, Interaction and Identity* [M] London: Routledge.
- [16]. Gumperz J J. (1982). *Discourse Strategies* [M]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 130-52: 73-5, 86-93.
- [17]. Myers-Scotton C. (1993). *Duelling languages: grammatical structure in code-switching* M New York: Oxford University Press. 3-6.
- [18]. Janet Nicol. (2001). *One Mind, Two Languages: Bilingual Language Processing* [M//Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing.
- [19]. Green D (1986). Control, activation and resource: A framework and a model for the control of speech in bilinguals. *Brain and Language*, 210-23.
- [20]. Aabutalebi J, (2018): *Imaging Technology*, The Blackwell Guide to Research Methods in Bilingualism and Multilingualism. Malden, MA, USA: Blackwell. 132-57.
- [21]. Gumperz, J J. (1977). "The Sociolinguistic Significance of Conversational Code-Switching." *RELC Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 1-34.
- [22]. G. Leech, (1983), *Principles of Pragmatics*, London: Longman, pp. xiv + 250
- [22]. Myers-Scotton C. (1993). *Duelling languages: grammatical structure in code-switching* M New York: Oxford University Press. 3-6.
- [23]. Seçkin Esen, *Code Switching: Definition, Types, and Examples*, <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Code-Switching-Definition-Types-and-Examples-of-Code-Switching>
- [24]. Verschueren, J. (2000). *Understanding Pragmatics* [M]. Beijing: Foreign Languages Teaching and Research Press.
- [25]. Clay Shirky (2009). "Here Comes Everybody: How Change Happens when People Come Together", p.19, Penguin UK.
- [26]. Grice, H. Paul. "Logic and Conversation." *Syntax and Semantics*, 1975. Reprinted in "Studies in the Way of Words." Harvard University Press, 1989.
- [27]. Ibid.
- [28]. Tracy Strong, Helene Kaiser. *The Pure Heart: World Knowledge Press*, 1986. 133.
- [29]. Ibid.
- [30]. G. Leech, (1983), *Principles of Pragmatics*, London: Longman, pp. xiv + 250
- [31]. Ibid.
- [32]. The time is always right to do the right thing - Building a new model of major-country relationship between China and the United States, *China Daily*, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2015xivisit/2015-09/27/content_21993909.htm
- [33]. G. Leech, (1983), *Principles of Pragmatics*, London: Longman, 103.