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**Reflection of the cultural identity of Asian elite circles through code alteration from English language into French (based on the book trilogy by Kevin Kwan "Crazy Rich Asians", "China Rich Girlfriend", "Rich people problems")**

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**Abstract**

In this article, we are going to observe the phenomenon of code alteration from English into French through the speech of the main characters and the description of the settings of novels by K. Kwan, in which he paints a picture of an elite Asian society. Our research is based on his trilogy, because most of the characters represent the educated class and are fluent in French, which is an ultimate second language of private schools. The books often refer to this language for emphatic and stylistic reasons, as code-switching is a tool used by the bilinguals to express their cognitive intentions or change the subject of a conversation. It is thought that bilingual speakers store both language systems in their mind and activate them simultaneously, when they need to send their message more clearly. In conclusion, we would like to note that the usage of French language inclusions gives the author a chance to convey his intentions of depicting a super-

exclusive society with its own rules. French has always been considered as an elite language, so the “super rich” characters of the book don’t hesitate to use it. In the course of our research we have realized that code switching has a huge linguistic potential for creating new lexical units of the language due to the large number of social and pragmatic functions of this phenomenon.

#### **For citation**

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#### **Keywords**

Elites, code-switching, bilingual systems, linguistic model, linguacultural.

## **Introduction**

In this article, we will try to look through the realization of cultural pattern of the Asian educated elites through their linguistic expressions.

Throughout the English-written narrative the characters use different foreign-language phrases to emphasize their attitude to different situations. According to the author, the elite class of Singapore and Hong Kong speaks fluent English, because from the very early stages of their childhood they have been surrounded by the English-speaking help and au-pairs and later in life obtained their education in England.

### **Reflection of the Cultural identity of Asian elite circles through code alteration**

A striking thing is that the English book by a Singapore-based author contains much code - switching into French. Presumably, it happens, because in the educated society it is considered to be obligatory to be able to understand and make conversations in French.

Let’s consider an example from the book “China rich girlfriend”:

«Located on the fifth floor of a nondescript office building on Wyndham Street, the Locke Club was Hong Kong’s most exclusive dining club—the holy of holies—and its members consisted of the *crème de la crème* of Hong Kong society and the international jet set [China Rich Girlfriend, Kevin Kwan].

So, in this example we can see the author replacing a common English phrase “a VIP”, which describes an elite dining place in Hong Kong, by a French phrase *crème de la crème*. It is the example of a situational code-switching. Linguists believe that situational code-switching occurs when the languages change depending on the situation in which the interlocutors or (in our case: English speaking authors are), while the topic of conversation does not change [Gumperz, 1982].

Another example depicts metaphorical code-switching:

«*Wow, vous êtes top, madame!*” Cassian’s nanny exclaimed as Astrid entered.

“*Merci, Ludivine.*”

“*Saint Laurent ?*”

“*Qui d’autre ?* » [China Rich Girlfriend, K. Kwan].

If the change in the topic of conversation occurs, then this is a metaphorical code-switching. This type is based on the possibilities of language switching. It is also based on the intentions of the speaker

to convey additional emotional connotations [Gumperz, 1982]. According to the authors, metaphorical code switching enriches the communicative situation, since the speaker's attitude to it is based on several social positions. It reports on the presence of multifactorial social relations in it. Metaphorical code switching, as a rule, is spontaneous and unpredictable.

In this book, the use of code switching is motivated by the author's intention to actualize cultural symbols or to attract associations accompanying conceptual educations of non-cultural origin.

Thus, most of the material of our research can be directly attributed to the metaphorical type of code switching detected by J. Gumperz [Blom, Gumperz, Hymes, 1986]. Comparing situational and metaphoric code switching, we can see that situational code switching implies a greater change in the language situation, and the metaphorical code-switching remains unchanged: it is more about the speaker's internal motives.

Scientists at the source of research on the psycholinguistic aspect of code switching believed that there are two language bilingual systems that can be "activated" and "deactivated" independently of one another [Gerard, Scarborough, 1989]. During the research, it was found out that some bilinguals read texts containing switching in both languages, slower than monolingual texts. Linguists explained this by saying that the mental switching mechanism takes more time to determine which language system to "turn on" or "turn off" [Ostapenko, 2014]. The authors of subsequent studies put forward the theory of the joint storage of two language systems in a single mental space and their simultaneous activation at the time of verbal communication or reading of a bilingual text [Grainger, 1993]. In the example below we can see the author switching on and off two languages to show the change of the topic and express the language competences of the character: «He took a deep breath, straightened his jacket, and strolled over to where she was standing. “*Je m'appelle Carlton. Je suis le frère de Rachel. Ça va ?*”

“*Ça va bien,*” Scheherazade replied, impressed by his perfect French accent. [Rich People Problems. K. Kwan]. »

The theory mentioned above served as the basis for the creation of a psycholinguistic theory of triggering, authored by M. Kline [Clyne 1967, 1987, 2003]. In this theory, a psycholinguistic motivated code switching is considered to be conditioned by the specific rules of production of speech along with the speaker's intentions [Ostapenko, 2014]. For this theory, the most important is the mechanism that ensures the functioning of language systems in the speaker's brain: the same lexical units act as triggers in the process of language switching.

K. Myers-Scott has developed a special linguistic model, which is based on the concept of matrix language. According to this model, for code-switching it is necessary to distinguish between the matrix language and the guest language. Matrix language is the main language of communication. A language whose elements are included in the matrix language is a guest [Myers-Scotton, 1993]. In the following example, English is the matrix language of communication, and French is the guest language: «Is that so?” *Marie-Hélène* said in astonishment, staring across the room at the girl with renewed interest. “Well, she is rather *soignée,*” she conceded. » [Crazy Rich Asians, K. Kwan]

Matrix language creates a morphosyntactic frame into which foreign-language elements can be included, both in the form of separate lexemes, and in the form of several related lexical-grammatical forms [Markelova, 2014]. Let's consider an example:

«Now let me show you the *pièce de résistance,*” Leo said, pronouncing “*pièce*” like peace. » [Crazy Rich Asians, K. Kwan]. The French phrase *pièce de résistance* is usually used to describe a “masterpiece”. Although, it was originally used to describe a work of art, now it is mainly used to describe a piece of clothes “to die for”.

In this example, the guest units of the language are French lexical units: nouns with an article. This example proves that foreign inclusions can be included in the receiving language in the form of coherent lexico-grammatical forms.

The style and management of conversation are closely related to social significance. The use of a specific code in each specific situation requires not only linguistic competence, but also a high degree of sociability. The tone of the communicative act is set at the expense of the social status of the subjects of communication, and it also implies the corresponding rights and duties of the speaker. Let's consider an example, where the author introduces French words to express the cultural surroundings of the elaborate society: « “*Désolée, monsieur, très désolée,*” she kept saying into the phone [Crazy Rich Asians, K. Kwan]. »

Code selection demonstrates social attitudes. The choice of code is a definite conditional arrangement between the participants of communication. The selected language or dialect indicates the social relations between the subjects of communication. For example:

«Listen, *chérie*, everything here is *très, très cher*. And it takes five months for delivery. Do you really want to know how much it costs?” she said, taking a slow drag from her cigarette. » [Crazy Rich Asians, K. Kwan].

In this example, we can see a conversation between a sales-assistant in a shop and a girl, who wants to buy. The author introduces French words in order to emphasize the pompous surroundings, in which Astrid (one of the characters) is standing.

O. Rodionova believes that “communicative intention is carried out through the choice of the appropriate language. On the basis of existing knowledge about culture and language situation, communicators know whether the linguistic choice will be unexpected or meaningful, and what it would mean in the given social context.” The process of code switching to another language, as well as the choice of language itself, can be successful if the listeners and those who speak it are able to correctly understand and interpret the text [Rodionova, 2015].

Most often, the choice of a foreign language form implies the rejection of the synonymic form already existing in the language system of the receiving language, and replacement of it with an alternative way of expressing communicative intentions.

For example:

«Recovering himself, Professor Oon put on his *blasé*, clinical tone. »

[Rich People Problems. K. Kwan]. We can observe the word “*blasé*” being a substitute to the English word “jaded”. Presumably, it is done to make the description of the situation less serious and more frivolous. Therefore, code switching can be regarded as a way to create contrast at the paradigmatic level and the language alterations themselves can be considered as expressive means and can participate in the creation of stylistic tools along with other language resources.

The ability of foreign language forms to find contact with the linguacultural side of the source language has been noted by many scholars, and cases of contrasting and pragmatically determined code switching are especially notable. In a pragmatically conditioned switch, the speaker uses metaphorical images, meanings and connotations of a specific code, and in contrast, one compares and contrasts two languages, without paying attention to their symbolic properties.

Sociolinguist H. Haarman, who studied the texts of Japanese advertisements, was among the first scholars to begin the study of the symbolic properties of language codes [Markelova, 2014; Haarmann, 1989]. He came to the conclusion that the use of foreign language code in advertising texts is due to the need to correlate the advertising text with ethno-cultural stereotypes regarding the native speakers of the recipient language. English is a symbol of international recognition and reliability, French -

sophisticated taste, fashion, charm, attractiveness. Consequently, French is most often used to promote products such as perfumes, cosmetics, clothing, luxury items. English, in turn, is popular in advertising cars, alcohol, household appliances, fashion clothing, watches, food. Following H. Haarman, a number of scientists conducted studies on the symbolism of language codes in advertising [Bhatia, 1992; Martin, 2002; Takashi, 1990]. French expressions in different texts outside the francophone community are associated with femininity, high fashion, sophisticated elegance, laid-back beauty and exquisite cuisine. The value of a foreign language unit in such cases is secondary, or it may not be taken into account at all during the interpretation of the statement.

The symbolism of a language code can be due not only to language factors, but also social ones. Thus, we can define a certain stereotype of language codes, a fragment of a conceptual picture of the world of a person. For example: «Araminta paused for a moment, pivoted expertly toward the photographer with one hand on her hip, her other hand showing off her exquisite Neil Felipp Suzy Wong *minaudière*, before proceeding up the red-carpeted steps. [Rich People Problems. K. Kwan]. » The word *minaudière* is a replacement for the word – clutch. It is probably used in this context to stress the elegance of the outfit the Singaporean heiress was wearing.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, we would like to note that the usage of French language inclusions gives the author a chance to convey his intentions of depicting a super-exclusive society with its own rules. French has always been considered as an elite language, so the “super rich” characters of the book don’t hesitate to use it. In the course of our research we have realized that code switching has a huge linguistic potential for creating new lexical units of the language due to the large number of social and pragmatic functions of this phenomenon.

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**Отражение культурной идентичности азиатской элиты посредством переключения кода с английского языка на французский: на примере трилогии Кевина Квана “Crazy Rich Asians”, “China Rich Girlfriend”, “Rich people problems”**

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**Аннотация**

В данной статье мы рассмотрим феномен смены лингвистического кода с английского языка на французский язык на примере разговоров главных героев в трилогии книг К. Квана «Безумно богатые азиаты», в которой автор описывает элитное азиатское общество. Наше исследование основывается именно на этих книгах, так как большинство главных героев представляет образованный высший свет азиатских стран и свободно говорит на французском языке, который является базовым вторым языком для изучения в элитных частных школах мира. Книга обращается к смене лингвистического кода в данном случае, чтобы отразить эмотивные и стилистические намерения автора. Использование включений на французском языке дает автору возможность передать свои намерения изобразить сверхбогатое общество с его собственными правилами. Французский язык всегда считался элитарным языком, поэтому «сверхбогатые» персонажи книги не стесняются его

использовать. В ходе наших исследований мы поняли, что переключение кода имеет огромный лингвистический потенциал для создания новых лексических единиц языка из-за большого числа социальных и прагматических функций этого явления.

#### Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

Тугова Е.В., Медведева Е.С., Шкинева М.А., Ким А.Р. Reflection of the cultural identity of Asian elite circles through code alteration from English language into French (based on the book trilogy by Kevin Kwan “Crazy Rich Asians”, “China Rich Girlfriend”, “Rich people problems”) // Культура и цивилизация. 2018. Том 8. № 5А. С. 185-191.

#### Ключевые слова

Элиты, переключение кода, двуязычные системы, лингвистическая модель, лингвокультурология.

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