

## Code-Switching in English-Mandarin Pop Songs

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### Abstract

This research paper analyzes code-switching in popular Mandarin songs in contemporary China. It describes code-switching patterns and investigates the functions of code-switching in the lyrics. It concludes with a discussion and implications for language teaching.

### Introduction

The rise of the multilingual population is significantly influenced by international business, communication, and immigration. Numerous countries and regions in Asia, including Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore, officially or unofficially embrace multilingualism. Today, there are more individuals who are bilingual or multilingual than those who speak only one language, displaying the linguistic diversity worldwide (Li et al., 2012). Code-switching is a common linguistic practice among multilingual speakers.

Code-switching occurs when a speaker alternates between two or more language varieties in a single conversation (Gumperz, 1982). This phenomenon manifests itself in diverse ways and to achieve a variety of goals. It may occur within or between sentences; it may signify social aspects such as identity or solidarity among people who share values; and, as this paper demonstrates, it may serve the author's personal ideas (Shartiely, 2016).

This paper analyzed the English-Chinese code-switching by American-born Chinese (ABC) singers in their songs. ABCs grew up in America because of family immigration (Jones & Themistocleous, 2022). The majority of them are from Hong Kong and Taiwan. During their childhood, they used English in their daily life but they spoke Mandarin or Cantonese at home. They acquired multilingual language ability and can now switch back and forth freely. With their music intelligence and multilingual capacity, their songs are composed of a mix of Chinese and English which interests the young generation from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Songs that incorporate code-switching provide listeners with a multicultural and multilingual experience. It can also serve as a form of cultural expression, reflecting the artist's background and the interconnectedness of different linguistic and musical traditions. Overall, code-switching in music contributes to the dynamic and evolving nature of musical expression in a globalized world.

In this paper, I will first demonstrate the ways in which ABC singers code-switch in their songs and discuss the potential reasons behind these lyric choices. Next, I will explore the



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attitudes and emotions that the artists elicit or reveal by code-switching. In the end, I will discuss some practical implications for ESL teaching. Considering the fact that young learners in China have an interest in idol culture, English-Chinese code-switching songs can be used to cultivate young generations' interest toward English language study.

### **What Is Code-Switching?**

When multilingual speakers hold a conversation, their utterances are often mixed with words or phrases from other languages. Code-switching between two languages is usually thought of as a characteristic of casual conversation between peers, used by bilinguals when they speak spontaneously, but with little concern for how the patterns sound (Davies & Bentahila, 2008b). Code-switching is different from loanwords. A loanword is a word or phrase that is borrowed from one language and incorporated into another language with little or no translation. But code-switching is the phenomenon that speakers who have the ability to speak two or more languages switch flexibly between these languages in conversation. A loanword is when the speaker borrows one word from one language and puts it into another language in order to form the sentence (Li et al., 2012).

The matrix language frame model (MLF), as proposed by Myers-Scotton and Myers (1993, as cited by Li et al. 2012), is one of the linguistic approaches to code-switching. In the MLF model, the matrix language is the dominant or "principal" language in a code-switching context. The matrix language provides the structure and syntax of the discourse, while the "embedded" or "guest" language is the language or variety that is inserted into the matrix language. The matrix language is usually the language of the community or context in which the discourse is taking place, or the language in which the speakers are most proficient. The embedded language, on the other hand, is typically a minority or heritage language that is used to convey specific concepts or ideas that are not easily expressed in the matrix language. The MLF model proposes that the matrix language and the embedded language interact in a particular way, creating a specific linguistic structure in code-switching. The matrix language provides the syntactic frame or "frame" for the discourse, while the embedded language fills in the "slots" within that frame.

Regarding the social functions of code-switching, according to Blom & Gumperz (1972), there are two main reasons that people use code-switching. One is called *situational* code-switching. Bilingual interlocutors use code-switching depending on the situation or conditions of the speech. The other is *metaphorical* code-switching, which is mainly used when bilingual speakers want to index a certain kind of social meaning or attitude towards the topic or matters they discuss. Discourse purposes of code-switching can be divided into six categories: quotation, addressee specifications, interjection, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization vs. objectification (Gumperz, 1982; Künzler, 2019).

- *Quotation* is normally used to cite speech from others directly or indirectly in order to maintain the original speech's authenticity.
- *Switching addressee* specification is mainly for singling out a certain person or group of people in a specific code. The choice of language switching depends on the language preferred by the addressees. It can enhance the communication and ensure that the

message is well understood. Meanwhile, it is important to inform other observers or participants about the language background of the people involved. This can help them understand why code-switching is occurring and facilitates effective communication.

- Code-switching with *interjections* involves interjections or fillers. It is a natural way for individuals who can understand both of the languages to convey their emotions or reactions which are felt appropriate or suitable at that moment.
- Switching for *clarification* is very useful and common when the multilingual speakers believe that a particular term or concept may not be well understood by the audience in the original language.
- Code-switching for *message qualification* occurs when the speaker introduces the topic in one language and elaborates on it in another language. It can be employed to emphasize or amplify the content of the message. The message may be more vivid and expressive if the speakers can switch to a particular language or dialect to convey the subtleties which might not be easier for them to express in one language.
- Code-switching for *personalization* is when the speaker switches to a different language to mark their degree of personal involvement (intimate or distant). In contrast, code-switching for objectification is when the speaker switches to a different language to indicate whether what they are saying is their opinion or a fact.

Code-switching can be divided into *inter-sentential* code-switching and *intra-sentential* code-switching. Inter-sentential code-switching is a phenomenon in which the speakers switch between two or more languages between sentences during a conversation (Gumperz, 1982, as cited in Li & Fung, 2012). Intra-sentential code-switching is when speakers switch between more than one language within a single sentence.

Künzler (2019) summarized the functions of *inter-sentential* code-switching as:

- Pragmatic distinction: Multilingual speakers can use one language for formal communication and another for informal conversation.
- Clarification or emphasis: Switching to another language can be used to clarify or emphasize, especially when there is no direct translation available.
- Group identity and social factors: Identity marking and cultural reflection or social affiliations can be made by code-switching. Speakers may code-switch to signal belonging to a particular identity or social group.
- Borrowing specialized vocabulary: Speakers may switch to a language which they are familiar with and think would be more suitable to express their ideas or purpose where there is not suitable vocabulary or terminology in another language.
- Linguistic competence: Proficiency in multiple languages may display the speakers' linguistic repertoires to express themselves effectively.

Inter-sentential code-switching is a common phenomenon that is used in multilingual and multicultural communications. Multilingual speakers can shift between two languages seamlessly to convey their ideas and interact with others, so inter-sentential code-switching is a dynamic form of language use that can vary in frequency, style, and purpose across different speech communications.

### **Code-Switching in Songs by ABC Singers**

Research by Moody (2020) shows that while English functions differently from industry to industry and in different cultures, each industry demonstrates bilingual creativity and linguistic innovation that has developed from the spread of English into Asia. Among many bilingual communities, code-switching is thought to imply that a speaker lacks the capacity to use a certain word in one language and can only express it in another language. Some people have labeled this behavior as lazy, careless, and demonstrating an inability to form correct sentences (Jones & Themistocleous, 2022). However, over time, sociolinguists are beginning to acknowledge that this hybridity is not a fault, but rather serves a purpose (Jones & Themistocleous, 2022).

There are numerous instances illustrating the sophisticated utilization of code-switching to heighten the rhetorical and aesthetic impact of lyrics. These examples show that code-switching patterns can interact with elements of lyrical structure, including rhyme, line segmentation, and chorus, and reinforce connections and distinctions in order to enrich various forms of artistic expression. Furthermore, code-switching can contribute semantically to the message conveyed by the lyrics. This occurs when it is employed to incorporate specific lexis or diction typical of the genre, emphasizing specific lexical elements, drawing attention to semantic comparison or parallels, or achieving patterns of parallelism, repetition, or rephrasing (Davies & Bentahila, 2008a). For example, in Cheb Akil's song "Diri Fiya Confiance," almost all the lines in Arabic rhyme with the repeated French phrase from the song's title (p. 5). Another example is the song "Ne me quitte pas" (Don't give up on me) by Cheb Lamin. The French line which also constitutes the title of the song is repeated 13 times among the Arabic lyrics (p. 7). Also, in the song "Rani murak" sung by Cheb Hasni, the key lines "Ca fait longtemps" (it's been a long time) and "Pour me dire oui" (to say yes to me) are both repeated many times in French in a song otherwise dominated by Arabic (p. 8).

According to Chan's (2009) research on songs in Hong Kong, code-switching from Cantonese to English has been primarily considered as quoting "Western" concepts and ideas, conveying referential and connotative meanings absent in Cantonese. This, on the other hand, paper examines the functions of English lyrics in Mandarin songs, finding they are more variable beyond a symbol of "Western culture." Particularly, code-switching fits into the rhyming, pointing out the theme, marking text structure and indexing deep emotions such as sorrow, meditation, self-accusation, and loneliness.

To explore code-switching in songs, this paper closely examines some typical examples of English-Mandarin lyrics of popular songs by some famous ABC singers.

### **Research Questions**

This paper aims to explore popular songs which contain an abundance of English - Chinese lyrics by ABC singers from the late 1990s to now. Specifically, it addresses the following questions:

1. What are the types of code-switching (intra-sentential, inter-sentential, discourse markers) that occur in the lyrics?
2. What words, phrases, or sentences tend to be used in English in the lyrics?
3. What are the functions of code-switching into English in the lyrics?

### Methodology

This research paper analyzes eleven Mandarin popular songs by singers who are originally from English-speaking countries (Table 1).

Table 1  
*Songs Used for Analysis in This Paper and their Features*

Singer	Song title(s)	Code-switching frequency	Artist's Background
Khalil Fong	1. "A song I wrote to you"	3 times	born in 1983 and raised in Hawaii by Hong Kong parents; performed mainly in Hong Kong then mainland China. Active years: from 2008 to now (方大同, Khalil Fong, 2023)
Will Pan	1. "UUU" 2. "Do not wanna wake up"	9 times 8 times	born in West Virginia in 1980 to Taiwanese parents; grew up in San Francisco; active from 2002 to now ("潘瑋柏, Will Pan," 2023)
Edison Chen	1. "The love I owe you"	4 times	born in Vancouver, Canada in 1980; grew up in L.A.; his family is from Hong Kong ("陈冠希, Edison Chen," 2023)
Leehom Wang	1. "In the remote place" 2. "Open your heart" 3. "Take your time"	4 times 11 times 10 times	born in 1976 and raised in New York; graduated from Berklee College of Music with a doctorate degree; his family is from Taiwan. He has been performing since 1998 ("王力宏, Leehom Wang," 2023)
JJ Lin	1. "Always online" 2. "Only told you"	12 times 10 times	born in 1981 and raised in Singapore; his family is from Fujian Province, China; with his traditional musical family background, he started learning to play piano in his childhood and received many awards for singing and composing songs before he was 18. From 2003 onward, he has always been ranked as a top popular singer ("林俊杰, JJ Lin," 2023)
Alex To	1. "Goodbye Louis" 2. "I never meant to hurt you"	4 times 5 times	born in Hong Kong in 1962 but moved to Canada afterwards; spent his youth in both Canada and the United States of America. He has been acting on the stage and singing from the late 1990s until now ("杜德伟, Alex To," 2023)

All of the selected songs were released between 1996 and 2018 and are still very popular in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. These songs have been played on national TV channels such as “MTV Tianlai Village” and featured on popular magazines such as “Music World of Today.”

I translated the Chinese lyrics of the selected songs into English while listening to all the songs many times to determine the reason why they showed preference for using certain language to express their meanings. In order to make a clear illustration of the first finding, I transcribed lyrics using the Chinese phonetic system, pinyin, between the Chinese lyrics version and its English translation. (The pinyin will only be provided when it is relevant for the discussion.)

I used Wikipedia to look up the five popular singers’ early years, music connections, and their early singing careers. Also, I went to music websites to find the lyrics of the songs I selected. Not only did I look for the lyrics, I also read about the production of these songs and music albums, the artists’ original ideas, design backgrounds, purposes, intentions, and album styles. The singers who composed and sang these popular songs have unique overseas backgrounds but their families have Chinese heritage. As a result, they are proficient in both English and Mandarin. They often use English in their daily life and speak Mandarin at home with their families. After graduation from the universities in the United States, they chose to go back to Hong Kong and Taiwan to develop their music careers (Table 1).

### **Findings**

From my analysis of the sampled song lyrics, I identified five functions of code-switching. These functions are (1) code-switching for rhyme, (2) code-switching to shift from introspection to addressing a second person, (3) code-switching for common expressions, and (4) code-switching for the chorus. The selected song lyrics displayed both intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching.

#### **Code-Switching for Rhyme**

One common technique for making songs attractive and easy to recall is using rhyming, keeping the syllables of the last words the same between lines. This technique is not unique to bilingual songs, but ABC songwriters employed it to blend the two codes in their songs.

In line 4, the pronunciation of the last Chinese character “右” in pinyin is [yòu], which is a close sound to English “you” at the end of the following line, making it a slant rhyme. Continuing with line 5, Fong switches to English to point out the theme of this song by making the last word as an English word, “you” [ju:], which almost rhymes with “右” [yòu], the last character of line 4. In short, Khalil Fong uses inter-sentential code-switching to sing the last sentence in English which rhymed with the last Mandarin line. In this way, the English-Mandarin lyrics work together in harmony.

## Excerpt 1: Song 4, “A song I wrote to you,” by Khalil Fong (2009)

Original lyrics	Pinyin	English translation
1 这是为你写的歌, 充满 忐忑	zhè shì wéi nǐ xiě de gē, chōng mǎn tǎn tè	<i>This is the song I write for you, full of uneasiness</i>
2 像生命所有转折, 要你 认可	xiàng shēng mìng suǒ yǒu zhuǎn zhē, yào nǐ rèn kě	<i>It asks for your recognition, like all my life's transitions</i>
3 只等你来唱和	zhī děng nǐ lái chàng hé	<i>It only waits for your melody</i>
4 我会在你左右	wǒ huì zài nǐ zuǒ <b>yòu</b>	<i>I will be with you</i>
5 Cause baby I wrote this I wrote this for <b>you</b>		<i>Cause baby I wrote this I wrote this for you</i>

Excerpt 2 shows the chorus of the song “the love I owe you,” with inter-sentential code-switching.

## Excerpt 2: Song 10, “The love I owe you,” by Edison Chen (2000)

Original lyrics	Pinyin	English translation
1 I love you, I love <b>you</b>		<i>I love you, I love you</i>
2 我都不是太清楚	wǒ dōu bù shì tài qīng <b>chǔ</b>	<i>I am not quite sure</i>
3 谈谈情说说爱	tán tán qíng shuō shuō ài	<i>Talk about love</i>
4 还是宁愿跳跳舞	huán shì níng yuàn tiào tiào <b>wǔ</b>	<i>Would rather than dancing</i>
5 I owe you, I owe <b>you</b>		<i>I owe you, I owe you</i>
6 抱歉让你不满足	bào qiàn ràng nǐ bù mǎn <b>zú</b>	<i>I'm sorry I'm not enough for you</i>
7 我欠你的爱	wǒ qiàn le nǐ de ài	<i>The love I owe you</i>
8 我欠了你最危险的礼物	wǒ qiàn le nǐ zuì wēi xiǎn de lǐ <b>wù</b>	<i>The most dangerous gift I owe you</i>

In lines 2, 4, 6, and 8, the last Chinese characters (“楚” [chǔ], “舞” [wǔ], “足” [zú], and “物” [wù]) rhyme together. The last word in the English lyric line “you” (line 5) rhymes with these words, blending in seamlessly with the Mandarin lyrics lines.

## Excerpt 3: Song 8, “In that remote place,” by Leehom Wang (2005)

Original lyrics	Pinyin	English translation
1 Dance with me dance with me		<i>Dance with me dance with me</i>
2 Come on and dance with me		<i>Come on and dance with me</i>
3 这首的节奏已播放在电话里	zhè shǒu de jié zòu yǐ bō fāng zài diàn huà <b>lǐ</b>	<i>The rhythm has been played on the phone</i>
4 Slide with me, slide with <b>me</b>		<i>Slide with me, slide with me</i>
5 Come on and slide with <b>me</b>		<i>Come on and slide with me</i>
6 跟我一起唱	gēn wǒ yī qǐ chàng	<i>Sing with me</i>
7 就拉近了距离 Sing	jiù lā jìn le jù lí sing	<i>Draw us closer then we sing</i>

In Excerpt 3, the singer also uses inter-sentential code-switching. By choosing the last Chinese character “里” in line 3 and “离” in line 7, which are pronounced as [lǐ] and [lí] respectively, Wang creates a rhyme with the last word in the English line: “me.”

Excerpt 4 is an example of both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching. In lines 5, 7, 9 and 11, intra-sentential code-switching is employed to complete the clause.

## Expert 4: Song 5, “Always online,” by JJ Lin (2009)

Original lyrics	Pinyin	English translation
1 遥远两端, 爱挂在天空飞	yáo yuǎn liǎng duān, ài guà zài tiān kōng fēi	<i>Love is flying up into the far ends of sky</i>
2 风停了也无所谓	fēng tíng le yě wú suǒ wèi	<i>It does not matter that the wind stops</i>
3 只因为你总说	zhǐ yīn wéi nǐ zǒng shuō	<i>It is simply because you always say</i>
4 Everything will be okay		<i>Everything will be okay</i>
5 准备好了, three two <b>one</b>	zhǔn bèi hǎo le	<i>Are you ready, three two one</i>
6 I'm always <b>online</b>		<i>I'm always online</i>
7 和你 one to one, 爱开始扩 散	hé nǐ <b>one to one</b> , ài kāi shǐ kuò <b>sàn</b>	<i>Together with you one to one, love starts spreading</i>



8 我们连结了 穿越, 天空 银河 oh	wǒ mén lián jié le chuān yuè, tiān kōng yín hé	<i>We're connected, crossing the Milky Way oh</i>
9 开始倒数, three two <b>one</b>	kāi shǐ dǎo shù, three two <b>one</b>	<i>Count backwards, three two one</i>
10 删除我的孤单	shān chú wǒ de gū <b>dān</b>	<i>Deleting my loneliness</i>
11 More and more, 尽是深刻	more and more, jìn shì shēn kè	<i>More and more, all is depth</i>
12 爱亮了, 爱笑了	ài liàng le, ài xiào le	<i>Love is brighting, love is smiling</i>
13 I'm always online		<i>I'm always online</i>

As in Excerpt 2 above, not only does Lin rhyme the Mandarin lyrics together but he also makes the English line rhyme with the Mandarin lyric lines above and below it. In line 5 and line 6, the last syllables of the English words “one” and “online” form a close rhyme with each other and with the last Chinese character “散” [sǎn] in line 7. Also, in line 9, the English word “one” is rhymed with the Chinese character “单” [dān]. In weaving both languages together in interlacing rhymes like this, the songwriter and singer can appeal to his Mandarin-English bilingual audience as well as expressing his own competent bilingualism and fluid Chinese American identity.

Excerpt 5: Song 2, “Do not wanna wake up” by Will Pan (2012)

Original lyrics	Pinyin	English Translation
1 So baby tonight <b>tonight</b>		<i>So baby tonight tonight</i>
2 掏出内心让你明白	tāo chū nèi xīn ràng nǐ míng <b>bái</b>	<i>Bring my heart out to let you see</i>
3 你的期待 依赖	nǐ de qī dài yī <b>lài</b>	<i>Your expectation, dependency</i>
4 能让辛苦变愉快	néng ràng xīn kǔ biàn yú <b>kuài</b>	<i>Would make difficulty into joy</i>
5 不想醒来 醒来	bù xiǎng xǐng lái xǐng <b>lái</b>	<i>Do not want to wake</i>
6 生命有你才精彩	shēng mìng yǒu nǐ cái jīng <b>cǎi</b>	<i>Life will only be wonderful with you</i>
7 so baby <b>tonight</b>		<i>So baby tonight</i>
8 让感动直达未来	ràng gǎn dòng zhí dá wèi <b>lái</b>	<i>Let impression get into future</i>

Excerpt 5 shows inter-sentential code-switching. In the chorus, Pan first uses an English sentence “So baby tonight, tonight” to introduce the situation, directly addressing the target of

his love. Then, except for line 7, all the last Chinese characters of the remaining lines, “白” [bái], “赖” [lài], “快” [kuài], “来” [lái], and “彩” [cǎi] rhyme together and form a slant rhyme with the last syllable of the English word “tonight.”

Excerpt 6 is from another classic song by Will Pan.

Excerpt 6: Song 3, “UUU” by Will Pan (2010)

Original lyrics	Pinyin	English Translation
1 Tell me baby, I love u love u love u, 陷入梦幻催眠的魔术	Tell me baby, I love u love u love u, xiàn rù mèng huàn cuī mián de mó <b>shù</b>	<i>Tell me baby, I love u love u love u, sinking into the dreamy hypnotic magic</i>
2 So baby baby, tell me baby, I love u love u love <b>u</b>		<i>So baby baby, tell me baby, I love u love u love u</i>
3 爱情在潜意识被征服	ài qíng zài qián yì shí bèi zhēng <b>fú</b>	<i>Love is conquered in the subconscious</i>
4 I'm crazy over u u u u <b>u</b>		<i>I'm crazy over u u u u u</i>
5 如此疯狂的中了毒毒毒毒毒	rú cǐ fēng kuáng de zhōng le dú dú dú dú <b>dú</b>	<i>Getting poisoned crazily</i>
6 I'm going crazy over u u u u <b>u</b>		<i>I'm crazy over u u u u u</i>
7 触控的心被启动 点选传说中的 的幸福	chù kòng de xīn bèi qǐ dòng diǎn xuǎn chuán shuō zhōng de xìng <b>fú</b>	<i>Touch-controlled heart is switched on selecting legendary happiness</i>
8 I'm crazy over u u u u <b>u</b>		<i>I'm crazy over u u u u u</i>
9 如此疯狂的中了毒毒毒毒毒	rú cǐ fēng kuáng de zhōng le dú dú dú dú <b>dú</b>	<i>Getting poisoned crazily</i>
10 I m going crazy over u u u u <b>u</b>		<i>I m going crazy over u u u u u</i>
11 Cause this is all about <b>u</b> oh yeah yeah		<i>Cause this is all about u oh yeah yeah</i>

During the whole song, Pan almost constantly code-switched inter-sententially. In line 1, the last English word in the first clause, “u” is rhymed with the sound of the last character in next Mandarin clause, 术 [shù]. Meanwhile, the last sound of line 2, “u,” is rhymed with the pronunciation of the last character of line 3, “福” [fú]. The repeated letter of line 4, “u,” is rhymed with the pronunciation of the last character of line 5, “毒” [dú]. The repeated letter of

line 6, “u,” is rhymed with the pronunciation of the last character of line 7, “福,” again pronounced as [fú]. Repeatedly, the rhyme occurs in the next pair sequence of line 8 & 9. This song applied both intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching.

Excerpt 7 is a song by JJ Lin that contains Mandarin, Korean, and English in inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching (lines 2 and 3, respectively).

Excerpt 7: Song 6, “Only told you” by JJ Lin (2006).

Original lyrics	Pinyin and Korean	English translation
1 사랑해요 只 对你说	사랑해요 zhī duì nǐ shuō	사랑해요 [ <i>I love you</i> ] only say to you
2 I will love you and forevermore		<i>I will love you and forevermore</i>
3 我答应 baby, you will see	wǒ dá yīng baby, you will <b>see</b>	<i>I promise, baby, you will see</i>
4 每一个我都属于你	měi yī gè wǒ dū shǔ yú nǐ	<i>Every bit of myself all belongs to you</i>

There is a rhyme at the end of the lyrics. In line 3, the last word, “see,” rhymes with the last Chinese character, “你”[nǐ].

In summary, the ABC song writers and singers used code-switching to build perfect or slant rhyming. Although distinct lyric lines are delivered in different languages, they unite in the rhyme, thus creating a sense of harmony between the two codes. This harmony both shows the artists’ high proficiency in the two languages and the intimate interrelationship between the two parts of their identity as ABCs.

### **Code-Switching to Shift from Introspection to Addressing the Second Person**

ABC artists are fond of metaphorical code-switching for conveying feelings. The five songs below show code-switching to shift addresses. While the Mandarin lyrics generally refer to the singers’ inner feelings and reflection, the English lines address the target of their affection in the second person.

Excerpt 8 is from the song “I never meant to hurt you,” composed and sung in 1995 by Alex To, one of the earliest English-Chinese code-switching ABC singers. He is a pioneer of inter-sentential code-switching between English and Mandarin lyrics. After his success, a number of ABC singers started following in his footsteps.

The song starts with Mandarin lyrics expressing the singer’s sorrow and loneliness because he can not see his lover (lines 1-10). It also indicates the reason for his apology. Importantly, the Mandarin lyrics are words he spoke to himself. However, he switches to English with “baby I’m so sorry” (line 11) when he addresses the second person. In lines 12 and 13, there is a code-switching for message qualification (Gumperz, 1982; Künzler, 2019), with the Mandarin lyrics reiterating the message in the English lyrics and adding emphasis. The same

type of code-switching recurs in lines 15-16, where the phrase “please come back” is expressed in English and then in Mandarin. Although Mandarin is used in lyric lines addressing the second person, they follow the English lines. In short, To used code-switching flexibly to index the shift in addressees.

Excerpt 8: Song 11, “I never meant to hurt you” by Alex To (1995).

Original lyrics	English Translation
1 真心无奈, 多心都为了爱	<i>A sincere heart is hopeless, suspicious of love</i>
2 我坐在这, 傻傻的发呆	<i>I am sitting here in an idiotic daze</i>
3 我仍依赖, 你纯纯的爱	<i>I am still relying on your pure love</i>
4 我心还在, 爱你的人还在	<i>My heart is still here, the one who loves you is still here</i>
5 苦苦等, 想哭哭不出来	<i>Waiting painfully, want to cry but i can't</i>
6 无心伤害, 你应该明白	<i>I never meant to hurt you, you should know</i>
7 爱太多空隙, 受伤容易	<i>Love has so many gaps, it's so easy to get hurt</i>
8 互信互爱才是唯一	<i>Mutual trust and love is the only way</i>
9 对你的付出, 都放在心里	<i>Put all my effort for you in my heart</i>
10 我始终这样珍惜, 我怎么会忘记	<i>I always cherish us like this, how would I forget</i>
11 feel so sorry, baby I'm so sorry	<i>Feel so sorry, baby I'm so sorry</i>
12 I never meant, I never meant to hurt you	<i>I never meant, I never meant to hurt you</i>
13 无心伤害, 你应该明白	<i>I never meant to hurt you, you should know</i>
14 feel so lonely, baby I'm so lonely	<i>Feel so lonely, baby I'm so lonely</i>
15 do you know, I need you to come back	<i>Do you know, I need you to come back</i>
16 are you alright? 请快点回来	<i>Are you alright? please come back soon</i>

“Goodbye Louis” is another masterpiece released in 2018 by Alex To, showing English-Chinese inter-sentential code-switching.

## Excerpt 9: Song 1, “Goodbye Louis,” by Alex To (2018)

Original lyrics	English Translation
1 终于明白当时你的笑容	<i>Finally understood your smile then</i>
2 是留给我一辈子的礼物	<i>It is a gift to my whole life</i>
3 每当经过我们走过的路	<i>When I passed the way we walked</i>
4 我知道你还留在我心底住	<i>I know you are still living in the depths of my heart</i>
5 你唱的歪歌, 幽的默, 都记得	<i>The devious song you sing, the humor, I remember it all</i>
6 你让我丢开烦闷	<i>You make me give up worrying</i>
7 唤醒纯粹的快乐	<i>Awakening pure happiness</i>
8 你陪我人生 最珍贵 的时刻	<i>The precious moment you stay with me</i>
9 在纷乱世界 闲着	<i>Is relaxing in this chaotic world</i>
10 谈 欢离悲合 笑着	<i>Talking about the joy, leaving sorrow, smiling</i>
11 我的老朋友, 当下胜过永久	<i>My old friend, right now is better than forever</i>
12 单纯而自由, 成就不如享受	<i>Pure and free, achievement is no better than enjoyment</i>
13 在世间骑游 回忆就是宇宙	<i>Traveling in this world, memory is the universe</i>
14 Don't wanna let you go	<i>Don't wanna let you go</i>
15 Don't wanna let you go	<i>Don't wanna let you go</i>
16 Don't wanna let you go	<i>Don't wanna let you go</i>
17 I'll never let you go	<i>I'll never let you go</i>
18 Why did you have to go	<i>Why did you have to go</i>

In this song, To uses Mandarin to recount his memories and feelings toward Louis, an old friend that he has not seen for many years (lines 1-13). Near the end, he code-switches to English. The English line, “Don’t wanna let you go,” is a direct request to his friend, in contrast to the self-reflection in the Mandarin lines above it.

Excerpt 10 is from the song “Take your time,” composed by Leehom Wang in 2001. This is a light, pleasant song with inter-sentential code-switching.

## Excerpt 10: Song 9, “Take your time” by Leehom Wang (2001)

Original lyrics	English translation
1 我用一刹那交换一个天长地久	<i>I exchange one moment for eternity</i>
2 我用我现在交换你的从此以后	<i>I exchange my today for your future</i>
3 时间在你双手, hey yeah	<i>Time is in your hands, hey yeah</i>
4 time to fall in love	<i>Time to fall in love</i>
5 不管什么时候	<i>Whenever</i>
6 一秒一个梦	<i>A second a dream</i>
7 转动爱的节奏	<i>Change the pace of love</i>
8 time to fall in love	<i>Time to fall in love</i>
9 不管上下左右	<i>I don't care whether up, down, left, right</i>
10 一秒一个吻	<i>A second a kiss</i>
11 一点也不保留	<i>We don't hold back at all</i>
12 time is in your hand	<i>Time is in your hand</i>
13 take your time take your time take you time yeah yeah	<i>Take your time take your time take you time yeah yeah</i>

In the Mandarin lyrics (lines 1-3, 5-7, 9-11), Wang reflects on his flexible and free attitude to love. When leaves the reflection and switches to actions with a directive (“time to fall in love” in lines 4 and 8), he turns to English. The code-switch thus helps to enhance the switch in the song’s moods and addressees.

Excerpt 11 is from the song “Only told you,” composed by JJ Lin. This song uses a Korean phrase, “사랑해요,” which means “I love you.”

## Excerpt 11: Song 6, “Only told you” by JJ Lin (2006).

Original lyrics	English translation
1 站在寂寞的舞台上	<i>Standing on the lonely stage</i>
2 灯光下拖着自己的影子	<i>Dragging my own shadow under the light</i>
3 音乐重复我们共同的忧伤	<i>The music repeats our shared grief</i>

4 不是每一次的演唱 就可以淡忘 明天 没有你	<i>No performance could be forgotten if you aren't here tomorrow</i>
5 In my heart, we'll never be apart	<i>In my heart, we'll never be apart</i>
6 残留手上的香味提醒我	<i>The fragrance remaining on my hands reminds me</i>
7 在数位相机里 留下的承诺	<i>The promise that are left in the camera</i>
8 每一封简讯 传出的思念	<i>Every message sends longing</i>
9 都对你说	<i>All say to you</i>
10 사랑해요 means I love you	<i>사랑해요 [I love you] means I love you</i>
11 代表着我, 离不开你	<i>It means I can not leave you</i>
12 每分每秒 每一个声音	<i>Every minute, every second, every sound</i>
13 只有你撒娇 会让我微笑	<i>As long as you act spoiled, it makes me smile</i>
14 사랑해요 只 对你说	<i>사랑해요 [I love you] only say to you</i>
15 I will love you and forevermore	<i>I will love you and forevermore</i>
16 我答应 baby, you will see	<i>I promise, baby, you will see</i>
17 每一个我都属于你	<i>Every bit of myself all belongs to you</i>

In the beginning lines of the Mandarin lyrics, Lin engages in introspection from line 1 to line 4. Then, he switches to English by saying “In my heart, we will never be apart.” It can be understood here that he is either speaking to himself or addressing a second person. Continuing with his self-reflection till line 10, he switches to both Korean and English. By using both Korean and English in a translation to declare his love, he indexes his intense emotion to the second person.

Similarly, he continues his introspection and then switched back to Korean and English to express his core message, that he will love her eternally. In the end, he uses English to address his love, “baby you will see” and switches to Mandarin to describe his love (line 17). Of note, in line 16, he used intra-sentential code-switching in order to rhyme “baby” with the last character 你 [ni]. If line 16 were all in Mandarin, the last words in these two clauses would not rhyme.

Excerpt 12 shows the beginning part of Pan’s “Don’t wanna wake up” before the chorus. In this part, he only used inter-sentential code-switching once, in the end.

Excerpt 12: Song 2, “Do not wanna wake up” by Will Pan (2012).

Original lyrics	English translation
1 最近是忙了些	<i>Recently it has been a bit busy</i>
2 没顾好你有的感觉	<i>I do not care for your feelings</i>
3 我真的没有疏远	<i>I do not drift apart</i>
4 也懂你担心的一切	<i>Know all your worries</i>
5 或许爱都有曲线	<i>Maybe love has curves</i>
6 总是会起伏蜿蜒	<i>It is all undulating and winding</i>
7 我们对彼此太了解	<i>We know each other too well</i>
8 不该冲动说再见	<i>We should not have said bye on an impulse</i>
9 but I can't just let you go~	<i>But I can't just let you go~</i>

All the Mandarin lyrics are about the singer's reflection on what has happened recently and his feelings and thoughts. In the final line, he switches to an action and uses English (“I can not just let you go”), implicitly addressing both the target of his love and himself.

In summary, ABC song writers displayed their multilingual repertoire by switching between two or three different codes to shift the addressees and express their strong feelings. They typically used Mandarin for introspection and English or Korean for actions, which can address the second person or the singer themselves.

### **Code-Switching for Common Expressions**

In addition to code-switching for rhyme, and for shifting from introspection to addressing a second person, ABC singers also used English code-switching for some easy, simple expressions, such as “I love you,” “baby,” “come on,” and “oh yeah” to emphasize their emotion and display their ABC identity. Another reason for this new tendency for code-switching in pop songs is that with the reform and opening policy from the late 1990s, there was a massive influx of Western culture into mainland China, including American songs, movies, cartoons, game shows, news broadcasts and English-exclusive TV channels. “Backstreet Boys,” “Prison Break,” “Desperate Housewives,” and all kinds of western content became popular among high school students. Young people deemed it fashionable to use some simple English phrases such as “come on,” “oh yeah” during casual conversations, “I love you” or “I miss you” in love letters, or “Merry Christmas” and “Happy New Year” on holidays. Everyone rushed to follow this style to show they were cool even though the majority of them could not speak complete English sentences. In this context, the ABC singers audience-designed their multilingual songs to attract more fans by using popular English phrases in songs mainly in Mandarin lyrics.



Excerpts 13 and 14 are examples of code-switching for simple expressions.

Excerpt 13: Song 3, “UUU” from Will Pan (2010)

Original lyrics	English translation
1 就像是失去神经，我感觉不到呼吸	<i>Like losing nerves, I can not feel myself breathe</i>
2 连空气都窒息，why why I love you so	<i>Even the air is stifling, why why I love you so</i>
3 每秒钟胆颤心惊，迎战你给的惊奇	<i>Panicking every second, I confront the wonder you make me feel</i>
4 与众不同的 love love, I want you girl	<i>Your unique love love, I want you girl</i>
5 Tell me baby I love u love u love u, 陷入梦幻催眠的魔术	<i>Tell me baby, I love u love u love u, sinking into the dream hypnotic magic</i>
6 So baby baby tell me baby I love u love u love u	<i>So baby baby, tell me baby, I love u love u love u</i>
7 爱情在潜意识被征服	<i>Love is conquered in subconsciousness</i>
8 I'm crazy over u u u u u	<i>I'm crazy over u u u u u</i>
9 如此疯狂的中了毒毒毒毒毒	<i>Getting poisoned crazily</i>
10 I'm going crazy over u u u u u	<i>I'm crazy over u u u u u</i>
11 触控的心被启动 点选传说中的幸福	<i>Touch-controlled heart is switched on, selecting legendary happiness</i>
12 I'm crazy over u u u u u	<i>I'm crazy over u u u u u</i>
13 如此疯狂的中了毒毒毒毒毒	<i>Getting poisoned crazily</i>
14 I'm going crazy over u u u u u	<i>I m going crazy over u u u u u</i>
15 Cause this is all about u oh yeah yeah	<i>Cause this is all about u oh yeah yeah</i>

In a song mostly in Mandarin lyrics, Pan uses simple English phrases and sentences such as “I love you,” “baby,” and “I’m going crazy over you.” In my view, the rest of the lyrics are in Mandarin because it would be a bit hard for the Mandarin-speaking young generation in China to understand if he sang in English. But by switching in this way, he magnifies his ABC singer identity, points out the theme of the song, and makes it popular for the fans to sing. From the fans’ perspectives, singing in their idol’s style is a way of keeping up with popular trends.

## Excerpt 14: Song 7, “Open your heart” by Leehom Wang (2005)

Original lyrics	English translation
1 baby, 我爱你, 快乐永远来得及	<i>Baby, I love you, happiness is still in time forever</i>
2 so come on now and 放开你的心	<i>So come on now and open your heart</i>
3 baby, 我爱你, 快乐永远来得及	<i>Baby, I love you, it is never too late to find happiness</i>
4 so come on now, just 放开你的心	<i>So come on now just, open your heart</i>
5 为什么抱着怀疑	<i>Why hold onto suspicion</i>
6 爱并不是都拥有自私自利	<i>Love actually is not self-centered</i>
7 虽然难免一些坏记忆	<i>Although it is hard to avoid the bad memories we share</i>
8 让爱情失去吸引力不再有趣	<i>Which make the love lose appeal and become uninteresting</i>
9 日子还是要过下去不管是笑或哭泣	<i>We still have to live on, whether we smile or cry</i>
10 所以别停止好奇其实生活充满惊喜	<i>So, do not stop being curious, life is actually filled with surprises</i>
11 yeah yeah, 跟规则道别	<i>Yeah yeah, goodbye to the rules</i>
12 yeah yeah, 跟我的感觉	<i>Yeah, yeah, follow my feelings</i>
13 yeah yeah, 跟过去道别	<i>Yeah, yeah, goodbye to the past</i>
14 跟挫折道别	<i>Goodbye to failure</i>
15 跟着我的感觉	<i>Follow my feelings</i>
16 baby 我爱你, 快乐永远来得及	<i>Baby, I love you, it is never too late to find happiness</i>
17 so come on now and 放开你的心	<i>So come on now and, open your heart</i>
18 baby, 我爱你, 快乐永远来得及	<i>Baby, I love you, it is never too late to find happiness</i>
19 so come on now just 放开你的心	<i>So come on now just, open your heart</i>

In Leehom Wang’s “Open your heart,” there are numerous instances of English code-switching such as “baby,” “come on,” and “oh yeah.” This can enable fans to sing along because these lyrics are easy to understand and sing. The entire lyrics would be hard for many Mandarin-speaking fans to understand if delivered in English.

The common expressions are integrated into the clausal frames in intra-sentential code-switching, e.g., “baby 我爱你, 快乐永远来得及” (lines 1, 3, 16). Another example is the lyrics in lines 2, 4, 17, 19, where the singer starts a line with the a common English expression, “come on now,” and completes it in Mandarin, “放开你的心.” The use of the common English phrase in an imperative that is the central message of the song might add emphasis and draw attention to the message.

As seen in Excerpts 13, 14, and the other excerpts above, a large number of simple expressions of English are used by ABC singers to make their songs catchy and easy to follow while also expressing their bilingual identity.

### Code-Switching for the Chorus

Choruses are usually used to highlight the main melody and the meaning of songs. In the Mandarin songs I examined, many of the chorus lyrics are in English. Table 2 shows these examples.

Table 2  
*English Choruses in Mandarin Pop Songs*

Song number	Song title	Chorus lines	Singer name
1	“Goodbye Louis”	“Don't wanna let you go” (3 times)	Alex To
10	“Owe your love”	“I love you” (2 times)	Edison Chen
9	“Take your time”	“take your time” (3 times)	Leehom Wang
7	“Open your heart”	“so come on now” (4times)	Leehom Wang
2	“UUU”	“I'm crazy over u u u u u” (2times) “I'm going crazy over u u u u u” (2times)	Will Pan

As shown in Table 2, all the simple expression phrases in the chorus are in English repeatedly in the chorus parts in the songs. We may conclude that the chorus is a part of the songs highlighted by the code-switch from Mandarin to English.

### Conclusion and Teaching Implications

From the above analysis, it is clear that both intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching have been applied to ABC singers' songs in a variety of ways. Inter-sentential code-switching takes place more frequently than intra-sentential code-switching. Code-switching often takes place for rhyme, which makes the lyrics unique and interesting while displaying ABC songwriters' bilingual and bicultural identity. Metaphorical code-switching from Mandarin to English is often used to shift from introspection to concrete actions, while addressing the second person. Additionally, common English expressions, such as “I love you,” “baby,” “come on,” or

“okay” are used to attract young fans. Choruses are also typically in English, which helps to set them apart from the rest of the songs and make the songs more catchy to a young audience.

The above analysis bears a number of teaching implications. First, I firmly believe that not only can code-switching in general be used in the classroom, the English-Mandarin code-switching in songs can be used as example sentences in English lessons. For example, the complete sentence “I wrote this for you” in Song 4 “The song I wrote for you” can be used to illustrate simple past tense. The sentence “Don’t wanna let you go” in Song 1 “Goodbye Louis” can be used to exemplify English imperatives. In addition, examples of short phrases can be found in songs with code-switching, such as “take your time” in Song 9, “Take your time,” or “dance with me” and “slide with me” in Song 8, “In that remote place” They are very common expressions in daily conversations and are not too hard to understand. Some of the English lyrics are similar to what people say in simple English expressions, such as “so baby tonight” (Song 2, “Do not wanna wake up”). On the one hand, those English lyrics can be utilized as practical expressions in oral English. On the other hand, they combine current young generations’ interest with pragmatic knowledge.

Teaching materials can also be created from the songs with code-switching. For example, in a middle or high school class where L2 learners’ age ranges from 13 to 18, the English-Chinese lyrics can be used for Cloze exercises with the English parts being the gaps to be filled. This can train students’ English comprehension. Moreover, translation skills and vocabulary knowledge can be tested. The answers can be any words that make sense in the given context. Not having to comply with the original lyrics gives students flexibility. This not only enhances students’ vocabulary ability, it also develops L2 learners’ critical thinking skills. Secondly, the English code-switching lyrics could be brought into pragmatic knowledge with the young generations because the songs composed by ABC singers are very popular. It is significant to teach L2 learners of when, where and how to use those English lyrics in daily communication. The popular songs attract students’ interest. The instructor can take advantage of those interests to show pragmatic knowledge. Lastly, for some advanced learners, with the whole song lyrics, instructors could explain the indexical meanings of the code-switching.

During the preparation of the code-switching songs in the teaching application, instructors need to choose the suitable songs carefully, since some English-Chinese code-switching songs are explicit and may not be suitable for middle school students. Also, the songs’ romantic themes and abstract ideas might not be suitable for young learners.

Code-switching plays an important role in linguistic application and daily communication in a variety of contexts, and I believe that it has an important place in the language classroom.

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