Sometimes Ngo Zau Start to Gong Chinese
The role of pragmatics and information structure in the syntax of codemixing

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This presentation focuses on the interaction between Information Structure, Pragmatics and Syntax in intra-sentential codeswitching (codemixing) by Cantonese-English bilinguals. The study examines data from a corpus of Heritage Cantonese speakers in Toronto (Nagy, 2011) and observes that when codemixing occurs, employment of plural morphology on English nouns in the bilingual syntax is focus-sensitive, and is predictable only with reference to the requirements of pragmatics and the discourse. Where previous studies (Chan, 1998; MacSwan, 1999) have focused on the lexical source of functional heads and their constraints at PF, the present study employs the Distributed Morphology framework (Harley & Noyer, 2003) to demonstrate that featural under-specification for plurality is the unmarked case in Cantonese-English bilingual syntax, and that only focus environments require marking of plural morphology on English nouns. The present study further argues that no domain-specific mechanisms exclusive to codemixing are required, and that the requirements of the grammars themselves are sufficient to predict the behaviour.