Social Factors for Code-Switching-a Study of Malaysian-English Bilingual Speakers

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Abstract: The study reported in this paper concentrates on the factors motivating code-switching within the social context of Malay-English bilingual speeches. Information for the survey was collected by means of transcribing different short video clips in Malay-English conversations. In the current study, the data were analysed within the sketch of Malik's framework [22] to find the social factors and social dimensions of code-switching parts. The finding of the study revealed that 'show identity' is the most frequent reason for motivating the speakers to switch languages. Information gained from the study will help provide insight on why Malaysian-English bilingual speakers use code-switching in their conversations.

Keywords: Code-Switching, Social Factors, Bilingual Speaker

1. Introduction

Bilingualism and multilingualism are the typical consequences of language contact. There are various definitions of bilingualism available within the literature. For example, Bloomfield [2] pointed out that native-like control over both languages is an essential factor for bilingual speakers. On the other hand, Haugen [16] proclaimed that when a speaker has the ability to produce comprehensive sentences in both languages, he or she can be considered as bilingual speaker. Diebold [10] uses the word 'incipient bilingualism' for the initial stages of contact between two different languages. He mentioned that a person may be bilingual to some degree, but he or she cannot make complete meaningful utterances. For example, a person cannot produce a language, but he or she is able to comprehend that language. In such examples, linguists generally talk about 'passive' or 'receptive' bilingualism [31]. Usually, a bilingual or multilingual conversation is full of language strategies that increase meaning. One of these language strategies is the use of code-switching. According to Gal "code-switching is a conversational strategy used to establish, cross or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations [12]". Code-switching (hereafter CS) is a common phenomenon among multilingual countries such as Singapore and Malaysia where English and Malay as well as other languages are combined in sentences. In the Malaysian context, it is so common to hear a conversation when there are a lot of English words as the Malay language is dominant and vice versa (David [8]).

Code-switching

One of the earliest definitions of CS lies in Weinreich's description of bilingualism as "the practice of alternately using two languages [32]". According to Marasigan [23] when two languages are used in a same sentence, CS happens. In an earlier study, Bokomba [3] claims that "CS is the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub) systems across sentence boundaries within a speech event". Myers-Scotton [27] asserts that CS includes the elements of two language varieties in the same CP, in which one of the languages serves as the morphosyntactic frame of the CP. The following example shows this type of CS.

(1) Paper neveštan xeili moškel-e

'Writing a paper is a difficult job'(Hadei& AR Ramakrishna [14])

Myers-Scotton [28] divides CS into inter-sentential switching and intra-sentential switching. In her study Inter-sentential switching refers to full sentences which are switched while intra-sentential switching occurs within a

clause. However, Muysken [26] classified CS as inter-sentential switching that happens between two separated sentences or two coordinated clauses that belong to the same utterance, intra-sentential switching that occurs within a clause and extra-sentential /emblematic or tag switching that occurs between a clause and usually an extra-clause element attached to it. Particularly, the use of discourse markers and conjunctions from another language is the most frequent type of extra-sentential switching [26].

Example (2) shows the inter-sentential switching between Spanish and English, Example (3) illustrates the intra-sentential switching between English and Korean and Example (4) exemplifies the tag switching between Persian and English.

(2) Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English y termino en español
 'Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English and finish it in Spanish' (Poplack [30])
(3) I have to ttake my hand
 'I have to wash my hand' (Choi [4])
(4) It was a good performance, nae?
 'It was a good performance, wasn't it?' (Mahootian [21])

Due to the bilingual education system and multilingual communication patterns in Malaysian society, speakers are bound to know more than one language. Therefore, CS is more likely to occur in order for communication to be successful among speakers of different social backgrounds. Thus, this paper aims to highlight different social factors which cause CS in Malaysian conversations and applies Malik's framework [22] as reference for analysing the CS between Malaysian-English bilingual speakers.

2. Related Literature

Research in CS has been carried out by researchers from a vast range of principles with various perspectives and approaches. A wealth of studies about CS has been conducted mostly on two different approaches: sociolinguistics and linguistics. The linguistic approach of CS tests the grammatical principles that govern bilingual speech. In fact, the grammatical investigation of the CS phenomenon is driven by the idea that there are some structural constraints on the production and a great deal of hypotheses has occurred in the literature formulating these constraints. On the other hand, the sociolinguistic approach of CS generally analyses this phenomenon in terms of the motivation and meaning. Myers-Scotton [28] argues that in the process of CS, the embedded words are chosen because they can express meaning or connotations better than the equivalence in the Matrix language.

Other scholars (e.g. McClure [24]; Zentella [33]) propose that language preference, social identity, language proficiency and participants' role can also be influential in a CS situation. Clyne [6] lists the following factors influencing CS: interlocutors, domain, topic, role relationship, venue, communication channel, phatic function and type of interaction. According to Malik [22] there are different social

factors which cause CS among bilinguals, such as the lack of facility, lack of registral competence, semantic significance, addressing different audience, showing identity with a group, amplifying and emphasizing a point, the mood of the speaker, habitual expressions, pragmatic reasons, attracting attention.

Since Malaysians rarely go a whole day without CS, it can be interpreted as part of the Malaysian life. Haja Mohideen [15] points out that mixing two or more languages is a very normal phenomenon in non-monolingual societies. Similarly, Jacobson [17] mentions that CS is natural for Malaysian speakers and they engage into it for the mere pleasure of combining the two languages. Thus, it is acceptable that Malaysian speakers use at least two types of languages in their daily conversations. Gumperz [13] claims that CS has a discourse function. He reports that CS is used as the mediator (language) between the participants in a communication. Speech accommodation essentially means accommodating other speaker (s) in the communication process. When a person subconsciously changes his/her style of speech (accent, rate, types of words, code-switching, etc.) towards the style used by the listener (s), the speaker is accommodating the listeners. This usually shows the person's rapport signalling agreement, liking and/or approval or could be perceived as an act showing negativity. Zuraidah [34] also agrees with Gumperz's idea [13] that CS could be happen for speech accommodation when a bilingual speaker uses the preferred code of the addressee in his/her sentences. Identity is understood as the fact of being or what a person is. Identity can also be connected to a group where they (the group members) share a close similarity or feeling of understanding among themselves. When a person uses CS to further portray their identities, it gives the addresser and addressee a distinctive personal and/or group identity. The common view many Malaysians share is that the more proficient his English, the higher is his level of education. Jariah [18] in her article, Code-Switching for Power Building, points out that in Malaysian society being proficient in English not only is a sign of intellectuality but also shows how an individual is experienced in communication skills.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

Before starting any kind of research, there is a need to have a conceptual structure within which the research is conducted. Kothari [19] defines research design as a condition for collection and analysis of the data that aims to mix relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. The research design chosen for the current study is a mixed-method one. Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle [20] divide the mixed-method design into the explanatory design, exploratory design and triangulation design. The present article utilises an exploratory design and the data in the present study have been collected and analysed first qualitatively by transcribing the data and then quantitatively by counting the frequency.

3.2. Data Collection

The CS data for the purpose of this study were collected from a Malaysian YouTube channel called *PopTeeVee,* from a series of videos named *Giler Selamba* Jane. The titles of the videos were *'Bile NakKahwin'*, *'SiapaSuruhJadiPerempuan'*, *'TakkanMerekaTakTahu'*, *'Apabila Rakyat MulaBeremosi'*, and *'Donat Kita, Harapan Negara'*.

3.3. Data Transcription

A total of 22.03 minutes of speech from the videos were transcribed in the current study. After identifying the bilingual sentences, all English elements in each bilingual sentence were identified and categorised based on Malik's framework [22]. The following are the reasons for CS as proposed by Malik [22]: Lack of facility, Lack of registral competence, Semantic significance, addressing different audiences, showing identity with a group, amplifying and emphasising a point, Mood of the speaker, Habitual expressions, Pragmatic reasons and attracting attention. All bilingual sentences in this study are followed by a free translation in English.

3.4. Data Analysis

In the current study the data were analysed first qualitatively by transcribing the data. See the example below.

(5) Korang tak boleh bising, tak boleh complain, tak boleh mengerang macam kucing nak beranak. Kalau tak puas hati tentang dunia sekeliling korang, kenapa tak boleh complain?

'You cannot voice out, you cannot complain, you cannot moan like a cat. If you are not satisfied about the world around you, why don't you complain?'

According to Neuman [29], the data used for quantitative analysis are in the form of numbers and the meanings are shown in the table. In this study, after analysing the data qualitatively, the findings were counted manually and displayed in a table in the form of number and percent.

4. Findings and Discussion

Malik [22] names ten social factors for CS. In this study, these functions serve as a framework of motives or reasons for CS in a Malaysian society. The table below illustrates different social factors for CS found in the data collected.

Table 1. *Social Factors for Code-Switching Among Malaysian-English Bilinguals.*

Social Factors	Number	Percent
To show identity with a group	38	29
To address different audience	24	18
Lack of facility	14	11
Pragmatic reasons	14	11
Lack of registral competence	11	9
Semantic significance	9	7
To attract attention.	8	6
Habitual expressions	5	4
To amplify and emphasize a point	4	3
Mood of the speaker	3	2
Total	130	100%

The table shows the number of different social factors which are used in English-Malaysian conversations. From the table, we can see that *show identity* accounts for 35 of the total 130 social factors in different conversations. The second most frequent social factor in this study is *address different audience,* forming (18%) of the codeswitched elements found in the data. As outlined in the table, the next most social factors for CS in the present study are *lack of facility* (11%), *pragmatic reasons* (11%), *lack of registral competence* (9%), *semantic significance* (7%), *attract attention* (6%), *habitual expression* (4%), *emphasise a point* (3%) and *mood of the speaker* (2%) respectively.

4.1. To Show Identity with a Group

Crystal [7] claimed that an individual uses CS to express unity with a particular social group. It is the same when a bilingual speaker codeswitches in a television programme in order to build unity and associate in friendly relations with fans, followers and viewers. To show identity with a group, Di Pietro [9] reports that Italian immigrants would tell a joke in English and gives the punchline in Italian, not only because it was better said in Italian but also it stressed the fact that they all belong to the same minority group, with shared values and experiences. The examples below clarify how these bilingual speakers codeswitched to show their identity.

(6) Am I the last person to know this? Adakah juga orang kat luar sana yang telah membawa anak-anak mereka dengan impian nak main golf versi mini tapi terkejut bila find out rupa-rupanya ini operasi haram tahap dewa!

'Am I the last person to know this? There are people out there that have brought their children with the dream of wanting them to play mini version golf, but they were shocked when find out about this illegal god forbidden operation!'

(7) We should put a sign outside these places, supaya senang polis nak cari. *'Hello*, polis, orang jahat kat sini!'

'Maybe we should put a sign outside these places, so as to make it easier for the police to find them. 'Hello police, bad guys are here!'

4.2. To Address Different Audiences

Malik [22] states that CS is also used when the speaker intends to address and welcome people from various linguistic backgrounds. For instance, in the data found in this study, the speaker, Jane, who hosts the programme often, uses Malay as it is the national language but also she switches to English. Similar types of situations have also been reported in some other settings. According to David [8], counsels tend to speak to a number of different interlocutors at the same time. During such occasions, obviously, they will switch codes according to the ethnicity of the addressee. The sentences below are the examples of CS used by the speaker to address different audiences in the YouTube videos.

(8) So, when we say it's wedding season, what exactly do we mean? Because according to Facebook, every season is

wedding season, and Malaysia bukannya ada empat musim.

'So, when we say it is wedding season, what exactly do we mean? Because according to Facebook, every season is wedding season, and Malaysia does not have four seasons'

(9) Anak-anak korang dah tak tahan, they will start doing weird things like settling for anyone just makes you be happy.

'When your children are under stress, they will start doing weird things like settling for anyone just makes you be happy'

(10) And with the added pressure of 'Bila nak kahwin' every time they attend a wedding, it can make the standard drop even lower.

'And with the added pressure of 'When are you getting married?' every time they attend wedding, it can make the standard drop even lower'

4.3. Lack of Facility

The term 'lack of facility' refers to bilingual or multilingual speakers who often codeswitch to the second language (L2) vocabulary to match their native language (L1) word (s). The Malaysian- English bilinguals may codeswitch when they are unable to find suitable vocabulary. The following examples illustrate how bilinguals in this study codeswitched as the result of this factor.

(11) Internet ni luas, dik, boleh jadi kongsi. Eh, jangan risau eh, nanti Abang Ezra datang balik, okay?

'It can go viral on the Internet bro. Eh, don't worry eh, Brother Ezra will be back later, okay?'

(12) Eh! Kalau letak dalam poket, nanti kena pick-pocket, jadi kena ikat kat pinggang.

'Eh! Don't put it in your pocket, or else you will be pick-pocketed, so strap it around your waist'

The codeswitched words from the examples above do not have any equivalent in the Malay language. Therefore, Malaysian speakers tend to use these English words in their daily conversations.

4.4. Pragmatic Reasons

Malik [22] claims that speakers may code switch in order to call attention to the context of a conversation. He points out that sometimes the alternation between two languages is highly meaningful in terms of the conversational context. The sentence below is an example.

(13) Maybe we should put a sign outside these places, supaya senang polis nak cari.

'Maybe we should put a sign outside these places, so that it easier for the police to find them'

4.5. Lack of Registral Competence

According to Muthusamy [25], when certain vocabulary is not available to a speaker in the first language (L1), he or she switches to the second language (L2) during a dialogue. Similarly, Anderson [1] suggests that certain phrases would sound better in the second language (L2) than in the first language (L1) and this usually results in CS. See the examples below.

(14) Saya syorkan agar anda kurangkan jerit time pagi-pagi.

'I advise you to stop shouting time early every morning'

(15) Aku ada movie yang lagi best, and "Misalnya, boleh belajar teamwork.

'I have a better movie, and For example, can learn teamwork'

In Examples (14) and (15), the bilingual speaker preferred to use some words in English because she found them more suitable.

4.6. Semantic Significance

According to Gal [11], CS can sometimes be utilized to signal the speaker's attitude, communicative intentions, and emotions to convey linguistic and social information. Choy [5] explains semantic significance as a 'verbal strategy'. In addition, Malik [22] and Gumperz [13] claim that all stresses switching in a particular moment express semantically significant information. It is a communicative resource that builds on the participant's perception of two languages. Gal [11] reinforces this view by stating that listeners interpret codeswitching as an indicator of the speaker's attitude, or communicative intents and emotions as codeswitching is a tool for conveying appropriate linguistic and social information. The example below shows how a speaker switched from Malay to English in a Malay video programme as a face-saving gesture.

(16) Korang tak boleh bising, tak boleh complain, tak boleh mengerang macam kucing nak beranak. Kalau tak puas hati tentang dunia sekeliling korang, kenapa tak boleh complain?

'You cannot make noise, cannot complain, and cannot moan like a cat giving birth. If you are not happy with the world, why can't you complain?'

4.7. To Attract Attention

Malik [22] states that in an advertisement in India, both written and spoken form, CS is used to attract the attention of the readers or listeners. The similar type of CS is noted in the following example. The following example illustrates how the Malaysian speaker uses the English word *Hello everyone* at the beginning of his sentence to attract watchers' attention.

(17) Hello everyone, tuan-tuan dan puan-puan, dah puas mengundi?

'Hello everyone, ladies and gentlemen, are you satisfied with your vote?'

4.8. Habitual Expressions

Malik [22] stresses the fact that CS often occurs in fixed phrases of greeting and parting, commands and requests, invitations, expressions of gratitude and discourse markers such as *Oyes* (listen), *you know or pero* (but).

(18) Excuse me, Wan Faizul, mak bapa engkau tak ajar kah macam mana nak eja betul-betul?

'Excuse me, Wan Faizul, your parents didn't teach you to

spell properly is it?'

In Example (18), the English phrase of greeting '*Excuse me'* is used as a habitual expression by the Malaysian-English bilingual speaker.

4.9. To Amplify and Emphasize a Point

Codeswitching is also used to amplify and emphasize a point. Gal [11] reports that switches at the end of an argument not only help to end the interaction, but it may also serve to emphasize a point by adding more force to the statements. Similarly, Anderson [1] states that when a speaker needs to stress a particular statement CS may occur. In the data found in this study, the speakers switch from Malay (L1) to English (L2) to emphasize his/her warmth and affection towards a certain viewer. See the example below.

(19) I really appreciate it and the reason saya tak respond kepada semua puji-pujian ni, saya rasa macam gedik lah kalau asyik nak highlight dengan puji ni, kan? So, thank you, thank you, thank you.

'I really appreciate it and the reason I didn't respond to all this laudation, I felt bashful if continuously highlighted with praise right? So, thank you, thank you, thank you.'

4.10. Mood of the Speaker

Whenever something emotional is said or raised, the speakers will automatically codeswitch. Crystal [7] claims that CS is triggered when the speaker is emotionally affected such as feeling upset, excited, tired, happy, surprised, and scared or distracted. As a result, when the speaker is in the right state of mind, he/she can find the suitable word or expression. The speakers from the current data probably know the exact word (s) and phrase (s) in both Malay and English languages, but the English language might be more available at that time. One of the reasons is because the speakers are very excited and eager to host the programme and therefore, they might create an obstacle in getting the appropriate word (s) or phrase (s) in the language in which the speaker may be more proficient if he or she is not mentally tensed.

(20) Come to think of it, berlambak je tempat urut kat Hartamas, kat Bangsar, kat Damansara yang kita tahu adalah tempat boleh menyewa khidmat istimewa dari perempuan. If I know it, takkan lah para detektif polis yang hebat-hebat belaka tak tahu. (Sad)

'Come to think of it, there are many massage places in Hartamas, Bangsar, Damansara that we don't know are places that offer special services from women. If I know it, how come the capable police detectives are unaware of it'

(21) Look! Is this because there are no stories made for middle-aged women? Tak boleh kah perempuan yang lebih matang dijadikan watak utama? (Angry)

'Look! Is this because there are no stories made for middle-aged women? Is it not possible that more matured women can be the main character?'

Examples (20) and (21) above indicate how bilingual speakers switched from one language to another when they are in different moods.

5. Conclusion

In this study, the phenomenon of CS in Malaysian speech was analysed through data collected from YouTube series GilerSelamba Jane from the YouTube channel PopTeeVee. The occurrence of CS was analysed by using Malik's ten reasons' approach to CS. It can be concluded that CS is rather apparent in the speech of bilingual Malaysians as the number of occurrence is high. The findings showed that there are many reasons for this phenomenon. The ability of the speaker in speaking more than one language and the ability of the listeners in understanding the languages spoken play important roles when it comes to word choices and speech. The study has shown that 'show identity' is the most frequent reason for motivating the speakers to switch languages which is followed by 'addressing different audience', 'lack of facility', 'pragmatic reasons', 'lack of registral competence', 'semantic significance', 'attracting attention', 'habitual expressions', 'emphasising a point' and 'moods of speaker' respectively.

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