

MALAYSIAN ADOLESCENTS' CODE SWITCHING: A CASE STUDY

ROSIATI BINTI IBRAHIM

UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS

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ROSIATI BINTI IBRAHIM



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**THIS PROJECT PAPER IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR MASTERS DEGREE OF EDUCATION**



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Specially dedicated to

my beloved husband,

Moktar bin Said

my children,

Hanis Adilah

Hakim Asyraf

Hassanuddin



my parents,

Haji Ibrahim bin Haji Awang

Hajjah Zaharah binti Junoh

my guru

Alias Mohd Yatim, PhD.

Nor Azmi Mostafa, PhD.





TABLE OF CONTENTS

PENGAKUAN		v
DECLARATION		vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		vii
ABSTRAK		viii
ABSTRACT		ix
LIST OF TABLE		x
 CHAPTER 1	 INTRODUCTION	
1.0	Background of the Study	1
1.1	Statement of Problem	4
1.2	Significance of the Study	5
1.3	Purpose of the Study	6
1.4	Rationale	7
1.5	Research Questions	9
1.6	Definition of Terms	10
1.7	Scope and Limitations of the Study	13
 CHAPTER 2	 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.0	Introduction	14
2.1	The Language Status in Malaysia	15
2.1.1	The Status of Malay Language	16
2.1.2	The Status of English Language	17
2.2	Pedagogical Terminology	19
2.2.1	Bilingualism	20
2.2.2	Code Choice	21
2.2.3	Code Switching	23
2.3	Linguistic Aspects	28
2.3.1	Monitor Theory by Krashen	29
2.4	Code Switching in Malaysia	32
 CHAPTER 3	 METHODOLOGY	
3.0	Introduction	34
3.1	Sampling	35
3.2	Instrumentation	38
3.3	Data Collection Procedures	40
3.4	Data Analysis Procedures	42
3.5	Coding Procedures	42
3.6	Selection of Variables	44
3.6.1	Dependent Variables	45
3.6.2	Independent Variables	45
3.7	Limitation and Delimitations of the Study	46



CHAPTER 4	DATA ANALYSIS	
4.0	Introduction	48
4.1	Data Presentation and Data Description	49
4.1.1	Occurrence of Code Switching	49
4.1.2	Linguistic Properties of Code Switching	50
4.1.3	Ethnic Identity	50
4.1.4	Gender	59
4.1.5	Language Used at Home	60
CHAPTER 5	CONCLUSIONS, INTERPRETATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	
5.0	Introduction	63
5.1	Conclusions and Interpretations	64
5.1.1	Code Switching Occurrence	64
5.1.2	Syntactical Pattern of Code Switching	65
5.1.3	Type of Code Switching	67
5.1.4	Ethnic Identity	67
5.1.5	Gender	68
5.1.6	Language Exposure	69
5.2	Summary	70
5.3	Recommendation for Further Research	70
REFERENCE		73
APPENDICES		75
A. School Enrollment List Questionnaire		76
B. Letter of Research Application from UPSI		78
C. Tape Scripts		80
D. Frequency of Code Switching		95
E. Code Switching by Syntactic Category and Language Pattern		105
F. Number of English Words Produced		109
G. Questionnaires		111



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PENGAKUAN

Saya mengaku karya ini adalah hasil kerja saya sendiri kecuali nukilan dan ringkasan yang setiap satunya telah saya jelaskan sumbernya

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the writing in this thesis is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

20.4.2004

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menjkaji sejauh mana tahap ubah kod dari Bahasa Melayu kepada Bahasa Inggeris dikalangan pelajar-pelajar tingkatan lima SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad Slim River dalam perbualan seharian mereka diluar bilik darjah. Kajian ini juga cuba melihat corak dan kekerapan pengubahan kod dalam perbualan tersebut. Di samping itu juga kajian ini cuba melihat kesan jantina, kaum dan juga pendedahan terhadap Bahasa Inggeris dalam bentuk penggunaannya di rumah terhadap kekerapan pengubahan kod, corak pengubahan kod dan juga jenis pengubahan kod. Adalah diharapkan agar maklumat ini berguna bagi mengenalpasti tahap kebolehan bahasa pelajar dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan wujud pengubahan kod di kalangan responden walaupun mereka tidak lagi berada dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris. Subjek A yang merupakan seorang pelajar perempuan berbangsa Melayu mempunyai kekerapan ubah kod paling tinggi dan beliau juga paling banyak menghasilkan jumlah perkataan dalam bahasa Inggeris berbanding subjek-subjek yang lain. Ini berkemungkinan besar disebabkan selain bahasa Melayu, beliau juga bertutur bahasa Inggeris di rumah. Subjek B iaitu seorang pelajar lelaki berbangsa Cina agak sederhana dari segi penguabahn kod jika dibandingkan dengan subjek A tetapi beliau berada dalam kedudukan yang lebih baik berbanding dengan subjek C. Subjek C, seorang pelajar lelaki berbangsa India menghasilkan perkataan bahasa Inggeris yang lebih terhad berbanding dengan subjek A dan B di mana kod bahasa Inggeris yang dihasilkan lebih tertumpu kepada bentuk satu perkataan sahaja.

Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan responden yang terlibat dalam kajian kes ini memang menggunakan Bahasa Melayu dengan diselang – selikan dengan penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris dalam perbualan seharian mereka. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapat hubungan antara kaum dengan corak dan kekerapan pengubahan kod. Begitu juga dengan hubungan antara penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris di rumah dengan corak dan pengubahan kod. Bagaimanapun faktor jantina didapati tidak memainkan apa-apa peranan yang signifikan dalam hubungan tersebut.



ABSTRACT

This study looked into code switching pattern and the frequency of code switching among the form five students of SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad, Slim River in their daily conversation once they are out of their ESL classroom. This study also attempts to find out whether code switching differ in terms of ethnic identity, gender factor and language used at home. It is hoped that the findings of this study benefited those who need to evaluate the students' ability in English Language acquisition.

The findings of the study show that the occurrence of code switching existed in the subjects' conversations when they are out of their ESL classroom. The findings reveal that Subject A who is a female Malay teenager has the highest frequency of code switching. She also has the highest number of English words used in the taped-conversations. It may be due to the fact that Besides Malay language, she also practices English language at home. Subject B who is a male Chinese teenager is a moderate code switcher compared to Subject A. However he is better than Subject C, a male, Indian teenager. Subject C produces limited number of code switching compare to two other subjects and most of his switches are in the form of single words.

The findings of the study also show that the respondents selected have a great tendency towards code switching. All of them code switched in their daily conversation once they are out of their ESL classroom. The findings also reveal that the respondents are in favour of larger constituent and all of them have a higher frequency on the intra-sentential type of code switching. Factors such as ethnic identity and language used at home by each speaker play a vital role in initiating code switching. However, the gender of each respondents has no impact on code switching.

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
3.1 Distributions of Form Five Students of SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad, Slim River, according to Race and Gender	36
3.2 Subjects by Race and Gender	38
3.3 Specification of Information Gathered from Questionnaires	39
4.1 Frequency Counts and Percentages of Code Switching	49
4.2 Number of English Words Used in Code Switching	50
4.3 Syntactical Pattern of Code Switching	52
4.4 Pattern of Code Switching	55
4.5 Frequency Counts and Percentages by Number of Switching by Ethnic Identity	56
4.6 Frequency Count and Percentage by Ethnic Identity and Type of Switches	57
4.7 Frequency Counts and Percentages by Gender and Type of Switches	59
4.8 Frequency Counts and Percentages by Number of Switching and Language Used at Home	60
4.9 Frequency Counts and Percentages by Language Used at Home and Type of Switching	61



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study



“While the Government will implement vigorously the teaching of Bahasa Melayu, measures will be taken to ensure that English is taught as a strong second language. This is important if Malaysia is to keep abreast of scientific and technological developments in the world and participate meaningfully in international trade and commerce” (Third Malaysia Plan 1976-80, 1976:397).

It is with the full awareness of the importance and role of English the world over and with the determination that Malaysians cannot be made to undergo a handicap with the implementation of the National Language Policy that the Malaysian government has chosen to establish English as “the second



most important language” in the country. With its status in the Malaysian education system, English is made a compulsory language to every schoolchild.

The change in education policy recently which stresses on the importance of English language in the field of science and technology brings in another new dimension. The teaching of English in Mathematics and Science made compulsory for Standard 1, Form One and Lower Six students in National schools can be seen as a new scenario in the Malaysian education environment. This new policy was implemented in January 2003. The new subject, English for Science and Technology is introduced to form four science and technical stream students. It is made compulsory for the students to pass with certain grade in Malaysian University English Test (MUET) to enable them to graduate from the local universities.

This is a reasonable educational requirement. It is not just due to the function and role of English already well known to us, but also due to the fact that knowledge of a language other than one's own may assist in one's intellectual development. In present day Malaysia, the objective of English language teaching is to make the language the most important foreign language for the purpose of knowledge and science.

According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), the policy of changing the medium of instruction in the teaching of Mathematics and Sciences from Malay to English is an important innovation which possessed special



challenges. Therefore, to operate effectively in innovation, first of all the teachers of Mathematics and Science need to develop their English language proficiency in order to access the wealth of information on the subject area currently available in English. It is undeniable that while preparing the materials for the new teaching method, as well as in the teaching itself, the transference of language played an important role in contributing ways to produce the teaching materials, references and in building multimedia software in English. The teachers are also advised to familiarize themselves with the idea of bilingualism in disseminating the knowledge, especially in the interim years to ensure that the knowledge is delivered to the students effectively. As for the students, they need to prepare themselves to cater for the change in the



Due to the National Language policy and the fact that Malaysia is a multi-racial country, where considerably large sectors of the population are bilingual, code switching has become a feature of spoken communication in the society. Communication between Malaysians do not consist of a simple straightforward use of a standard language, be it Malay, English, Chinese, Tamil or any language at all. A conversation between two persons of the same linguistic or even dialectal background may be stipulated with interferences and code-switching, what more if the conversation participated in by people who differ from one another in the mother-tongue or language of education.





1.1 Statement of Problem

The Malaysian adolescence today is facing new and different types of challenges due to the recent change in National Language Policy which is now stressing on the importance of English language especially in the field of science and technology. Their competency in English language becomes an important factor in measuring their capabilities. They have to prepare themselves to face future challenges. While on the other hand, commentators have observed a decline in the standard of spoken and written English language over the years (Asmah, 1994, p. 246). Because spoken and written English language is extensively used in private sector and international relations, the concern has been that this decline in English language proficiency (Gill, 1993), particularly in speaking and writing, is a disadvantage to the country's economy as it takes on more global trend.

The main concern of this study is to find out if code switching occurs among the form five science stream students of SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad, Slim River, Perak when they are out of ESL classroom. This study is also interested in finding out the code-switching pattern that occurred when the respondents use among themselves. This study hoped to be of help in giving a better understanding of the student's ability and potential in English language by looking at various perspective in the language use within Malaysian contexts respectively.





1.2 Significance of the Study

Language behaviour has gained a great deal of attention among social scientists and educators because it raises several important questions. Among them are: which language is used – where, when, among whom and why? Questions have also been asked about how community and personal beliefs, values and practices impinge upon the acquisition and use of language by children as well as adult. Code switching studies are interested in the language use of individual speakers and how this is associated with certain aspects of the context in which conversations take place.

Bilingualism in Malaysia is common since Malaysia is a multiracial country. Thus code-switching among the Malaysian adolescence is common. Some understanding of the nature of code-alteration and its meaning in everyday interaction must be obtained (Gumperz, 1972). However, not much study is done on code-switching among the Malaysian adolescences especially after the drastic change in the education policy recently which make it compulsory for the form one and year one Mathematic and Science teachers to use English as the medium of instruction in teaching Mathematics and Science to the students.

This study attempts to look at whether the students take the change in education policy seriously and try to improve their English language competency by code switching in their conversation. It is hoped that by code



switching, students will be able to comprehend and communicate better in ESL.

Responsible educators must know where and under what conditions alternants are employed. Such knowledge is absolutely necessary for the formulation of sound language policy and if the study is to turn out to have positive results, then educators, language instructors, textbook writers, curriculum organizers and researchers must find a way in their field of specialization to promote code switching out of ESL classroom. This study is hoped to provide valuable information for them to realize the students' ability in using L2 in their daily conversation. The finding of this study is hoped to be a direct contribution to the existing knowledge in the field of linguistics in

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study was undertaken to identify the ability of the form five students of SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad, Slim River, Perak in using L2 in their daily conversation when they are out of their ESL classroom and hence, to find out the pattern of their code-switching in verbal communication. The secondary purpose is to find out where code switching among the teenagers

take place. Another purpose is to find out whether they code switch content or structure word. All these will be done by:

- a) analyzing the students' conversations with their teachers in a natural setting when they are out of their ESL classroom.
- b) analyzing the students' conversations among themselves in a natural setting when they are out of ESL classroom.
- c) comparing the frequency of code switching of each student.
- d) analyzing the environmental factors in relation to the students achievement in English language.

This study was undertaken to identify the spoken competency of form five students of SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad, Slim River, Perak in using L2 in their daily conversations when they are out of their ESL classroom. The results obtained may shed better understanding of students' individual ability and proficiency. It will also be beneficial to the teachers generally and the English teachers specifically in conducting the teaching and learning process.

1.4 Rationale

English is indisputably a world language – its development has been facilitated by its wide usage around the world. The teenagers need to improve

their command of the English Language in this country to keep pace with the international development. To most people, English is still the high language because of its economic and social realities, Malay, though, is rising as a prestigious tongue owing to economic and political forces, has lost some its “aroma”. English assumes the “centre stage” might replace Malay one day (Alias Mohd Yatim, 2003)

Teenagers today must adapt themselves in line with the government’s education policy which stresses the importance of English Language. They must also do something about their proficiency in English to expedite their enrollment in the local universities. English is made compulsory for the students to pass with certain grade in Malaysian University English Test (MUET) to enable them to graduate from the local universities. Thus, one way of improving their English proficiency is through daily communication in the language.

They must also show their language competency in English in order to survive or to face future challenges especially if they want to join the workforce later. English is one of the factors in determining their capabilities especially in communicating with other people or in entertaining customers. This is due to the fact that Malaysia is producing an increasing number of undergraduates who are waiting to join the workforce.



Code switching actually becomes a trend among the Malaysian teenagers today. Code switching is common to Malaysian teenagers since they are born in multi-racial country. They were introduced to their mother –tongue since small and majority of them are introduced to English officially while they are in kindergarten.

1.5 Research Questions

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions :



1. Do students who have high achievement in English code-switched when they are out of their English Language classroom?
2. What is the syntactical pattern of the subjects?
3. What is the code switching type of the subjects?
4. Does code switching differ in terms of race of the teenagers?
5. Does code switching differ in terms of gender of the teenagers?
6. Does code switching differ in terms of the language used at home?



1.6 **Definition of Terms**

Form Four Students: Students of SMK Dato’ Zulkifli
Muhammad, Slim River, Perak whom
are now in form five. They are
either born in 1987 and enrolled in form
one in the year of 2000 or born in 1986
and enrolled remove class in the year of
1999 and then later joined form one in
the year of 2000

Code Switching: It is a phenomenon which reflects the
change from one code to another in the
speech of a particular speaker in a
particular situation. Code here may mean
language, dialect or style. But in this
study it refers to the change from the
Malay language to English language
only.



Diglossia:

Two or more varieties of the same language are used by some speakers under different conditions.

Correlation:

Having a mutual relation or connection especially when affecting or depending on each other.

English language:

The second compulsory language taught in Malaysian school as stated in the National Education Policy.

English language classroom: A place in school building where a group of students are taught English language together by a qualified English teacher.

Adolescent:

Young person between childhood and adulthood roughly between the ages of 13





and 17. In this study it refers to the form five students of SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad, Slim River, Perak.

Variable:

a property or characteristic which may differ from individual to individual or from group to group

Social class:

indicators of a person's position in the stratified system, such as occupation, housing, income or educational level. This study will use 3 indicators of education, occupation and income of the subjects' parents.



1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The results of this case study do not represent the whole population. This case study is limited to only one particular group comprising three form four students from SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad, Slim River, Perak.

This study is limited to the conversational code switching and the socio-cultural and individual factors affecting the language choice of the subjects from Malay language to English language or vice-versa. However, code switching at the phonological level is not a part of the study. This study also does not try to look at the reasons for the code switching.

The description of code switching in this study is based on the principles of discourse analysis of taped natural conversations of randomly selected adolescent students of SMK Dato' Zulkifli Muhammad, Slim River only.

The time limit for the study also poses a constraint, as time given does not allow the researcher to conduct a more thorough study on the topic.

their ESL classroom. Correlation formulae are used to find out whether one variable is associated or correlated with another.

2.1 The Language Status in Malaysia

Among the multi-ethnic population of Malaysia of 19.4 million (roughly divided into 62% Malays, 27% Chinese, 8% Indians and 3% others) many languages and related dialects are spoken (Wah Kam Ho and Ruth Y. L. Wong, 1997) Malay is the most important language, being the national and only official language and serving as a lingua franca. English is the second most important language, and according to Asmah (1994, 1995), it is still used widely in certain domain of public life. Of the immigrant languages, Chinese has the highest number of speakers. The use of Tamil and other Indian languages among the Indian population is largely confined to the domains of family, friendship and religion. Such ethnic identities at the group level have been maintained.

English education was first introduced in Malaysia when Penang Free School was established in 1816. The English schools were established mainly in the urban areas. The curriculum in these schools was patterned after the