

Code-mixing and Code-switching Language Among Malay Language Learners in Private University

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Abstract: *The use of multiple languages in the classroom during the teaching and learning of Malay is a common practice among educators and learners. This mixing and shifting of language codes significantly impacts students' mastery of the Malay language, leading to challenges in spoken Malay language proficiency. Research has found that factors driving code-mixing and code-switching among private university students include facilitating communication, expressing identity, and the constraints of using only one language due to limited resources. Therefore, this study aims to identify the factors contributing to the use of language code-mixing and code-switching by Malay language students in private universities and to analyze the impact as well as strategies to overcome the challenges arising from this process in their daily communication. Conducted in urban areas such as Ipoh, Perak, Kelana Jaya, and Petaling Jaya, the qualitative study employs the interview method as the primary means of data collection. Interviews were conducted with four respondents, including two lecturers and two private university students, to gather and analyze information in line with the research objectives.*

Keywords: Code-switching, Code-mixing, language study, psycholinguistics

1. Introduction

Psychology is the study of the human mind, while Linguistics is the scientific analysis of language. Psycholinguistics is the scientific study of the relationship between language and human behavior and cognition (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2007). Psycholinguistics is also a combination of two sciences, psychology and linguistics (Busro, 2016). Nowadays, psychologists are more likely to study human thought processes to understand, explain, and predict human behavior.

Code-switching refers to the practice of speaking in more than two languages. In other words, it can be seen as mastering two languages. This language switching is closely linked to a person's life. Those who engage in code-switching know when to use each language and understand the circumstances or situations in which each language should be used. Using different languages can also help people communicate more effectively and obtain what they need. This is often seen in everyday conversations and relationships, such as when a speaker mixes formal and informal language styles.

Code exchange means the use of two different languages or two linguistic differences, one of which is informal and formal (Ferguson, 1959). While code-mixing is one of the topics found

in the field of psycholinguistics. The definition of the concept of code-mixing is a common phenomenon among people who can speak more than one language. Code mixing occurs when a person speaks by mixing another language or dialect or between one dialect and another. This phenomenon occurs in Malaysia because there are various types of languages and dialects such as Malay, Chinese, Tamil, and their local tribes and dialects.

Bakamba (1988) emphasized that language mixing should be chosen as an appropriate term to refer to alternation in a sentence. Code change and code-mixing are general terms and do not refer to any specific type of code exchange.

1.1 Problem Statement

Malaysia is known for its multiracial pluralistic society. Most people's bilingual dominance has become the norm in today's era. This is because the Malay language is the national language and needs to be mastered by the people, at least at the oral level, even though the community itself has its mother tongue or dialect. The mastery of these two languages, namely the national language and the mother tongue, makes most of Malaysia's population able to communicate using at least two languages compared to people in other countries. The ability of Malaysian people to speak more than one language is a source of pride for us.

However, this situation to some extent has left **a not very good influence on the education system in our country**. The use of two or more languages in the classroom during learning and teaching in Malay is not a strange situation among teachers. This situation exists due to the backgrounds of teachers and students of different races, especially for those who are used to using their mother tongue in their daily communication. In addition, teachers may also have skills in languages other than their mother tongue and Malay which are also understood by their students. Therefore, in addition to code mixing, the use of language in the classroom by teachers while interacting with students can create a code exchange situation. At the same time, **it has an impact on students learning Malay**.

According to a study by Berawati, Adi Yasran, Hasnah and Sharil Nizam (2020) students use code mix and code transfer in the family and neighborhood domains which can show closeness and do not use their mother tongue during conversations. The use of code mixing and code porting here also occurs according to the appropriate context and situation. Meanwhile, a study by Mohd Helmi and Puteri Roslina (2016) showed that the use of code conversion is due to the speaker also using his mother tongue to ensure that communication runs smoothly.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to look at the factors that contribute to the exchange and mixing of codes as well as to examine their impact on Malay language learning among students of private and public universities. This study also aims to see how well lecturers in educational institutions in Malaysia are aware of the issue of code exchange and mixing in language learning.

Study Objectives

- 1) Identify the factors that contribute to the mixing and exchange of language codes among students.
- 2) Identify the effects of mixing and exchanging language codes among students.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

This study focused on only one higher education institution in Malaysia. At the same time, the respondents consisted of lecturers with teaching experience and students from the faculty of

education who took language education courses. This limits the view of exchanging and mixing codes in languages. The findings on the views of mixing and exchanging codes may differ according to the views of respondents who are not from the field of language education.

2. Literature Review

Code-switching behavior can be studied as a reflection of the social structure and cognitive mechanisms that govern language transitions. Code exchange indicates the existence of bilingualism (intelligence). In a multilingual country like Malaysia, which has a large bilingual population, code-switching has become a form of oral communication between communities. Most of the population in Malaysia is bilingual in Malay and English. This is so because bilingualism is the result of the national education policy, which stipulates that Malay is the main language of education and English is the second language.

According to Asmah Hj. Omar (1982) states that code conversion is a phenomenon that symbolizes the conversion from one code to another code in speech or style. Code conversion can occur interlingual or intralingual. This *phenomenon* exists in most bilingual and monolingual speakers, depending on their sociolinguistic state. Code conversions that occur in two or more sentences usually occur in formal or semi-formal situations, for example, in discussions such as formal meetings, seminars, and conferences. In such a situation, the code conversion involves Malay and English. The change occurs in a circular flow from code A to code B, back to code A, and so on.

According to Poplack (1981), there are three types of code conversion. First, *the conversion of the paste code* involves the use of phrases such as *you know*, *I mean*, and so on. This type of code conversion is simple and does not require great language mastery because the risk of breaking the grammar rules is minimal. The second type of code conversion is internal code conversion. This type of code conversion occurs at the phrase and sentence level. The third level, intracentric code conversion, is considered more complex. This type of code conversion tends to break syntactic structures and requires high language skills in both languages. This listing has become a reference for many researchers in the field of code conversion.

Hoffman (1991) argues that code conversion is one of the most creative forms of bilingual speech. However, code conversion is also a sign of linguistic extinction, as bilingual speakers do not acquire the two languages well and cannot separate them. According to him, the most general definition of code conversion involves the use of two languages or linguistic diversity in one speech or in the same conversation. When bilingual speakers converse with each other, code conversion can consist of language changes, or when speakers of one *language* (*monolingual*) are conversing with each other, code change can occur in the form of a style change.

The definition of code conversion, according to Marasigan (1983) is the use of two languages in the same sentence or discourse. However, the study of code conversion from one language variation to another in the same language is equally discussed because it also involves social, cultural, and individual preferences.

A study from local researchers on the issue of code exchange and mixing is Factors Influencing Code Exchange in Primary School Language Teacher Teaching (2021) is a qualitative study aimed at exploring code exchange and factors influencing code exchange for primary school Malay language teachers in teaching and learning. For this reason, a total of three non-native

Malay language teachers with experience in teaching Malay language subjects were used as study respondents. The three participants in the study taught at a rural primary school in the Song district of Sarawak. The interview method is used as the main instrument in data collection. Interview data were analyzed manually by searching for themes related to the objectives of the study. To determine the validity and reliability of the themes found, an expert was selected to verify the themes. The findings of the study show that there is a lot of code exchange among Malay language teachers in their teaching and learning. The code exchange occurred when all the study participants wanted to explain the content of the lesson, which was not understood by the Iban students. The change of Malay to the student's mother tongue (first language-B1), i.e., Iban, occurs when the student does not understand what he is learning in Malay (second language-B2).

3. Study Methodology

This study aims to identify the facts of the process of mixing and exchanging language codes among Malay language students in higher education and the impact of the process on Malay language of students in higher education. The researcher will also assess the effectiveness of the measures taken to address the problems that arise because of this. Study design is a qualitative study in the form of a case study that uses the interview method as a research instrument. Reflective interviews involving researchers and respondents are conducted orally (conversations) and recorded throughout the process to transcribe the text of the conversation to obtain accurate information. Interviews need to be reflective and reflect real life and circumstances regarding a phenomenon (Denzin, 2001). The qualitative method is seen to be able to explain the information to be obtained holistically from the source without any manipulation by the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Subsequently, this study involved two different private institutes of higher learning (higher education) located in Ipoh Perak, which is referred to as a single *case* study (Yin, 2012; Creswell, 2008). Here is a further explanation:

- 1) One case: Referring to the issue of mixing and changing the language code of Malay language students in higher education according to the study location chosen by the researcher. The focus of this study is to explore information in terms of triggering factors, implications, and coping methods taken by the respondents to deal with the problem.
- 2) Various places: Refers to the location of higher education; that is the researcher's choice to obtain and collect research data. In this study, the researcher selected two private universities with different locations, namely Cosmopoint College and International University (UNITAR). Both of these private higher education centers are located in Ipoh Town, Perak. The researcher has identified teachers, lecturers, and students who are faced with the issue of mixing and exchanging language codes.

3.1 Sample Size

The *purposive* sampling method, which is to take samples from any individual in the population who meets the criteria to be selected as a study participant, was used in this study to conduct an interview process to obtain information related to the issue of mixing and exchange of Malay language codes among students in higher education. The selection of the sampling method aims to enable researchers to obtain information about what is to be studied accurately, holistically and meaningfully (Merriam, 2019) The sample must show parallelism with the findings of the study to achieve the objectives of the study. The sample was carefully selected to meet the necessary criteria to ensure that readers understood the results of the study. Therefore, a total of two lecturers and two higher education students were selected as study participants based on

the criteria for study participants that had been set. The following is a sample/study participant selected by the researcher to conduct the interview session.

3.2 Study Instruments

The study instrument used to obtain the data was, semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the theme analysis method. Interview questions are the main instrument in the data collection process. Semi-structured questions can be modified and arranged in a certain order so that the sample/study participants can understand well. The researcher looked at the research issue under the subject's perspective during the interview question formulation process. Arguments of minimal encouragement are used to obtain more information related to the issues discussed in the interview session. Reduction or increase in questions can also occur during the interview process. The interview questions have gone through a process of review and correction by experts who are experienced in the field of qualitative research related to the issues that occur in the higher education center.

4. Findings

In this chapter, we will discuss the findings of the study by analyzing the results of interviews with two lecturers who work in two private higher education institutions and two students who are also studying at the same two private higher education institutions located in the Ipoh Perak Urban Area. The findings of this study will also discuss the issue of mixing and exchanging language codes among Malay language students in the two higher educations in terms of factors that cause mixing and exchanging language codes, the effects of mixing and exchanging language codes and the ways taken to overcome any negative effects that occur due to this issue. The researchers conducted an interview session with all four respondents to obtain data for this study. The four respondents were given code labels as Malay language lecturer 1 and Malay language lecturer 2 for respondents in the lecturer category and student 1 and student 2 for respondents in the student category. The demographics of the respondents included gender, race, age range, location of the higher institution, length of service/study and the latest academic qualifications of the respondents.

The researcher interviewed two lecturers and 2 students at two private higher learning institutions located in Ipoh Perak to obtain information on the factors that caused the mixing and variation of language codes among Malay language students in the two higher educations studied. All the respondents were selected as study participants to help the researchers prepare for this interview. The factors that motivate students to do the process of mixing and exchanging language codes in their daily conversations are categorized into several main themes. Theme 1 is a factor for the purpose of daily communication of students, theme 2 is a factor for learning and teaching in the classroom and theme 3 is the language factor as a student's identity. Each of these themes has its own sub-sub-theme breakdown based on the answers given by the respondents for the student category in their interview sessions.

4.1 The Factors of the Mixing and Exchange of Language Codes Among Students.

The researcher determined that the primary reason students engage in mixing and exchanging language codes is to facilitate communication. Both respondents within the student category were observed to utilize code-switching in their daily communication. These factors are further elaborated in several sub-sub-themes that the researchers have effectively identified. The examination of the first subtheme elaborates on the factors that support students' daily communication processes while mixing and exchanging their language codes. Based on the above transcript, the researcher found that both respondent from student 1 and student 2 utilized

Malay and English in their daily communication to enhance the communication process. Respondents indicated that this code-switching is prevalent, particularly when interacting with non-Malay friends, specifically Chinese and Indian individuals. ***The factors influencing learning and teaching*** objectives in the classroom are related to the interplay and exchange of language codes to facilitate the educational process. The subsequent findings of the study for the second theme statement are derived from the interview transcription. The researcher identified that the second thematic factor involves students utilizing the process of mixing and exchanging language codes for learning and teaching purposes within the classroom. Both respondents within the student category were found to have utilized the language code-mixing process during their teaching and learning activities in class.

Language factors describe self-identity are associated with the mixing factors, and the exchange of language codes is utilized to depict the student's identity. The findings of the study concerning the third theme statement, as discerned from the interview transcription, are as follows. The researcher determined that the third thematic factor associated with students' use of code-mixing and code-switching is related to the construction of self-identity. The two respondents in the student category expressed differing opinions on this matter. The factors associated with racial differences also contribute to the mixing and exchange of students' language codes. This has been confirmed and stated by both Malay language lecturer respondents. They believe that the multiracial language background of students necessitates the incorporation of language code mixing and exchange in their daily communication.

The level of English proficiency as a second student is also at a good level to ensure the smooth teaching and learning process. The third sub-theme addresses the influence of students' proficiency in English as a second language, which is currently at an adequate level, facilitating an effective teaching and learning process. Malay language lecturer 1 and Malay language lecturer 2 indicated that using two languages during teaching and learning sessions poses no issues and enhances the information-sharing process with students in class.

4.2 The Effects of Mixing and Exchanging Language Codes Among Students.

The resulting effects have two categories, namely positive effects and negative effects. All the respondents were selected as study participants to help the researchers prepare for this interview. The responses from the student and lecturer category information are shown in the table below

There are several positive effects identifying based on the interview when mixing and changing the Malay language code is carried out in the daily communication of students in higher education. These positive and negative effects are categorized into several themes. Theme 1 is effective communication, theme 2 is easier and smoother learning and teaching assignments and theme 3 is poisoning and damage to the Malay language and theme 4 is the issue of loss of confidence in students. Each of these themes has its own breakdown of sub-themes based on the answers given by the respondents for the categories of students and lecturers in the interview session with them.

Theme analysis is related to the effect of mixing language codes from the aspect of effective communication. The researcher identified that the positive effect of mixing and exchanging language codes among the Malay language students of higher education students studied was that they were able to produce effective communication. All the respondents in the student and lecturer categories gave their own opinions. These effects are also detailed into several sub-sub-themes that the researchers have successfully identified. Details analyze the effects of

effective communication in terms of being able to create a friendly and comfortable relationship when communicating. This is agreed by student 1, Malay language lecturer 1 and Malay language lecturer 2 only.

They think that they feel more friendly using a third mixed language to communicate. However, for student 1, he did not agree with this. He added that a person can feel uncomfortable using English when communicating due to poor mastery of the language. Next, analysis is related to the effect of mixing and exchanging language codes to make the learning and teaching process easier and smoother. Based on the interview result, the researchers identified that the positive effect of both mixing and exchanging language codes is that the Teaching and learning process is easier and smoother. The four respondents in the student and lecturer categories provided almost the same data related to this theme. The impact of this theme is also detailed into several sub-sub-themes that were successfully identified by the researchers.

The analysis of theme 3 is related to the negative effects of mixing and exchanging language codes, namely poisoning and deterioration on the Malay language proficiency of students in the higher education studied. It shows that the negative effects of mixing and exchanging language codes can cause poisoning and damage to the Malay language of the students. The four respondents in the student and lecturer categories gave their opinions on this matter. These effects are also detailed into several sub-sub-themes that the researchers have successfully identified. The analysis of theme 4 is related to the negative effect of mixing and reproducing language codes causing students to lose confidence to communicate.

This subtheme details the negative effects of students feeling embarrassed because they are not able to speak English well when mixing language codes in their daily communication. This was agreed upon by student 1, Malay language lecturer 1 and Malay language lecturer 2. They think that good English proficiency is very important because they are worried about making grammatical mistakes when using English like everyone else. However, P2 stated otherwise. He does not care about the views of others and is not ashamed even though he still makes mistakes in English when communicating in two different language codes. This subtheme details the negative effects of students feeling left out because they do not master English well. As for student 1, Malay language lecturer 1 and Malay language lecturer 2, they found that students still feel left behind and inferior when their English is not very good. Malay language lecturer said English is not a requirement in Malay classes although there are still students who feel inferior when their English is not very good.

5. Conclusion

The respondents involved in this study consisted of lecturers and students of UNITAR International University. The lecturers at UNITAR have teaching experience in Malay language education while the students are students of the bachelor's degree in Malay language education. According to the results provided, the use of mixing and shifting codes is often used in educational contexts. To some extent it has an impact on the learning and learning of the respondents. They use Malay and English in everyday conversation. However, in speaking with lecturers, there is often a code conversion from Malay to English. In fact, in many verbal communication situations, conversation segments are often inserted in both languages.

This can be seen from the findings of the study, which is based on the listed mixing and shifting factors, such as daily communication learning objectives, as a way of identifying one's identity

and bilingual learning affects the mixing and shifting factors of language codes among private higher education students.

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