# CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0.   Introduction

There have been various studies carried out on the languages used to communicate on the Internet especially through emails, message boards and Internet Relay Chat. However, there have been very few relevant studies to analyse the choice of language use, language mix or code-switching in such communication. Most studies concentrate mainly on the type of English or register used to communicate.

This chapter will first look at literature on language use on the Internet. It will then examine the literature on code-switching and language choice. Some of this literature such as Hymes' framework of communication and Valdes-Fallis' strategies of code-switching will form the theoretical framework for this study and will be used to analyse the language used in this website and also to analyse the code-switching patterns in the chosen website.

2.1.   Texts on the Internet

It is important to understand the features of texts on the Internet before proceeding to the language use on the Interent. The distinctive

properties of texts on the Internet or technology texts are explained by Kok (2000) and Shortis (2001). Kok (2000:57), refers to a homepage as the locus point to all the other related links. In his study, Halliday's framework of language was modified to describe the semiotic resources in technology texts (refer to Figure 2.1).
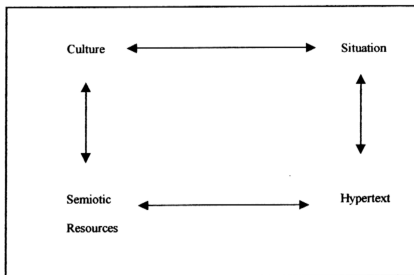
Figure 2.1 : Semiotic resources in hypertext

As shown in Figure 2.1, Kok observes that, culture together with the situation, which in this case is the Internet, determines the type of technology text produced. The interpretation of the meaning of the text and the words used will depend on the context of culture and the context of situation. The intention of those who publish the words and the words themselves influence the layout of the document and the meaning created.

The context of situation which determines the type of technology texts produced is also examined by Shortis (2001), who observed that

linked information in the form of tags are usually placed on the left margin of the homepage. They are easily seen and the font is bold thus encouraging the user to search for more information by clicking on the tags. There is no mention of asking the user to click on these words, but anyone using the Internet would understand and interpret tags as a call to seek more information. Shortis explains that the text producer on the Internet is very well aware of the receipients' linguistic competence. This inherent understanding between the producer and recipients of text have an influence on the way communication is carried out on the Internet.

2.2.   Communication on the Internet

Communication on the Internet resembles spoken language as was mentioned earlier in Chapter 1. At the same time, the media of communication on the Internet is in written form. As such, communication on the Internet is a new mode of communication which requires literature from both Internet and non-Internet settings for the analysis. So far, most of the studies on communication on the Internet have only analysed the communicative functions and discourse features of language.

For instance, Ng (2000) studied electronic messages in a local business community and examined them for grammatical features, communicative functions and discourse features. It was found that most of the clauses were in the imperative mood, followed by declarative and interrogative mood. It shows that electronic messages seem to be mainly used for requesting and informing and less for the purpose of inquiries.

There were also instances of paralinguistic cues like '*oops!!*', simplications of language in the form of abbreviations, contractions and subject-pronoun omissions such as '*asap*,' '*thnks*'. In other words, conventional business communication rules were simplified.

Similarly, Le Vasan (1996) who analysed email texts in a business community found that some of the rules of letter writing were only partially held. Some rules have partially undergone modifications as a result of the demands of technology. For instance, texts in emails were not organised in paragraphs. They were cut and pasted randomly depending on the software available. In such communication, the meaning of the content seems to be more important than the grammatical accuracy as time is a precious commodity on the Internet and costs money. Email texts were also found to be more informal when compared to traditional letters. There seems to be no need for any saluations or polite formalites as the study was among the business community who are familiar with each other. It was also observed that on the surface, the sentences in emails appear to be simple and straightforward. A closer inspection shows that the words have been structured together to produce the desired effect collectively thus indicating that communication on the Internet has an inherent system of its own understood by the participants.

Similarly, Lewin (2002) who studied communication on Internet message boards, found that the messages had certain distinctive features commonly ascribed to computer mediated communication. The messages were not corrected and had inappropriate use of lower case letters. They

lack paralinguistic cues present in face to face communication but had emoticons to replace facial expressions. There were pause fillers such as 'hmmm' to imitate a conversation. Generally, subjects and verbs were omitted. There was also a lack of intersentential connectors such as 'however'. Special acronyms and colloquial words are a common feature since speed is important in communication on the Internet. Unlike Le Vasan's findings, Lewin found that there were a lot of greetings by names and also signing off using names. Maybe this difference could be attributed to different cultures where Asians usually work more formally or indirectly to reach consensus before any formal meeting or decision making takes place (Fitzgerald, 2003).

2.3. Communication in non-Internet settings

Hymes (1977), sketched out a general framework in terms of communication. There are four aspects to the framework : the components of communicative events, the relations among components, the capacity and state of components and the activity of the whole so constituted. The components comprise the senders and the receivers. In this study, it would be the webmaster and the participants and others who view the website. The components also include the settings in which the communication is permitted. The forms of messages , the types of messages, the attitudes of the participants , the contents of the messages and the events themselves form the components which determine the events themselves. In this study, the social setting is a hypertext type

protocol which has properties not reducible to those of the language competencies of persons.

Hymes also states that communication depends on the relationship among the components. The system of communicative events is usually organised and there is no complete freedom of co-ocurrence among components. What chance the language has to make an impression upon individuals will depend upon the degree and pattern of its admission into communicative events. Hymes believes that people do not use language to the same degree everywhere. It all depends on the events. The language use is also dependent on the communicative events and their relation to other components. It is not what a language does for the participants, their personalities and culture, but of what participants, their personalities and the like do for and to a language.

In Hymes (1967), models of the interaction of language and social setting, he explains that the functional roles of languages have to be understood. The communicative role and social value is not equivalent for all languages. The communicative conventions of a particular language enables a member of the community to know when to speak, which code to use.

2.4. Code-switching

Valdes – Fallis (1978), describes code-switching as the alternating use of two languages on the word, phrase, clause or sentence level.

When bilingual speakers communicating in the other language introduce a word, phrase, clause or sentence, they are said to be have code-switched. Usually, when two languages are spoken by a group of bilinguals, interference can occur. Interference is a momentary transfer from one language to another of elements from one of the languages spoken by a bilingual, regardless of which language is dominant. This happens when the speakers' first language do not meet all their communicative needs. It was observed that everyone uses language according to certain sociolinguistic rules. The language use and choice depends on who says what to whom and when. The categories used by Valdes – Fallis to differentiate between the use and function of various patterns of language alterations are as follows :

- Code-switching as a means of reflecting social information – it can signal the fact that there is a shift in role relationship with regard to one another or when there is a change in topics, or responding to the particular characteristics of the settings; whether it is an informal or formal setting. It is common for bilingual communities to use their two languages in different domains and settings. At times, social expressions known as identity markers are used to express solidarity and intimacy between two speakers of the same ethnic group.

- Code-switching as a stylistic process - speakers need to code-switch dependent upon the individual speaker's personal preferences for one or the other of the two languages, provided that the social situation permits either code. In such cases, the switch is commonly found within the same sentences on the word, phrase or clause level. It is used as a personal rhetorical device to add colour to an utterance to create poetic

meanings. The same item can be repeated in two languages or one language can be used for narration and the other language as the language of paraphrase. The reasons for such patterns can also be for the reason that there is no equal word found in two languages for poetic or expressive purposes.

• Code-switching as the overall proficiency of bilingual speakers - at times, code switching is done out of habit. The speakers themselves may not be aware of the strategies used in the language choice. They may not know the right words or cannot think of them quickly enough and the switch to the other language would seem to be the right choice. This can also reflect the language strength of the speakers. Many bilinguals switch only when speaking their weaker language in order to emphasise in the stronger language.

Valdes – Fallis principal code-switching patterns can be shown in Tables 2.1 and 2.2. The tables show that code-switching can occur in response to external factors as well as internal factors. The external factors are dependent on the context of situation and the self identity of the individual with the group.

Table 2.1.

Switching Patterns that Occur in Response to External Factors

Situational	Related to the social role of speakers
Contextual	Depends on the situation, topic, setting
Identity markers	In-group membership stressed
Quotations & paraphrases	Contextual, related to language used by the original speakers

Source : Valdes-Fallis (1978)

Table 2.2.

Switching Patterns that Occur in Response to Internal Factors

Random switches of high frequency items	Unpredictable, do not relate to topic, situation, setting or language dominance. Occurs only on word level
Switches that reflect lexical need	Related to language dominance, memory and spontaneous vs automatic speech
Triggered switches	Due to preceding or following items
Performulations	Include linguistic routines and automatic speech, eg : 'you know',etc.
Discourse markers	Include words like 'but', 'and' 'out'
Stylistic switches	Obvious stylistic devices used for emphasis or contrast
Sequential switches	Using the last language used by the preceding speaker
Quotations and paraphrases	Non-contextual and not related to language used by original speaker

Source : Valdes-Fallis (1978)

2.4.1.   Code-switching in non-Internet settings

Generally, code-switching studies are carried out when there is a language choice available. The choice of language is based on how the speaker identifies with the group. Speech is a signal of social identity (Hudson, 1980). Similarly, Romaine (1994), states that what languages and varieties are available to speakers in a particular social context influence the language choice made. The most likely place for the use of native language was the family domain, followed by friendship, religion, employment and education. Holmes (2001) also agrees that aspects of social identity influence the way we talk. The final language choice reflects the relationship between the people in a particular situation, and how the speaker feels about the person addressed. Similarly, when non-

native speakers of English communicate on the Internet, and when English still dominates the Internet, there is also a language choice available for the participants involved. The studies mentioned below describes the code-switching patterns when there is a language choice in non-Internet settings.

Hype (2002), did a study on English used in advertisements in Japan and discovered that English is a source of material to convey an image rather than an exact meaning (emblematic). It does not matter whether English is understood or not. It conveys a fashionable, desirable image symbolising modernity and a connotation of Western identity. It also serves as extra linguistic material when the original language does not meet the communicative needs. Similarly, Friedrich (2002), studied the use of English in advertising and brand name in Brazil. It was realised that English was restricted to single words or short phrases only to create the desired effects. There is also a tendency to assimilate English words phonologically and morphologically.

Gumperz, (1967), believes that the same social pressures which would lead a monolingual to change from colloquial to formal or technical styles may lead a bilingual to shift from one language to another. Data in Gumperz's study were collected from tape recorded speech samples from bilingual speakers in Hindi-Punjabi and Kannada-Marathi interacting in natural settings. The shift between codes seem to have a quality of abruptness which to some extent accounts for the speakers' view of them as distinct languages.

Anie Attan (1998), examined the discourse communities' choice of codes and patterns of oral and written discourses. Two multinational manufacturing firms in Malaysia were used as case studies. In her analysis, Anie discovered that participants shared knowledge and values is reflected in the language choice. English and not Bahasa Malaysia was used to identify and describe specific objects or activity. Adoption of English technical vocabulary and expressions in a predominantly Bahasa Malaysia discourse was for accuracy and effective exchange of information. These English terms have a long established tradition of being widely used and were well understood by the community. The use of numbers and letters in specifications which were in English helped in the accurate transmission of information. In Anie's study too, it was realised that giving a briefing in English actually puts a distance between the facilitator and the listeners. The native code was then used to negotiate and also to gain the community's social approval and support.

In another study by Piller, (2001) on how bilingual couples talk, the author divides the two languages into majority language and minority language. The majority language was used as a default option by couples and this choice was hardly discussed at all during the conversation used for the study. One of the few reasons given was that of one partner's limited proficiency in the minority language and so it is too much hassle to use the minority language.

Couples who use the minority language or who use a mixed code tend to explain and justify the reasons for the language choice. The most frequently adduced reasons are habit. The couples find it difficult to change from the language of their first meeting to another. There seems to be a close relationship between language and the performance of identity. There is a sense of being a different person in different languages. One of the reasons given for language mixing is that the speakers do not know either language a hundred percent. Another reason is connected to the speaker's thoughts and feelings and on which language the speaker can express better.

Treffers – Daller, (1994), describes how Belgium people mix French and Dutch. In this study, code-mixing and borrowing are considered as interaction of two lexicons. Borrowing is limited to one single word insertion and code-mixing for longer switches. It was observed that French words were borrowed more often into Brussels Dutch than Dutch words into Brussels French. This was linked to Bloomfield's observation that borrowing goes predominantly from the upper language to the lower language. French is the upper language in Brussels and the influence of French on Dutch has been much more important than the influence of Dutch on French. Borrowings in Brussels Dutch, on the other hand were mainly nouns. This was related to Muysken hierarchy of borrowability which states that nouns are more easily borrowed than adjectives, followed by verbs, prepositions, coordinate conjunctions, determiners, pronouns and subordinate conjunctions. The word order is not influenced by borrowings or code-mixing. It was also observed that

intersentence code-switching requires a good active command of both languages.

2.4.2.   Code-switching while communicating on the Internet

There have not been much studies carried out on code-switching while communicating on the Internet due to the dominance of English on the Internet. With multilingual and bilingual webpages increasing as was shown in Tables 1.1 and 1.3 in Chapter 1, there might be more studies carried out in future. Likewise, relevant studies on Tamil and English code switching while communicating on the Internet are also minimal. The following studies describe the language variation among participants while communicating on the Internet using Internet Relay Chat (IRC).

Beh (2001), studied the language used among undergraduates from different ethnic groups using the Internet Relay Chat (IRC). It was found that most students used English as the main language to chat, although like non-virtual communication, switching to other languages seem to be normal and natural. There were two code-switching patterns found in this type of communication. Code-switching was found when there is a lexical need and often as an ending particle. Lexical shifts were commonly carried out in Cantonese and Bahasa Melayu. Mostly nouns, verbs and adjectives were replaced by the native language. The participants were mainly Chinese and felt more comfortable expressing themselves in Cantonese. The reason could be to show solidarity among themselves. Code-switching found in the ending particles such as *'kan?' 'mah?'* was

more for communicative purposes such as to question, and to be more emphatic.

A similar study was carried out by Paolilo (1999), to study the language variation in IRC. It was found that there is a highly structured relationship between participants' social position and the linguistic variation used. Those with regular contact with each other tend to use more non standard vernacular linguistic variation. On the other hand, there were fewer vernacular linguistic variants and a higher incidence of variants associated with the recognised standard variety where there are weak ties such as among casual acquaintances.

2.5.   English and Tamil code-switching patterns

Kahlah Vathee (2001), studied the influence of lexical items in English spoken by Malaysian Tamils in the domain of friendship. It was found that participants of the study code-switched to Tamil in the midst of their English conversations. Cultural, religious and other sensitive matters were conveyed more effectively when Tamil lexical items were used in English conversations. The participants are usually not aware of the usage of the Tamil lexical items, but it helped to create a closer bond and better understanding of meaning among friends.

Use of single Tamil words in English conversations include names of Indian food, musical terms, kinship terms, insults, vulgarities, body parts, expression of fear and surprise, complaints and fashion or coined

words. Tamil expressions which carry more than a single word but carrying a single meaning were also used. Interestingly, the participants of the study who were more than 21 years of age, used very few vulgar words. The younger participants could have used such words to express solidarity among friends of similar age group. The older participants who were more than 50 years used Tamil idioms, indicating that a lot of importance is given to Tamil cultural and religious ways.

2.6.   Conclusion

This chapter discussed the language used and the code-switching patterns in non-Internet settings as well as on the Internet. As was mentioned in this chapter, there have been very few studies carried out on language choice on the Internet especially for bilingual users of languages such as English and Tamil. Therefore, using this literature review as background, the following chapter will discuss the research questions and procedures of data collection necessary for this study.