CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years, research into language and gender has resulted in a comprehensive study of the features and structures of women's talk in both single and mixed gender interactions (Lakoff, 1975; Zimmerman and West, 1975; Edelsky, 1981; Fishman, 1983; Tannen, 1984,1990; Hirshman, 1994). The earliest and the most influential linguist to write about language and gender was Robin Lakoff. Lakoff (1975) in her book, Language and Women's Place, claimed that women's speech style is inferior to men's because women were taught to believe that asserting themselves strongly is not feminine or lady-like. On the other hand, Jennifer Coates (1996, 1998), showed that women's conversation in an all- female group was often built on a framework of co-operativity.

2.2   SPEECH STYLE OF WOMEN IN GENERAL

The idea that women and men speak languages differently began to gain attention among linguists in the 1970's. Every possible source of linguistic variations such as pronunciation, grammar and syntax were regarded as possible areas of sex differences in as much as language is concerned. Stylistic differences like politeness, hesitancy and non- assertions were also seen as potentially gender- linked, and in this tone the number of studies comparing male and female speakers increased considerably (West & Zimmerman, 1987). It was the work of linguist Robin Lakoff that began the search for the definite features of women's speech. Lakoff (1975) identified women's language as inferior to men's language. She introduced the term women's language in 1973. Women's language in English was a system of sex-linked

linguistic signals, a set of features used by both sexes but more by women than men. Researchers coined new terms like 'women's language' (Lakoff, 1973), 'the female register' (Crosby and Nyquist, 1977) and 'genderlect' (Kramer, 1974b) and recently ' gender-linked language' (Mulac et.al, 1986) (Crawford, 1995: 22). Lakoff (1975) in her book Language and Woman's Place has been enormously influential. Lakoff (1975) believed that "speech features form a cluster that constitute a recognizable style of speaking" (Crawford, 1995: 25). She argued that hedges and tag questions made up a style that created a unified effect. It is generally believed that the effect of a woman's style is negative - It is a powerless style. However, Fishman (1978) noted that women gave many minimal responses (e.g. mm, hm) during their husbands' speaking turns, while they in turn witheld minimal responses to express lack of interest and to control the topic. De Francissco (1991) said that women may offer whereas men will withhold conversational support in the form of asserting responses (Crawford, 1995: 40). These patterns suggest that women do more interactional work. Their speech strategies function to hold a share of conversation time and attention for themselves and to give support to their male conversational partners.

2.3   SPEECH STYLES OF MALAY WOMEN IN MALAYSIA

The Malays are the indigenous people of the regions of the Malay archipelago (Latiffah Pawanteh, 1996: 23). Generally, a Malay person is expected to be courteous and demonstrate finesse in behaviour. The notion of relational distance, respect for elders, politeness, hierarchical position, status, and authority are very much rooted in the Malay value system (Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 101). On the whole, Malays often avoid confrontation, public displays, being too forceful and direct. Ethnic values according to Jamaliah Mohd. Ali (1995) are bound to influence the conversational styles among Malaysians. For example, the Indians are more vocal, the Chinese more

concerned with face-saving and so are the Malays who are more polite and non-assertive in manner. In Malaysia, the concept of face-saving means saving another person or oneself from embarrassment. In other words, the speaker tries not to put himself or the listener in a position in which he or she might be embarrassed (Jariah Md. Jan, 1995: 106). The communication style of the Malays is described as "high context" where meanings are hidden in the situation (Latiffah Pawanteh, 1996: 246). People speak indirectly about themselves among other things. Group members are supposed to know the intended meanings concealed within the situation. The American style of communication, however, is "low context". Their style is direct and meanings are in the words used (Latiffah Pawanteh, 1996: 246). The Americans are more open, expressive and free to articulate their personal opinions on a variety of topics unlike the Malays. The Malays at large are not at liberty to participate openly. This is because any opinions that are contradictory may create tension and conflict.

Latiffah Pawanteh (1996) further added that the Malay culture was similar to most Eastern cultures which represented a collective culture. The Malays have the tendency to want to belong to a group. They have to work hard to fit into the group and the group has considerable influence on their practices (Latiffah,1996: 26). The co-operative goals of the group as an entity is given immediate attention, which individual goals do not enjoy.

Latiffah Pawanteh (1996) said that in the company of a Malay man, Malay women had to pay attention to all the Malay social etiquette concerning a woman's role in society. This includes the topics discussed and her mannerisms. The subjects in Latiffah Pawanteh's (1996) study likewise have to follow these social conventions. If they were to do otherwise, they would appear snobbish and 'unMalay' (Latiffah Pawanteh, 1996: 204). Malay women should conform to particular norms and practices. Malay men take the active role in conversations and determine the topics

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discussed. A good Malay woman should allow herself to be put into a Malay woman's role whenever talking with a man. A woman has no choice but to conform to the Malay social rules, for to do otherwise would create a misinterpretation of the woman's good intentions. Latiffah's (1996) findings and Robin Lakoff's (1975) work can be considered to be similar. Lakoff (1975) identified women's language as inferior to men's language. She claimed that women's language denied them the means to strong self-expression and conveyed triviality. She further characterized women's language as contributing to women's inferior social position. Latiffah (1996) added that Malay women in their daily interactions found comfort and security among themselves as they shared a common cultural pattern.

From what has been seen thus far, it can be concluded that the conversational style between Malay men and women is comparable to the conversational style of men and women in general. The style of Malay women can be seen to be weak and tentative. Asserting themselves too strongly is not considered to be lady-like or feminine. It is a powerless style. These characteristics are associated with femininity and typical of women as claimed by Lakoff (1975). Furthermore, Malay women and men speak in different voices because they seemed to seek different things from talking. Malay women just want to be friends while Malay men want to control the conversation and dominate the discourse in order to assert control over the meanings that Malay women have voiced out. Thus it can be seen that the speech of Malay women differs from that of Malay men i.e. the women's style is communal while the men's would be competitive and hierarchical.

2.4   CONVERSATIONAL STYLE IN AN ALL FEMALE GROUP

(WHITE as well as MALAYSIAN WOMEN)

Deborah Jones (1980) used the term gossip to describe talk among women. Jones (1980) added that gossip arose from women's own perception of themselves as a group that shared a great deal in common: "Gossip is essentially talk between women in our common role as women" (pg.195). Women's speech is said to be more friendly, it discusses personal experience, and is domestic in nature. On the other hand, men's conversational style is taken to be serious as they seem to discuss factual and impersonal subjects, unlike women: "Single-sex women's groups conversations involve topics related to people and feelings, while in parallel all-men conversation... the men talk about things- home, beer making, hi-fi systems etc." (Coates, 1998:144). Therefore, the language used by men is taken to be the real language and often given more attention than women's.

Guendouzi (2001) further commented that the women in Coates's research (1991, 1993,1996, 1998) were built around a framework of co-operativity. She added that the ways in which the female participants in Coates' studies talked was similar to the 'jamming sessions of jazz musicians' (Guendouzi, 2001: 29). According to Guendouzi (2001), women's discourse is seen to be co-operative; therefore, women are also said to be co-operative in their social relationships. This leads Guendouzi (2001) to believe that Coates idea of an ideal friendship is based on women's friendship. Guendouzi (2001) also mentioned that women speakers can also be competitive in conversation but if not vying for the floor, they were actually seeking for attention or appoval of other members of the floor.

According to Tan Tek Bing (1997), the term gossip in anthropology refers to informal communication among members of a group. Anthropologists stress that social gossip functions as a tool to maintain unity, morality, and group identity. Jones (1980)

described gossip in relation to setting, the participants, topic, formal features of language, and its function. Interaction takes place at home, in supermarkets and hair salons. The topics discussed by women are related to women's roles as girlfriends, wives and mothers. The formal features of gossip includes the use of questions followed by answers, the use of rising intonations, giving feedback, using minimal responses like 'mm' and 'yes', the use of non-verbal communication, for example smiling, nodding and raising the eyebrows. In general, the formal features of language are what Tan (1997: 53) called 'reciprocal interaction'.

Men's style in conversation is said to be competitive in nature. The notion of competitiveness is used to describe the adversarial style of conversation where speakers vie for turns and where participants are more likely to contradict each other rather than to build on each other's contributions, unlike women. Women are prone to be co-operative in their interactions. Co-operativeness refers to a particular type of conversation where speakers work together to produce shared meanings (Coates, 1998). In Jariah Mohd. Jan's (1999) study, the term co-operativeness refers to participants working closely together in harmony to produce shared meanings, and building on each other's contribution in order to successfully produce a coherent text. The female panelists in her study pursued a style of interaction based on co-operation and support. The female panelists were more expressive, receptive and supportive in their interaction to establish co-operative talk that signified feminine solidarity.

Jariah (1999) further added that the co-operative and competitive use of the features in her study suggested that a hierarchy existed among the female panelists contradicting the common assumption by Coates (1998) that the literature of female groups are non-hierarchical. Hence, these findings demonstrated that females use a mixture of strategies to demonstrate solidarity or co-operation, and to some extent dominance in their discussion. The all-female group in Jariah's (1999) study was

flexible. The women participants engaged themselves in constructing a collaborative, co-operative and supportive style of talk. They avoided competing for the floor or interrupting others and appeared to be more attentive listeners. They often spoke at the same time and made full use of the back channel support to indicate support for the speaker. Politeness and face saving according to Jariah (1999) are also used to relate positive self-image of tolerance and understanding in order to maintain harmony and social relationships.These linguistic features according to Jariah (1999) showed powerful signs of solidarity.

In brief, even though the female participants' conversations in Jariah's study were hierarchical in nature, they still used features like minimal responses to produce co-operative talks. This further showed that achieving solidarity within the female group was important and vital in order to maintain their friendship.

2.5   TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTION USED BY THE RESEARCHER

A variety of transcription conventions exist, and in selecting one, a researcher must choose a transcription technique which is salient to the study. For example, in Jariah's (1999) study, she used a transcription style invented by Gail Jefferson (1978). This convention clearly showed the distribution of turns between speakers. Readers can see the relative length and frequency of the participants' turns. Jefferson (1978) placed more attention to phenomena that is central to the organisation of conversation; for example turns, speech- onset, overlaps, intonation, and so on. Jefferson's (1978) style provided information about the occurrences of simultaneous speech or where interruption began and when the speaker ceased to talk in relation to the next speaker's turn (Jariah, 1999: 10). Jefferson's (1978) convention attends to the features of conversation that are significant in critical analysis (Wood, 2000: 85).

Coates's (1996, 1998) style was adapted for this study since she had produced a similar study of linguistic features of women's language and how these features promoted co-operative talk among women. Coates' (1996, 1998) transcription convention is suitable for this study as Coates (1996, 1998) looked into detailed, conversational strategies typical of women's friendly talk. She was interested in conversational features such as questions, minimal responses and topic development rather than phonetic variations. Jefferson (1996) in Linda A. Wood & Rolf O. Kroger (2000:85) says that there maybe special challenges in the transcription of English spoken by those whose first language is not English. For instance, in this study, the researcher had to transcribed Malay words into English as the conversationalists code-switched from English into the Malay dialect frequently in the conversations. Since 'there cannot be a single ideal transcription' (Wood & Rolf, 2000: 85), the researcher has to adapt the system for the purpose of developing it by adding symbols for some features of the data. The additional symbols are to show interruptions (refer to page 71), to translate Malay words into English (refer to page 97) and to indicate the end of an interaction (refer to end of conversations in Appendix A and B)

2.6 METHODOLOGY UNDERTAKEN BY OTHER RESEARCHERS

This research is based on a few studies mainly, by Robin Lakoff, Lynette Hirshman, Jariah Md Jan and Jennifer Coates. Their findings are quoted because they are found to be significant to the said research. For instance, Robin Lakoff was one of the earliest and most influential linguists to write about language and gender. Lakoff in her book, Language and Women's Place, claimed that women's speech style is inferior to men 'precisely because they are socialized to believe that asserting themselves strongly isn't nice or lady-like or even feminine' (Lakoff, 1975: 54). Lakoff's ideas about women's language are based solely on her intuition as a speaker and not on

empirical research. Lynette Hirshman's 1973 paper was again published in 1994. Hirshman's paper was based on an experiment conducted on four participants: two males and two females. The participants were University of Pennsylvania sophomores and all of them were Caucasians. The subjects were told that the study was on lifestyle alternatives. They were paired off and each pair was given a question to discuss for four minutes in a room with a tape recorder to record their conversation. At the end of ten minutes, the pairs were rotated and a new question was given. The participants talked to each other in all possible pairs. In the study, three questions were asked. A total of sixty minutes of conversation was recorded and transcribed. Hirshman's experiment showed how two people in conversation interacted in terms of interruption and indication of support, agreement and disagreement.

A local linguist, Jariah Md Jan's 1999 study showed how her panelists frequently built an unequivocal relationship through conversations using linguistic devices like floor apportionment, back channel support, epistemic modality, hedges, and interruptions. The setting was in a public domain. The data in her study was taken from the Global talk -show programme. The show was broadcast live every week on national television i.e. RTM, TV2. A total of four episodes were selected for this study. The data was obtained from verbal interactions that took place between the host, the panelists, call-in participants and members of the audience. According to Jariah, the episodes that were chosen were based on the topics discussed, the host, and the panelists. The researcher used both the qualitative and quantitative approach. The data (transcripts) and the findings were qualitative, while the analysis of the transcripts, which consisted of the frequency counts of the occurrence of the linguistic features in the data, was quantitative.

According to Jariah, the talk show could be categorized as formal as well as semi-formal. She said that the status of the panelists and the topic for discussion was

formal but the mode of conduct on the part of the host and hostess was considered semi-formal. The setting of the panel discussions was fixed with panelists seated on a platform or dais facing the studio audience. Members of the audience were seated in three separate areas of the studio. The host, however, was given the freedom to move around the studio. Similarly, the participants in Jariah's (1999) study used linguistic devices such as floor apportionment, back channel support, epistemic modality, hedges, and interruptions to contest for power, and to build positive relationships through their conversations.

Coates's (1998) findings are frequently quoted in this research as she had produced a comprehensive work on the basis of co-operative talk. Her study was designed to deal with women's conversations in an all-female (white, middle-class English) friendship group. Coates (1998) explains that women language has features which can be identified as a style distinct from the one used by men in single-sex interaction. According to her, women's speech and men's speech are characterised by different linguistic features. Men's speech has features that establish hierarchies in a group, while women's language has a high frequency of features that promote co-operation. Coates's (1998) study placed more emphasis on the private domain. She identified the private domain as the place for women's talk - the home, the hairdresser's, and the supermarkets are the typical locations. The setting of her conversations was the living room of her home in Birkenhead, Merseyside. Participants sat on sofas or on the floor. Coates (1998) argued that "the split between the public and private domains would be a major contributing factor in producing sub-cultural difference between men and women and therefore different patterns of linguistics behaviour" (Coates 1998 cited in Jariah, 1999: 42).

There were several differences on how the studies by these researchers-Lakoff, Hirshman , Jariah and Coates- were carried out. First of all, Coates's study was

conducted in a private domain as the data was recorded in the living room of her home. While studies by Hirshman and Lakoff were more of experiments and intuition, Jariah's study, on the other hand, was conducted in a public domain. Her data was gathered from the Global talk show. Secondly, Coates studied single-sex groups consisting of female friends. The members of the women's group, Coates (1998), whom she recorded were white, middle-class, aged in their late 30's and early 40's, and came together as a support group. The group, which was formed in 1975, provided a network of support for each participant for twelve years. In contrast, the participants in Hirshman's and Jariah's study consisted of both single and mixed sexes. The subjects in Hirshman's studies were university sophomores and Caucasians. There were four participants: two males and two females. In Jariah's research, a total of nineteen males and nineteen females were involved in the study. The panelists were native and non-native speakers of English, highly educated, and experts in their fields. They came from various social backgrounds with regards to age, race, gender, and nationality. Therefore, it can be seen that the relationship among the participants in the studies undertaken by Hirshman and Jariah was not close, and some of them may even be complete strangers.

According to Jariah (1999), the panelists might be acquaintances who shared similar knowledge and experiences in relation to the topics discussed. There were no hierarchies in the conversations taped by Coates in her all female group. The researcher thinks that this is probably due to the close-knit relationship that they had and also due to their equal status. On the other hand, the conversations in Jariah's research showed evidence of hierarchies. Since the data collected was taken from a talk show, it is assumed that, the nature of the programme is informative. Generally it is believed that people who talk the most are deemed to be influential. Likewise panelists who possess authority, knowledge, power, and prestige are purported to have greater performance

ability. They have more opportunities to talk and initiate talk. The male panelists in Jariah's study maintained a dominant hierarchy, while the women had a flexible hierarchy in the order of speaking, unlike the women in Coates's study. Despite the existence of hierarchies in the conversation between female participants in Jariah's study, talked in 'tandem', interrupting, overlapping each other's contribution to build a harmonious and co-operative exchange (Jariah Md.Jan, 1999; 368)

Next, the conversations recorded by Coates (1998) were spontaneous and covered a wide range of topics. The topics discussed included television programmes, mother's funeral, and child abuse. However, Coates (1998) felt that it was typical of an all-female group to discuss people and feelings, while men added Baalen (2001), were more likely to discuss important things such as sports and politics. Therefore, Coates's (1998) agreed with Jones's (1980; 195) claim that "the wider theme of gossip is always personal experience"(Coates,1998: 130). Conversely, the participants in Hirshman's and Jariah's study were asked to converse based on prescribed topics. The topics chosen were interesting and appealing to the public. They covered current issues i.e. social, cultural and environmental. The topics also contained elements of controversy and sensationalism. In short, the topics of the discussion were able to stimulate views and discussions, and also to initiate maximum participation.

Despite the differences between the context of Coates's (1998) and Jariah's (1999) studies, there are many features identified by Jariah as typical of women's language as suggested by Coates (1998). Coates (1998) in her study found that these linguistic features: minimal responses, topic development, simultaneous speech, and epistemic modality as typical of women's language and Jariah also used these features as a basis of her research. Jariah's (1999) study suggested that women and men adopt different styles of speech, but the speech of women was more co-operative than the speech of men.

Researchers like Coates (1998) and Jariah (1999) operating within this paradigm have noted that the features of conversations which they describe as co-operative are found more frequently in the conversations of women than men.

A detailed description of the linguistic features typical of co-operative speech is outlined. Based on Coates (1998) model, the following features are chosen because these linguistic forms are relevant to the concept of co-operative talk in women's discourse. In her study on all-female conversations, Coates (1998) identifies certain features that occur frequently and which have not been the primary focus of previous studies on conversations. These features, typical of all female discourse are chosen by the researcher since they are found to be co-operative and group-oriented. Specifically, the main concern of this research is to indicate any valid references that could be feasible in an all-Malay group.

2.7 FORMAL FEATURES OF FEMALE LANGUAGE

Amy Sheldon's (1992) work suggested that women's speech styles were no longer viewed negatively as the product of powerlessness and of submission. According to Sheldon (1992), women's conversational skills such as turn-taking, timing of minimal responses, back channel support, not interrupting, and competing for the floor, are seen as a strength of women's conversational style, not a form of weakness (Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 35)

Pamela Fishman's (1980) study claimed that women do all the "shitwork" in conversations, that is, they did the conversational work that enabled the conversation to happen and continue. This is realised by asking questions, introducing topics, and using active listening strategies, like minimal responses and fillers (Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 33).

In a friendly talk, women are negotiating and expressing a relationship in the form of support and closeness but it may also involve criticism and distance (Maltz & Borker, 1982: 209). In an interaction, women need others' contribution because women often build conversations on previous utterances to create continuity in the interaction. Getting the floor is not seen as problematic as it comes automatically. The problem is to get participants to engage themselves in the conversation in order to get it going. Therefore it is the women who act as facilitators to maintain the continuous flow of the conversation (Hirshman, 1994).

2.7.1   MINIMAL RESPONSES

In any spoken interaction, active participation by both parties is much required. Therefore, some kind of oral responding besides non-verbal feedback is expected in order to indicate that the participants are paying attention to one another. The success of an interaction depends on the reaction of other participants. Listeners signal their attention to the speaker by using the terms like 'mmhm', 'uh-huh', 'yeah' and so on. These terms are also known as minimal responses. In Jariah's (1999; 65) research, minimal responses (Zimmerman and West, 1975) such as 'mmhm', 'uh-huh', 'yeah', 'yes', 'right', 'okay' and so on are also known as 'accompaniment behaviour' (Kendon, 1967); 'back channel support' (Yngue, 1970) and 'back channel behaviour' (Duncan, 1972).

According to Jariah, females used more back channel support than men in single sex groups. Females used more when they talked to their counterparts regardless of their position and status. Hence, Jariah's female panelists worked closely together in harmony to produce co-operative talk that signified feminine solidarity. The female participants collaborated with one another by providing information to build up the discussion . Their active participation in producing a joint text clearly showed their

active listenership roles. Frequent use of back channel support shows that the conversation is co-operative in nature. The females in her study preferred to use 'right', 'o.k.' and 'yes' while the males prefer to use 'yes', 'ya' and 'o.k.'. According to Jariah (1999; 124), the use of 'ya' is evident in the conversational styles of Malaysians. It is used as a form of acknowledgement and confirmation. The females in her study used back channel support to indicate their agreement of topics discussed. Jamaliah (1995) further added that the form of back channel support used by females should not be perceived as a sign of weakness but as " an effective sign of solidarity" (Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 352). The female host in the Global programme used back channel support to indicate her active attention and to express her support for the current speaker. In her study, women, regardless of their position, used back channel support in two ways:

1.   Interactional based

        The back channel support was used to support the panelists, to signal the participants' active role as listeners, and to show their attentiveness to the topics discussed. The occurences, however, did not disrupt the flow of the conversation.

2.   Informational based.

        This type of back channel support was used less by the participants. They were used to signal agreement i.e. to indicate that an understanding had been reached and therefore accepted by the participants.

Jariah further stated that the use of back channel support in female speech:

(a)   expressed solidarity, facilitated the panelists to continue the discourse, and expressed politeness.

(b)   showed attention and interest.

(c)   indicated that the female panelists were more friendly, promoted happy relations, expressed approval, showed encouragement , concern, and

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attentiveness (Jariah Md. Jan,1999:257).

Laughter according to Coates (1996) is a very important component of women's talk. Laughter like minimal responses, plays a major role in the construction of collaborative floor. Laughter arises in response to what someone else says, to signal the participants' continued involvement in what is being said or to signal their presence in the conversation without having to produce an utterance (Coates, 1996). Jariah (1999) said that laughter was used to signify many functions and the nature of such interaction is informal. Some of the functions as mentioned by Jariah (1999; 112) were:

a)   to indicate that the speaker is relaxed and serves as tension reliever.

b)   to close the conversation on a pleasant informal note.

c)   to mitigate face-threatening utterance.

(d) to have a face keeping function, to avoid from committing oneself to   sensitive matters.

As reported by Zimmerman and West (1975) and Fishman (1983), many studies have proven that the absence of back channel support can make the speaker feel that his listener is not interested in what he is saying, not paying attention to what is being discussed, or disagrees with it. Coates (1998) agreed that in an all-female group, the use of minimal responses showed "women's active participation in the joint production of text" (Coates, 1998:137). Minimal responses according to Coates (1998) are used to support the speaker and to indicate that the listener is listening attentively. Minimal responses signal the listeners' active participation in an interaction and it is a way co-operative talk is produced.

Lynette Hirshman (1994) in her study also found that minimal responses was a "predominantly female speech form" (Hirshman,1994: 437). Hirshman used the term, fillers to refer to the minimal responses found in her study. Fillers like 'um', 'ah',

'like' 'I think', 'sort of', 'may be', 'you know', and 'I mean' were more frequently used by the females than the two males in her study.

Therefore, it can be concluded that minimal responses are not seen as interruption but it is a form of feedback. Both Coates (1998) and Jariah (1999) believed that minimal responses (both verbal and non-verbal) were important in women's talk. They signaled the participants' active involvement in conversations. In this study, the researcher predicts that the participants will use minimal responses to indicate active listenership, to show that they are interested and to show agreement similar to Coates and Jariah's findings. This, in turn, will develop the topics discussed further.

2.7.2   HEDGES

Lakoff in her 1975 study found that women used hedges for instance 'well' and 'you know' more than men did. The expressions 'you know', 'I think/ guess', 'probably', 'perhaps', 'sort of' and 'maybe' are examples of what has been described as female hedging device (Hirschman, 1994). They are used to mitigate the force of an utterance in order to respect addressees' face needs. However, Holmes (1986,1993) concluded that no gendered group used hedging devices more than another. Rather, hedging device is used to tie participants together and functions as verbal fillers. Holmes (1986) concluded that hedging is used as an intimacy signal, as a positive politeness strategy and expressing solidarity by generously attributing relevant knowledge to the addressee (Freed & Greenwood, 1996: 8). Hedging devices like 'you know' is thus a tool that works to reinforce mutual involvement in the conversation, whether as an expression of speaker certainty or uncertainty, and assists in the joint production of conversation (Freed & Greenwood, 1996: 10). Holmes (1995) added that 'you know' often occurred in informal conversations where participants knew each other well. 'You know' is a solidarity marker as it emphasized participants' shared

knowledge and reduced power and status. Holmes (1986) stated that 'you know' was used as an "intimacy signal and politeness strategy, expressing solidarity by generously attributing relevant knowledge to the addressee" (Freed and Greenwood, 1996:8)

In Coates's 1998 study, she referred to hedges as epistemic modality. Epistemic modality is defined as "those linguistic forms which are used to indicate the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed in the utterance" (Coates,1998: 143). Coates (1989) found that lexical items like 'I think', 'sort of', 'probably' and 'perhaps', are used to express epistemic modality. Coates (1998; 143-144) further added that epistemic modality or hedging devices were used to:

a)   indicate lack of confidence in the truth of proposition expressed in an utterance.

b)   indicate lack of commitment to the truth of proposition.

c)   mitigate the force of an utterance as a form of respect to the addressee and not to offend him/her.

d)   protect the speaker's face when sensitive topics are discussed.

e)   facilitate open discussion, that is, to invite other participants to speak.

The use of epistemic modality and hedges in Jariah's study justifies other researches that females do use more of these forms in public discourse. Both the male and female participants in her study preferred to use 'I think', followed by 'I mean', with 'sort of' the least. The use of 'I think' as expressed by the males were used to indicate dominance and the power of knowledge. Meanwhile, the females used 'I think' to show their commitment or express their personal opinion concerning the topic discussed.

In short, epistemic modality and hedges in Jariah's study were used to:

1.   save the face of members involved in the conversation.

2.   discuss sensitive issues and to elicit members to join in the discussion.

3.   create a sense of oneness to imply solidarity and togetherness.

4.   avoid embarrassment over sensitive issues.

5.   remain cordial, harmonious, and enhance a closer relationship especially among the female participants.

<div align="right">(Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 367)</div>

In short, hedges are used to indicate the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of a proposition expressed in an utterance. Hedges also have the effect of damping down the force of what is said. The primary function of hedges is to signal that the speaker is not committed to what he or she is saying. They also allow the speaker to be sensitive to other's feelings, to signal that the speaker is searching for the right words and as a means of avoiding being the expert. The use of hedges by women is related to three aspects of their conversation. First of all, women often discuss sensitive issues which may arouse strong feelings amongst the conversationalists. In order to avoid creating arguments, they tend to hedge their assertions. The second aspect of female discourse involves self- disclosure. Telling others about one's personal experience is important in establishing friendship. It becomes easier when done in a mitigating way; hence the usage of hedges is useful. The last aspect of women's conversation is to maintain a collaborative floor. A collaborative floor involves social closeness and the group's voice encompasses individual opinion (Baalen,2001). Hedges are a valuable resource for women speakers because they use them to mitigate the force of what has been said and to protect the face of both the speaker and the listener (Coates,1996). In this respect, it is crucial for a woman not to make strong or hard statements or comments about topics sensitive to

others. Furthermore, women's knowledge of topics in a conversation also plays a role in the use of hedges. Women tend to downplay their authority as the expert in the conversation to avoid social distance and not to sound authoritative. According to Baalen (2001), women purposely use hedging devices to avoid a hierarchical structure of friendship in their talk.

Based on what has been mentioned by Jamaliah Mohd. Ali (1995) regarding the idea of face saving which influences the way Malays interact with one another, the researcher believes that the Malay women in this study will use hedges in their conversations. Since the group are going to discuss various topics involving personal issues, and also sharing stories that mirror each other, hedges may be used to avoid confrontation, to mitigate the strength of an utterance or avoid being too forceful, and to be humble when expressing their views because such behaviour is regarded to be polite and refined.

2.7.3   SIMULTANEOUS SPEECH

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) model of turn-taking in conversation assumes the norm of "one speaker speaking at a time" (Coates, 1998: 137). On the contrary, Coates's (1998) study showed that in a conversation between equals (females to females), the participation of more than one speaker was essential. Simultaneous speech, as defined by Coates (1998), is a pattern where two speakers produce part of an utterance together rather than one speaker beginning and another completing the utterance. The simplest kind occurs when two speakers both say the same words simultaneously. The main goal of such interaction is to maintain good social relationships. Therefore the word interruption is not suitable as "there is no sense of competition or of vying for turn. Speakers do not become aggrieved when others joined in" (Coates, 1998: 142). The women's interaction in Coates's study, was very much a

joint effort with the participants contributing to the text. The researcher agrees with Coates because by contributing information simultaneously, speakers are actually working together and not against one another. Therefore, this is a good way to achieve co-operative talk. Other forms of simultaneous speech are overlaps and interruptions.

2.7.4   OVERLAPS

Overlapping speech is a highly important feature of female talk. Zimmerman and West (1975) said that overlaps were "instances of simultaneous speech where a speaker other than the current speaker begins to speak at or very close to possible transition place in a current speaker's utterance that is within the boundaries of the last word" (Zimmerman and West, 1975: 114). It occurs when women friends combine so that two or more voices may contribute to talk at the same time. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) model of turn- taking in conversation views simultaneous speech as an aberration. Their model assumes the norm of one speaker speaking at a time. On the contrary, researchers like Coates (1998), Tannen (1984) and Edelsky (1981) have found that women are involved in a more interaction focused talk where several speakers speak at the same time to jointly produce a text. Tan (1997) pointed out that the difference between interruptions and overlaps was that the former occurs in the middle of a speaker's utterance while the latter occurred at the end of a speaker's utterance. Overlaps also occurred when two speakers completed an utterance simultaneously but completed it differently i.e. not using the same words (Coates, 1996). Jariah further added that the data collected from her 1999 study was a good example of solidarity and co-operation. The participants in her single sex group used overlaps and simple interruptions to build up information on the topic discussed. Jariah said that the female panelists in her research interrupted and overlapped one another happily. The women preferred to establish a collaborative floor where they worked

together to provide information. Jariah also mentioned that females talked in tandem, interrupting, overlapping each others's contribution to build a harmonious and co-operative conversation. Again, her data supported Jamaliah's (1995) findings in which participants "work closely together, co-operating and monitoring each other's performance throughout and processing what others have said and done and making their contributions appropriately" (Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 368). According to Jamaliah Md. Ali (1995), overlaps or interruptions are viewed positively by Malaysians. This is a sign of agreement or support. In addition, it shows that the hearer is listening attentively and following the conversation.

In short, overlapping speech in women's talk is not seen as competitive or a way of vying for a turn. It is a way speakers contribute ideas to construct collaborative talk. The researcher also agrees with Jamaliah (1995) that overlapping speech should be seen as a possible feature in conversation. It showed especially to the current speaker that the other members of the floor are aware of things being discussed. Typically, overlapping speech happens when speakers try to complete an utterance but their completions are produced at slightly different times. It is actually a contribution by participants to build up a collaborative conversation

2.7.5   INTERRUPTIONS

Interruptions are often seen as something negative as it creates conflicts and misunderstanding. Interruptions are seen as an attempt to seize the right of the current speaker to speak. Usually it happens before the current speaker has finished her turn. However, interruptions can be positive when it shows co-operation, support, or agreement. Fishman (1980) adds that men would interrupt their partners, omit back channel signals and hold the floor longer than women (Fishman 1980 cited in Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 33). Interruption is seen as untoward and violative, an interference with

the interactant's speaking rights (Bilmes, 1997: 507). It is seen as 'penetrating the boundaries of a unit-type prior to the last lexical constituent that could define a possible terminal boundary of a unit-type' (Zimmerman and West, 1975: 114). Jefferson (1983) in Bilmes (1997) characterized the nature of interruption as "starting up in the midst of another's turn at the talk, not letting the other finish" (Bilmes ,1997:508).

Interruption is divided into two: a successful and unsuccessful interruption. In a successful interaction, the speaker cedes the floor to the interrupter, and in an unsuccessful interruption, the interrupter falls silent (Hirshman, 1994). Unsuccessful interruption happens when the current speaker does not want to give up her turn. The current speaker will speak faster, her voice will become louder and higher in intonation. Kalcik (1975) claims that many instances in women's conversation where interruptions function as support of the speaker's conversational topic, completing their idea rather than attempting to seize the floor (Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 77). Tannen (1984) described this behaviour as 'overlap-as-enthusiasm'. Both Tan (1997) and Jamaliah (1995) think that interruptions are positive. Tan (1997; 23) said that interruption was not an attempt to steal the current speaker's right to speak. It was used to show support and to ask for further explanation. According to Jamaliah (1995), Malaysians interrupt one another to give support to the speaker, as a signal that they are following the topic discussed, to further develop the topic and as a signal of agreement (Jamaliah 1995 cited in Tan 1997; 23). Jamaliah (1995) further stated that "speakers show their attentiveness by regularly contributing to the course of the development thus helping to build the communicative goal... the synchronisation and the orchestration of the discourse by the participants in the interaction result in the harmonious development of the text. The end product of the text is derived from the enactment of philharmony" (Jamaliah Md. Ali 1995 cited in Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 368).

Jariah (1999) also found that the panelists in her study used interruptions to establish solidarity and co-operation. The female host in Global often interrupted the panelists. According to Jariah, the host's behaviour showed support and encouragement to the panelists to proceed in contributing their ideas to the discussion. To the female panelists, her actions were seen as positive but to the male panelists, her behaviour was seen as negative. It was intrusive, interfering, manipulative, unsupportive and discouraging (Jariah Md.Jan, 1999: 370). In general, it was evident that interruption was very significant among the female participants unlike the male. Interruptions were more frequent between the female panelists and their host as compared to their counterparts. Therefore, Jariah (1999) concluded that the results of her study contradicted Holmes's (1993) research that men interrupted and overlapped women more' and Zimmerman and West (1975) where men interrupted women more (Jariah Md.Jan, 1999: 370).

As can be seen, the nature of interruption is multifunctional and complex. It can work co-operatively as a gesture of support to the speaker and the topic being discussed or competitively when its function is to take the floor from the previous speaker. Nonetheless, the researcher agrees with Jamaliah's (1995) views that interruption can be seen as something positive. It is not a tool to vie for the floor but is used to show support and to build the discussion progressively.

2.7.6 LATCHING

Another type of interruption, claimed Jariah (1999) was latching. Participants in Jariah's study used latching to complete each other's utterances. Likewise, latching is not common in male talk. Coates (1996) however, did not use the term latching. Nonetheless, her findings suggested that completing each other's utterances developed the conversation as "it is a way of doing friendship" (Coates, 1996:268). Completing

one's utterance is normal and exists in conversations because at times, it can be incomplete. According to Coates (1996), speakers may choose to complete their utterances verbally or non-verbally like producing minimal responses, laughing, nodding or smiling to show that they comprehend the utterances. This level of collaboration says Coates, can only be achieved when speakers pay close attention to each other. The person who contributes at the end of the sentence has to listen attentively to what has been said earlier. Thus, this demonstrates the way female speakers monitor what each other is saying so that the construction of utterance can be shared.

Latching, overlaps and simultaneous speech were some of the devices used by the female panelists in Jariah's study to promote co-operative talk among themselves to build up a discussion. Hence, solidarity in speech was formed. According to Jariah (1999), other researchers like Edelsky (1981), Holmes (1987) and Tannen (1984) also supported this.

Latching is an important tool in female speech because completing one's utterance is a way of helping others to develop conversation. The listener is not trying to take over the floor because participants only latch at the end of an utterance. So this device cannot be seen as an interruption. Instead, it helps in encouraging and supporting one another.

2.7.7 PRONOUNS WE AND US

Hirshman (1973) said that women's conversation was interactional. She added that women tended to use personal and inclusive pronouns such as 'you' and 'we'. However, Goodwin (1980) said that women used a lot of 'we' and 'us' as pronouns rather than exclusives like 'I', 'me' or 'you' to emphasize the cohesion of the group rather than individual status. Goodwin (1980) further emphasized that the boys

in her study gained authority over other group members by using imperatives like "get off my steps" where the use of 'I' and 'you' created distance between them in status (Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 73).

As the Malays have the need to belong to a particular group, the researcher thinks that the conversationalists in this study would use 'we' and 'us' to emphasize the collective nature of the group. In order to be a good Malay, one has to think of the group rather than personal needs because individualism is considered to be selfish and unMalay.

2.7.8 QUESTIONS

Questions are used as another linguistic device which has been stereotypically associated with the conversational style of women. Lakoff (1975) was among the first who claimed that women used questions or hedging devices more than men. According to Coates (1996) questions have a particularly important role in women's relationships. It is used to construct and sustain friendship. Questions are used to demand response and often ensure a minimal interaction between speakers. As a result, women often employ question as a method to facilitate and maintain the flow of the conversation. Questions can also be used to seek information, to encourage another speaker to participate in talk, to hedge, to introduce a new topic, and to invite someone to tell a story (Coates, 1996). In addition, questions are used primarily to minimize expert status and to affirm the importance of the group. Questions can be divided into two: speaker oriented and other or addressee oriented. Speaker oriented questions seek information while questions which concern the addressee and conversational maintenance are called other oriented questions. Women tend to use other oriented questions to establish and maintain solidarity which are the crucial aspects of an all-female conversation.

Freed and Greenwood (1996) purposed four types of questions:

1) External questions which seek factual information about the world or about the lives of the speakers.

2) Talk questions which solicit information about current and ongoing conversation. These questions ask for clarification, confirmation or repetitions of something said.

3) Relational questions which are designed to continue the conversation flow. They usually have as their basis the shared knowledge that exists between the speakers.

4) Expressive questions which contain information already known to the speaker through which the speaker conveys information to the hearer.

In Freed and Greenwood's (1996) study, they found that women asked a higher percentage of relational questions than men. Therefore, women are socialised to actively engage their conversational partners, whereas men find themselves expressing their individuality or uniqueness.

The researcher agrees with Coates (1996) that women use questions as a means of facilitating and maintaining the flow of conversation because by posing questions, the speaker is often assured answers. Even though questions are used mainly to seek information or used as a tool to demand response, its most important role in this study, according to the researcher, is to encourage and invite other speakers to participate in the talk so that the conversation will be continous. The researcher believes that questions tend to be other oriented rather than speaker oriented. Other oriented questions invite other speakers to participate and draw them into the conversation. It is also a way of signaling awareness to the others and a way of staying connected.

2.7.9 · THE MARKER 'KAN' AS TAG QUESTIONS

Lakoff (1975) identified tag questions as a common feature in women's language. According to Lakoff (1975), women use tag questions more than men (e.g. "The weather is really nice today, isn't it?). A tag question is an add-on to the end of a statement, thus turning it into a question. The tag is simply the subject and verb of the main clause. Normally, the tag has contrasting polarity with the main clause like it is, isn't it? or it isn't, is it? (Coates, 1996). Similarly, tag questions are also used to elicit information. Lakoff (1975) proposes that tags are used when a speaker lacks the confidence in the truth of a claim. Tags are also used to convey uncertainty and lack of conviction about one's own beliefs or opinions. She further claimed that tag questions that did not seek information were weak and were typically used by women to express tentativeness and unassertiveness.

Holmes (1984) in her own analysis distinguished two main functions of tag questions which she called modal and affective (Holmes 1984 cited in Coates and Cameron, 1988: 82). Modal tags are used to request for information or confirmation of information which the speaker is uncertain of. They are also termed as speaker oriented. It is designed to meet the speaker's need for information. Affective tags are addressee oriented, that is, they are used to indicate concern for the addressee. It is used to soften or mitigate the force of a negatively affective utterance or to facilitate the participation of others, that is, they invite them into a discourse. In Holmes' (1984) analysis, women used more tags with affective meaning especially facilitative tags because women are co-operative conversationalists who express frequent concern for other participants in the talk (Holmes 1984 cited in Coates and Cameron, 1988: 83).

In Fay Wouk's (1998) work on solidarity in Indonesian conversation, the discourse marker 'kan' in casual Indonesian conversation is similar in function to interrogative tags and to the hedge 'you know'. For example:

D: 'Pràmugari darat **kan** ada,

  ' There are ground stewardesses, aren't there?'

R: 'Ada **kan** kuburan kecil , khusus untuk warga situ'

  ' There's a small cemetery you know, just for the local residents'

<div align="right">(Wouk, 1998: 381)</div>

The functions of 'kan' can be characterised as solidarity building activities: requesting agreement, marking conjoint knowledge, and extending common ground (Wouk, 1998: 379). According to Wolf's (1980) description, the particle 'kan' is found in three positions: sentence final where it functions as a tag question, pre- predicate and sentence initial both of which serve to remind the addressee of some piece of conjoint knowledge (Wouk, 1998: 382). Wolf (1980) further added that the first function of 'kan' was similar to Holmes's conjoint knowledge of 'you know' (Wouk, 1998: 382). The particle 'kan' found in the study can also function as tag question and conjoint knowledge. According to Wouk (1998), 'kan' can build solidarity among speakers.

'Do you want this or not?' or ' You took my book yes or not?' are other forms of Malaysian English statements which are converted to interrogatives by adding 'yes or not' or ' or not' tags at the end. This could be an influence from Bahasa Melayu (Umathy Govendan Nair, 1999)

In this study, the participants would probably use the marker 'kan', similarly used in Indonesian conversations instead of 'is it' or 'isn't it' in their conversations. The marker 'kan' acts as a tag question which functions as confirmation or agreement and a marker of conjoint knowledge. Being Malaysians, the participants in this study would probably use the tag 'or not' at the end of their utterances as tag questions too, and its function would be to confirm.

2.8 · TOPICS IN CONVERSATION

Coates (1996) mentioned that the topics of conversation between female friends varied. She had analysed the conversations of her subjects and found that topics that were predominant in women's talk relied heavily on significant people in their lives and their personal experience. The topics of conversations in Coates (1996) study demonstrated that topics which dealt with serious ideas like child abuse was common. Conversely, work was not a predominant topic of conversation. The women in her study also talked about the people in their lives, for example, partners, children, parents, relatives, and friends. Some of the topics discussed involved self-disclosure, for example, sharing experiences of mood swings related with periods or backaches. They even talked about domestic things like recipes, clothes, fashion, and make-up. In short, Coates's participants talked about almost anything and it progresses in a random way from topic to topic. Therefore, it seems that any topic can spring up in a conversation because " women friends enjoy the sense that there is no set agenda" (Coates, 1996:71).

Coates (1996) also mentioned that women developed and explored their topics through mirroring of stories. This is a pattern of collaborative talk as speakers told stories of their own experiences by first presenting the main idea and the other members of the group will share their stories of the same theme and their feelings. Consequently, the participants gain each other's support and this unity increases co-operation and solidarity of the group. Therefore, the researcher assumes that the topics of conversation in this study would comprise anything and everything, since the recorded conversations were spontaneous. As the research design is close to Coates, it is likely that the study would produce similar findings to Coates's, as women are bound in one way or another to discuss domestic stuff, their personal lives or problems, and also friends and families. Since the subjects in this study are all Muslims, this

could mean that they would also discuss matters pertaining to Islam or include the Islamic ideology in their opinions and views.

2.9   TOPIC DEVELOPMENT

Coates' (1998) findings suggested that telling anecdotes, completing each other's utterances and asking questions developed the conversation further. Women develop topics progressively. This joint production involves both the right to speak and the responsibility to listen and support. All these contributions are signals of active listenership. Her data (1998) suggested that women developed their topic of conversation on each others' contributions. Topics are developed jointly and the shift between topics are gradual rather than abrupt.

Women's conversation comprises two components: narrative and discussion (Coates, 1996: 72). Stories according to Coates (1996) are accounts of events that has happened to us and about other people. Discussion, on the other hand, is a part of conversation where everyone joins in to think over issues raised in a narrative. Stories, added Coates (1996) involved a speaker while discussion involved all participants. A simple development of a topic in a conversation would be to tell a story or more, and end with a discussion. A more complex or chaining pattern as Coates (1996) puts it, is a series of narration and discussion or a topic can even consist of a story or a discussion section on its own. Discussion however is not initiated by a story but by a simple question or statement. Therefore, the development of topics differs from one another. Be it through the telling of stories or discussion, or even a blend of these modes, women explore a wide range of topics by doing so. Hence, the researcher agrees with Coates (1996) that women develop their topic through stories, discussions or maybe a combination of the two. The researcher believes that since women discuss basically everything, the Malay women in this study would develop their topics of

conversation by narrating self- mirroring stories, or through discussions where they could all participate and discuss the topic at hand, or any pattern of combination involving stories and discussions.

2.10   CODE SWITCHING

Malaysia is a country where people of different linguistic backgrounds live together side by side. The nation's unity is fostered through the use of minority and native languages. Bahasa Malaysia or BM is the national and official language while English is the second language of Malaysia. According to Asmah (1997), the term second language refers to " ... second in importance in the hierarchy of the Malaysian languages, seen in terms of the official recognition given to the language, its importance as a language of educational instruction, as well as its position as an important language in the professions" (Asmah Omar 1997 cited in Jariah Md Jan, 2003: 42). Communication between Malaysians says Jamaliah (1995), Le Vasan (1996) and David (1999), as mentioned in Jariah's (2003), does not simply consist of the use of a simple language but involves 'interlingual code-switching' (Kuang 2002 cited in Jariah Md Jan, 2003: 42). This is because in Malaysia, various languages are spoken in daily interactions particularly switching from Malay to English and vice versa. Language switching often occurs among participants of a similar ethnic background and usually their conversation would be informal (Jacobson forthcoming cited in Jariah Md Jan, 2003: 42).

Code-switching has become a common phenomenon in a bilingual or multilingual society. Many sociologists claimed that "it is an ability to speak two languages at the same time, a natural process in the refining of one's mastery of a certain language, a normal strategy employed to perform various functions" (Kuang, 1999: 77). Code- switching according to Tarone, Cohen and Tumas (1976), Tarone

(1977) and Corder (1978) is also known as 'language switch' (Khong, 1996: 97). It is used to refer to switching from the target language to the first language or any other foreign language. Code-switching, as defined by Di Pietro (1978), is "the use of more than one language by the communicants in the execution of a speech act" (Di Pietro 1978 cited in Jariah Md. Jan, 1999: 93). People according to Khong (1996) code switch for social reasons including prestige, status and peer acceptance. Baljit (1994), in Jariah (2003), claimed that in the Malaysian context, code-switching was used to establish rapport among interactants especially when speaking to a person of different ethnic backgrounds. Baljit referred to this as 'code or language choice', which refers to the use of two languages, i.e. English and Malay, in the same sentence or discourse (Baljit 1994 cited in Jariah Md. Jan, 2003: 45). According to Jariah (2003), when involved in a conversation, one has to learn to accommodate to others. Speech accommodation is vital because language or code selected for the conversation is linked to speakers' need to seek the approval of the listener. Consequently, the code or language selected will be the language or style used by the listener. Furthermore, the language chosen when code-switching must be comprehensible to the interlocutor for the message to be understood (Wong, 1978 in Khang, 2001). Nik Safiah Karim (1988) also added that the knowledge of the communicator in a topic can play a major role in deciding the language used in code- switching (Khang, 2001:26).

Below are reasons for language switching by David (1992a):

1.   to create rapport with one's speech partner

2.   to establish a sense of shared identity with the person one is talking to

3.   to exclude participants from parts of a conversation which are meant to be private or a distancing strategy.

4.   to indicate to the speech partner that one belongs to a particular class and to use it as a marker of high social status, for example the use of one's native language interlarded with some English words.

5.   to soften or strengthen a command.

6.   to maintain originality of content, e.g. proverbs and figurative expressions are best retained in their language, for a translation would result in losing its originality and would not have the same impact.

(David 1992a cited in Jariah Md Jan,1999:96)

In Malaysia, code-switching is normal because the national language is Malay, and English is used as the second language. Therefore, it is a common practice in Malaysia for a person to switch from one language to another without being conscious about it. Mohd. Fadzeli (1999) claimed that the discourse markers like 'lah', 'what' and 'ah' are very powerful identity markers in Malaysian English. Richards and Tay (1977) said that in Singaporean English the particle 'la' is a code marker which identifies informality, familiarity, solidarity and rapport between participants (Mohd. Fadzeli Jaafar, 1999: 43).

Code switching occurs at many levels. They can occur at the following levels:

1.   word level

2.   phrase level

3.   sentential level

4.   tags or exclamations

Switches within a sentence are termed as intrasentential while switches between sentences are classified as intersentential. Switches involving tags or exclamations are termed as emblematic.

According to Kuang (1999), many studies have confirmed that code-switching is employed to perform various functions. Her own study has clearly shown that code- switching was used to:

1. signal a change in the topic.

2. neutralise a situation.

3. display power and authority.

4. relate a topic to a language/dialect.

5. return from a distant environment to a here and now environment.

6. emphasise and reemphasise.

7. seek equality.

8. draw attention to an instruction.

9. keep a conversation going.

<div align="right">(Kuang, 1999: 87-88)</div>

Kuang (1999) confirmed that other studies had also suggested code-switching as a strategy to perform functions such as to admonish, to assuage and to pacify, to direct, to repair a conversation, and to express emotions. (Kuang, 1999: 88)

Rekha in her 1998 study examined and described the patterns of code-switching in the correspondence of four Malay women. She also identified the functions of the code switching performed, and she interpreted the socio-cultural meanings and values produced by it. From the data gathered, she mentioned that the bilingual participants constructed an informal correspondence and displayed a dual identity that was their Malay identity on one hand and an educated person who is proficient in English on the other. Language choice was motivated by role-relationships, topics, attitudes and values. The switches, however, did not violate the syntactic structure or rules of the languages employed. In fact, it was systematic and followed its own grammatical and appropriacy rules (Rekha, 1998).

The background of participants in Rekha's 1998 study was similar to the subjects in this study. Rekha's participants were adult bilingual Malay women. All of them had similar linguistic and educational backgrounds. They received their education in both English and Malay. The subjects were equally competent in both the languages because they use Malay and English in their daily interactions. Furthermore, all four women were Muslims and were familiar with Quranic language. The participants in Rekha's study had a close relationship and their communication was informal.

Findings

1. Using Malay idiomatic or fixed expressions

In the study, Rekha observed that code switching provided the users with an apt expression which was often shorter, more succinct and more expressive. Tay (1989) agreed that the choice of code was based on "which code has the most colourful, most expressive and the most economic way of repeating or elaborating what was said earlier" (Tay 1989 cited in Rekha, 1998: 67).

Example

Anyway, she's grown taller since the last time you saw her. Her shoe size is 9!!! *Sahlah **kaki kapal***.

[Anyway, she's grown taller since the last time you saw her. Her shoe size is 9!!! *It's confirmedlah that she has big feet*].

The use of the idiomatic expression **kaki kapal** expresses the user's intention in a formulaic way as the expression **kaki kapal** means having big feet.

2. Using of abbreviated forms of Malay

Another pattern observed by Rekha was the desire of the users to economize or abbreviate. It was marked by a switch from English to Malay. The use of colloquial Malay rather than the formal, standard Malay marked the degree of

friendship, solidarity and intimacy the user shared (Rekha, 1998: 69). The most common expressions found were:

Ni-ini [this]	nak- hendak [to want, to get]
dah-sudah [past tense marker]	yg.-yang [which]
kat-dekat [at,by in,to]	mau- mahu [want, get].
tu-itu [that]	tak-tidak [do not, did not]

According to Rekha, these abbreviations did not affect the subjects' understanding of the discourse but enhanced intimacy and solidarity.

3. Switching into Arabic, from Malay and from English

As Islam is the religion of all the subjects, some Islamic expressions were inserted in their discourse. The users switched to Arabic for salutations or openings when they began their email messages, or for closings or endings in formulaic expressions.

Examples

Assalamualaikum and **Waalaikumsalam** which means 'Peace be with you'.

Wassalam means 'regards'.

Alhamdullilah means 'Thank God or Thanks be to God'.

InsyaAllah means 'God willing or if it is God's will'.

All these Arabic expressions projected a Muslim identity in their communication. According to Kamwangmalu (1992), this type of in group identification is evident in bilingual or multilingual societies (Rekha , 1998: 71).

4. Switching to English on first and second person pronouns

The Malay women in the study used English pronouns to downplay their attitudes towards seniority and status as the Malay pronoun system is complicated and has hierarchical connotations (Rekha, 1998: 71). The choice of pronouns said Rekha is determined by age, rank, and status. Therefore, the use of English pronouns among Malays are popular, as power relations and seniority are neutralized. Rekha further added that the use of terms of address like '**Kak Long**' might also be used to show respect to superiors or elders. **Kak Long** means elder sister in informal Malay.

5. Using Malay words for culturally untranslatable concepts (mots justes).

The subjects in this study switched codes (English to Malay) for particular names of food items, clothes, professions, organizations and buildings for instance. They also code switch when there is no equivalent to a Malay word or phrase. Rekha concurred that this kind of switching occurred especially in culture-bound situations like Malay weddings, festivals, and other Malay celebrations (Rekha, 1998:72).

Example

Air-cond as **hantaran** [wedding gift] sounds perfectly reasonable to me.

Hantaran here refers to the wedding gift given to the bride by the bridegroom. The writer used this phrase for it described exactly what she meant and it also established solidarity since both were of the same ethnic group.

6. Code switching to mark quotations or reported speech

In this particular study, there were many instances where the writers switched codes to quote or to report their own or other people's words. It can be said that the

subjects switched codes to preserve the originality and the authenticity of the message (Rekha, 1998: 74). Rekha further said that the message, which was written in Malay, would not have the same impact or it would lose its originality if it was translated into English.

7. Switching to mark a topic shift

There were a few times in this study when the subjects switched codes to indicate a change in the topic in the middle of their discourse. Gumperz (1982) said that topics might be discussed in either discourse but the choice of codes added flavour to the topic discussed. He further added that "each choice encodes certain social values and has an affective dimension to it. Sometimes writers changed codes to redefine the situation from formal to informal, official to personal, serious to humorous. They also switched to convey politeness or solidarity" (Gumperz 1982 cited in Rekha, 1998: 74).

Example

(name) spent a night at her friend's place in Gastang and she's gone with them to a fair. I'm lonely. **Tak tahulah macam mana nanti** I **cope bila dia** eventually leave home.

[(name) spent a night at her friend's place in Gastang and she's gone with them to a fair. **I do not know how** I will cope **when she will** eventually leave home].

The writer switched codes to make the situation more personal. In this example, the writer is expressing her inner thoughts. The switch, said Rekha, is used as a solidarity marker between the writer and the addressee.

8. Code alternation related to the academic world of the writers

Nayar (1989), noted that " code switching into English from one's mother tongue was a sociolinguistic device used in that context to establish one's credentials " (Rekha, 1998: 75). The use of items like 'office server down, jammed, mail, email' in the study showed the increasing use of English terminology in the areas of education, science, and technology. Nayar (1989) pointed out that " English expressions are often more direct or precise, less cumbersome or more elegant 'mots justes' in areas like academics, politics, medicine, science and technology" (Rekha, 1998: 75). In Malaysia according to the writer, English is associated with the language of science and technology while Malay is associated with religion, culture and custom. It also showed that the participants were more familiar with English terminology than the Malay equivalent of the word.

In conclusion, the researcher believes that the conversationalists code-switched for a number of reasons. First of all, they code-switched to refer to words related to culture and religion and if these words were to be translated, they would lose their essence. The second reason would be that there was just no similar word for it in English; therefore, the participants had to code-switch. Switches especially from English to Malay was motivated by relationships between the participants, the topics, and their attitudes. When the participants codeswitched, their friendship became closer and more intimate. Participants also switched to indicate equality with and respect for one another. Hence, based on the study undertaken by Rekha (1998), the researcher feels the conversationalists in her study would also code-switch for the same reasons. Thus, it can be said that code-switching helps promotes cooperativeness in their conversations as well.