

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter provides an overview of the study. The chapter is divided into three sections such as research background, summary of findings, and recommendations. Towards the end of the chapter, suggestions or recommendations for future research are discussed.

9.2 Summary of the Study

9.2.1 Background

This study examines and analyzes the occurrence of language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching of interracial couples' verbal communication in the home domain.

This study aimed to:

1. Examine Filipino-Malaysian couples' language choice in the home domain.
2. Examine language choice in relation to ethnicity, religion, first language and gender.
3. Investigate the accommodation strategies used by Filipino-Malaysian couples' in verbal communication.
4. Examine the occurrence of code switching in interactions in the home domain.
5. Explore the reasons for the codes selected.

The study also sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the preferred language of Filipino-Malaysian couples in the home domain?
2. How do ethnicity, religion, first language and gender influence language choice?
3. What accommodation strategies are used by couples in verbal communication in the home domain?

Giles and Powesland's (1979) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) was used as the theoretical framework of the study. The concept of CAT has been extended to family communication where different accommodation strategies such as approximation, interpretability, discourse management, and interpersonal control strategies are emphasized. Consequently, a conceptual framework of this research was conceptualized to help explain the occurrence of language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching in interracial couples' communication (see Figure 2.1).

Studies on language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching were reviewed to provide background knowledge of the area being studied. In addition, the literature review provides a wider knowledge of language choice in interracial communication (see Chapter 2).

9.2.2 Methodology

Chapter 3 outlined the research design and methodology of the study. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed to capture a comprehensive data gathering and analysis. To carry out the study, 30 interviews, 6 (60 minutes) recorded conversations and 60 survey questionnaires were used to collect data. There were 60 spouses who took part in the study. In analyzing the data both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used.

Qualitative approach was used to analyze the interviews and recorded conversation and quantitative approach was used to analyze the survey data.

9.2.3 Findings

The findings of the study show that English dominates. Both Filipino and Malaysian spouses consider English as their second language or a foreign language. Although English is not their first language, they choose to use it in the home domain because of the personal and social benefits it brings. As a result, the couples' first language has been displaced by English. Since English has become the medium of communication between husband and wife, there is a possibility that English will become the first language of their children. Eventually, the mother tongue of Filipino and Malaysian spouses might be abandoned by the young generations (with the exemption of Bahasa Malaysia because of its wider social function compared to other languages).

Selecting a code in conversation is a challenging task for interracial couples. Language choice occurs because of the spouses' intention to accommodate their partners. The findings show that Filipino wives accommodate their Malaysian husbands because they are in Malaysia. It is also found that power claims in couples' interactions are evident where husbands tend to show more power and authority than the wife through language. Therefore, husbands seem to be in control in the homes studied.

Strategies to accommodate spouses were examined and included such as approximation, interpretability, discourse management, and interpersonal control. Such accommodation strategies were used even in a single communicative event.

Moreover, in examining the language choice of interracial couples it is found that language alternation or code switching has become a common feature. The wider linguistic repertoire of bilingual couples resulted in code switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia, Filipino and Chinese in various interactions in the home domain. The patterns of code switching were analyzed using the conversation analysis approach. The findings reveal that the lexical choices between turns and within turn create an impact to the speaker. Code switching occurs in various interactions at home because they function to compensate and soften the previous utterance, minimize a face threatening act, establish solidarity, signal a collaborative interaction (establish solidarity), accommodate other speakers, and to show agreement.

Code switching with English as the dominant language has emerged to be the preferred language variety of Filipino-Malaysian couples and appears to be natural in every interaction at home. Code switching has become a common language variety for Filipino-Malaysian couples.

9.3 Contributions of the Study

The findings of the study provide some theoretical, empirical, and methodological contributions in sociolinguistic research particularly in interracial couples' language choice in verbal communication.

9.3.1 Theoretical Contribution

This research contributes to the theoretical development of interracial couples' interactions in the home domain. Such contribution is labeled as the Circular Model of Interracial Couples' Communication as shown in Figure 9.1.

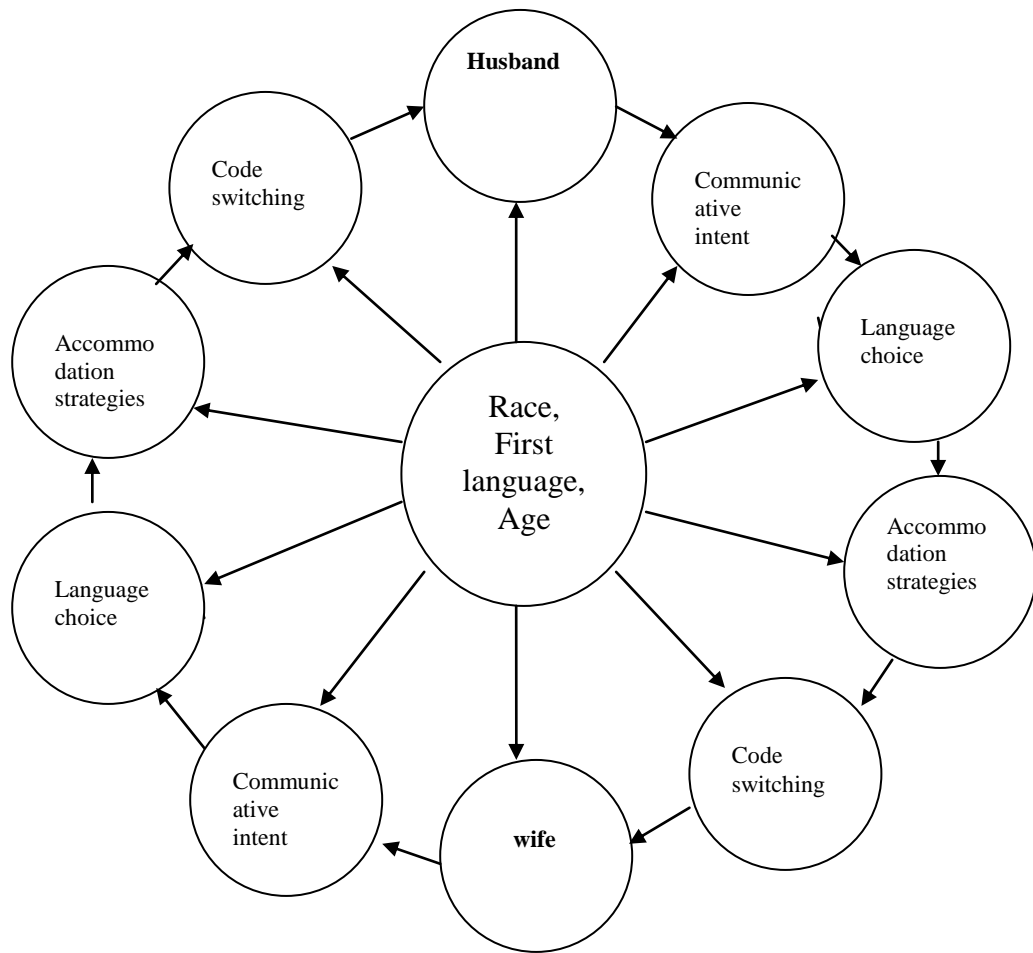


Figure 9.1 Circular Model of Interracial Couples' Communication

This Circular Model of Interracial Couples' Communication serves as the theoretical contribution of this study in communication research. The model has been conceptualized based on the findings presented in Chapters 4,5,6,7 & 8. The model shows that the spouse's (husband or wife) communicative intent influences his or her language choice, accommodation strategies and patterns of code switching which leads to convergence or divergence in communication. A spouse may choose a language or mixed languages depending on his or her intention. In the process of communication, both husband and wife may possibly use certain strategies such as approximation, interpretability, discourse

management, and interpersonal control to accommodate each other. Consequently, both spouses may converge or diverge when communicating (see Chapters 7 and 8). It can be expected that multilingual husband or wife selects an appropriate language which might be influenced by his or her communicative intent and the accommodation strategies that he or she prefers to use (see Chapters 5 and 6). However, it is inevitable that the communicative intent, language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching in husband and wife interaction can be influenced by the social factors such as race, first language and age (see Chapters 5,6,7 and 8). These factors could not be separated in interracial couples' communication because they are embedded with the speaker's language and culture (see Chapters 4 and 5).

The process of communication between husband and wife follows a similar pattern as both speakers continue to communicate. This circular pattern of communication shows that interactions continuously follow a circular movement. With such concept, the model is labeled as circular model because the process of communication continues as the two interlocutors communicate.

In addition, this study may provide some contributions in the theoretical development of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) most particularly in interracial couples' language choice and accommodation strategies. CAT was used to examine and analyze the language choice and accommodation strategies used by interracial couples in verbal communication.

9.3.2 Empirical contribution

This study has documented and described how Filipino-Malaysian couples choose English and code switch from English to Bahasa Malaysia, Filipino, or Chinese when communicating with their spouses. The empirical data as presented in various Tables and Figures in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 provide new ideas to the readers and researchers on the patterns of language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching in Filipino-Malaysian couples' interactions in the home domain.

9.3.3 Methodological contribution

This research adds knowledge to the methodological framework in conducting a study on interracial couples' communication. Investigating how husband and wife communicate requires a good methodology in the data gathering that will capture a wider range of information so as to explain the complexity of couples' language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching. The use of mixed method can be a good research design to effectively assure a valid and reliable data gathering and analysis of interracial couples' communication because these two research approaches include the qualitative and quantitative (see Chapter 3).

9.4 Recommendations

The study concludes that Filipino-Malaysian couples prefer English as the medium of communication in the home domain. They also have shifted to a new variety of language which is code switching. However, the dominance of English is evident when husband and wife code switch. The switching patterns reveal that English serves as the matrix language and Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, and Filipino function as embedded languages.

Future research on languages used by Filipinos married to spouses of other nationalities like Thai, Indonesians, and Vietnamese is suggested. Replicating the methodology of this study can further substantiate its theoretical contribution to the circular model of interracial couples' communication and it may add new insights in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT).