CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Marriage is viewed differently by couples of interracial marriages (Reed, 2003). These different perspectives on marriage may reflect the linguistic choices of couples when they communicate with their spouses in the home domain. To foreground this research some studies on language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching will be first described so as to shed light on the complexities of verbal interactions among couples.

Language choice for multilingual speakers plays a crucial role in everyday talk because whenever they speak, they make choices. Similarly, in interracial couples' communication the challenges of choosing a language is always present because of their linguistic and cultural differences. The challenge is compounded when each spouse is multilingual leading to a wide choice of languages to choose from. According to Coulmas (2005) multilingual speakers cannot help but make choices for language is a social fact, culturally varied, group specific, and governed by convention. The choice of language in interactions can be triggered by a number of variables which include the speaker's first language, community language, (Piller 2004; Johansson, 1991) age, education, role-relationships, ethnicity, (Burhanudeen, 2003) dominant language, (Piller, 2004; Warshauer, El Said & Zohry, 2002) social status, (Tan, 1993) numeric factor, economic and political position of the linguistic group and the neutrality of language (Degefa, 2004).

Couples who are linguistically and culturally diverse sometimes apply certain strategies when communicating. One common strategy is to accommodate other speakers

by modifying the speech style. This concept can be explained by the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) argued that Communication Accommodation Theory can be applied in interracial encounters because both interlocutors may possibly converge or diverge by choosing an appropriate language available in their linguistic repertoire. In interracial encounters, the choice of any linguistic code may reflect a speaker's approval or disapproval (Coulmas, 2005). When a speaker approves another interlocutor and uses a similar language and manner of speaking, the speaker is converging. However a speaker may sometimes diverge in communication to show difference from other interlocutors.

Giles (1979) proposed three paradigms in interracial communication, i.e. language choice situation, accommodation situation, and assimilation situation. Language choice situation happens in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies where many languages exist. As a result, speakers choose a language that is appropriate in a specific context. However, the choice of a certain language may vary in different domains of communication.

Such choice may lead to solidarity of speakers who are involved in conversations. Solidarity is manifested when speakers converge by accommodating other interlocutors. When members of a minority group emerge into a dominant culture and learn the dominant language but retain their ethnic language this can be classified as accommodation. Consequently, speakers become bilingual by using two languages such as the community language and ethnic language (Giles, 1979). In a continuum, when speakers frequently accommodate other speakers with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, assimilation is most likely to happen. Assimilation usually happens when immigrants assimilate to the language used in the new place they live in (Giles, 1979).

In a speech encounter, Giles (1979) explains that speakers adjust their speech style to accommodate another speaker. The adjustment can be downward convergence or upward convergence depending on the intention of the speaker. The occurrence of downward and upward convergence is discussed in detailed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1. On the other hand, divergence takes place in communication when a speaker does not conform to the language choice and speech patterns of other interlocutors. Instead, the speaker uses a different linguistic code to emphasize the differences. However, Miller (2005) argued that there are instances when a speaker is particularly looking for differences in other speakers.

The concept of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) was expanded and applied to family communication including communication between husbands and wives. Harwood, Soliz, & Lin (2006) proposed that there are different strategies in family communication, i.e. approximation accommodation strategies, interpretability accommodation strategies, discourse management accommodation strategies, and interpersonal control accommodation strategies. Harwood, Soliz, & Lin (2006) described these four strategies when analyzing different aspects of accommodation in communication. A brief overview on accommodation strategies is explained below but a detailed explanation is provided in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.1.

Approximation accommodation strategy is a form of accommodation to the interlocutor's productive performance which focuses on the partner's speech style. Such accommodative practice focuses more on the adjustment of the speech style. In Communication Accommodation Theory, the adjustment is done by moving towards other speaker's speech style (convergence) or moving away from the other's speech style (divergence) (Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006: 23). For example in interracial couples'

communication, this strategy is used when a spouse uses his or her partner's language to converge when communicating.

Interpretability accommodation strategies involve accommodation of the partner's perceived interpretive abilities, which refer to the ability to understand (Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006: 24). This strategy is used when there is an age difference between the two speakers. For example in interactions between a mother and a child, the mother sometimes over accommodate by speaking like a child. This downward convergence is used so that the child can understand the mother's message.

Discourse management accommodation strategies focus on the person's conversational needs and are often discussed in terms of topic selection, face management, and the like (Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006: 26). This occurs when a speaker tailors the conversation so that it will fit the intellectual capability and interest of other speakers. For example when a patient talks to a doctor, he or she may discuss topics related to health issues.

Interpersonal control accommodation strategies attempt to direct the course of a particular conversation or more generally a relationship by strategies such as interruption or even direct power claims (Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006: 27). This is common when two speakers have different role relationships. For example in student-teacher interaction, the teacher may show authority over the student to show professional advantage and maturity.

One evident feature of accommodation can be through code switching. The occurrence of code switching in couples' interaction can be explained and analyzed clearly

by employing the Conversation Analysis approach. Examination of the turn-taking and sequential order of talk may also help in obtaining a more comprehensive analysis of code switching in interactions. (See Chapter 2, Section 2.5 and Chapter 3).

Many studies about code switching have proven that in multilingual societies like Malaysia, code alternation occurs in various domains of communication. David (2001), Jawakhir (2006), Jariah Mohd. Jan (2006), and Kuang (2002) found that code switching in Malaysia occurs in the home domain regardless of families' ethnic background be they Malay, Chinese, or Indians. Code switching occurs in the home domain when referring to food items, signaling group solidarity, accommodating to a speaker's lack of proficiency and for the purpose of rapport, teasing, distancing, expressing annoyance, and admonishing (David, et al., 2009).

The occurrence of language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching can be important features to examine inter-ethnic and interracial encounters. It is therefore the objective of this research to explore the occurrence of language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching in interracial marriages of Filipino-Malaysian couples in verbal communication in the home domain.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This research examines the language choice of Filipino and Malaysian couples. More specifically, this research aims to:

1. Examine the Filipino-Malaysian couples' language choice in the home domain;

2. Examine the occurrence of language choice in relation to ethnicity, 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; and

5. Explore the reasons for the codes selected by couples.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

This research is conceptualized to determine the language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching in marriages between Filipinos and Malaysians. Such studies have not been fully explored particularly the language choice of Filipino-Malaysian couples.

The term "interracial marriages" is used throughout the study instead of "inter-ethnic marriages." Emphasizing the "race" rather than "ethnicity" is essential to understand the racial and ethnic complexity in these two Southeast Asian countries: The Philippines and Malaysia. The concept of ethnicity emphasizes more on the shared culture, customs and traditions of a group (Janzen, 2003). People of the same ethnic groups may usually have a common language, religion, and history. On the other hand, the concept of race is attributed to the physical characteristics of a person and race can be altered through intermarriages (Janzen, 2003).

To understand the relevance of the term "race" in this research, it is essential to briefly trace the historical background of the Philippines and Malaysia. Historically, Filipinos and Malays are Austronesian people and originated from the Malay race. However, due to colonization, trade, intermarriages, and migration which occurred in the Philippines and Malaysia, the issue about race has become complex. Consequently, the

term "Filipino race" is now commonly used and accepted to describe the Filipinos. On the other hand, the term "Malay race" is used to describe the Malays. However, the Chinese and Indians who come from their respective countries to work and live in Malaysia still consider their races as "Chinese and Indians." To avoid confusion about the complexities of the terms,"race and ethnicity" of Filipinos, the term "race" is used. Consequently, "interracial couples" is used to describe the Filipino-Malaysian couples throughout this study.

The focus on husband and wife communication can also be an important issue to discuss. At present, studies on marital communication have not been widely studied particularly in the field of sociolinguistics. Piller (2000) pointed out that studies on marital communication frequently encounter some methodological problems of data collection because it is perceived to be private. Because of the privacy of couple's relationship, most studies tend to focus on the behavior of an individual rather than on the interaction between husband and wife.

On the other hand, language choice is explored in this research because speakers in a multilingual society cannot evade in making choices. Speakers tend to use a language or languages available in their linguistic repertoire and their choice can be influenced by some social factors such as the speech patterns, setting, topic, and social dimensions which include the speaker's social distance and status, and the formality of the occasion (see Holmes, 2008). In multilingual societies, language choice is part of people's everyday experience. Speakers need to frequently select an appropriate linguistic code in different domains of communication.

It is evident that whenever bilingual or multilingual couples speak they make choices. Such choice is triggered by psychological, social factors, and social dimensions. Thus, exploring interracial couples' communication in relation to some sociolinguistic factors sheds light in understanding language choice in such interactions. Questions like "Which or whose language is used? Why? What accommodation strategies are used?" might be helpful to determine the language selected in interracial couples' interactions.

1.4 Overview: The Philippines and Malaysia

Some background of the two countries where the participants came from is necessary to understand the complexities of their language and culture in relation to intermarriages.

1.4.1 The Philippines

Figure1.1 Map of the Philippines

The Philippines is a multilingual and multicultural country consisting of 170 languages (Dumanig, 2007) and has a population of 88.57 million (National Statistics, 2008). People in the Philippines speak different languages and dialects however Filipino, the Philippine national language, is widely spoken. Apart from Filipino, English is also used as an official language which serves other functions specifically in government and education. Most Filipinos can speak English because it is used as the medium of instruction in the kindergarten, elementary, high school and college. Although bilingual education is encouraged, many people give importance to English because of the economic benefits that it brings particularly the opportunity to work abroad. Due to the high demand of English, some Filipinos tend to compare intelligence with their ability to communicate in English (Darunday, 2006). A person who can express himself or herself freely in English can be regarded smart but those who have a poor command of English are regarded as less intelligent (Darunday, 2006).

Working overseas has become one of the aims of many young working professionals and even non-professionals in the Philippines. Due to economic and political instability in the country, most people are motivated to go overseas and work. In addition, the Philippine government has motivated Filipinos to master English because of its aim of sending workers overseas so as to increase the country's revenue. In some cases, Filipinos marry people of the host country then eventually live and reside permanently in these countries (Japp, 2001).

In fact, the remittances of overseas Filipino workers have contributed much to the improvement of Philippine economy (Manalansan, 2008). In 2008, the monthly remittance average reached up to 1,368,905.00 US Dollars as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 OFW Remittances by Origin, 2008-2007, in Thousand US Dollar

World Group of Overseas Filipino Workers	2008 (US Dollars)	2007 (US Dollars)
Asia	1,883.996	1,543,173
Middle East	2,502,639	2,172,417
Europe	2,658,726	2,351,704
Americas	9,213,372	8,244,344
Africa	17,746	16,027
Others	952	846
Land based Total	13,392,301	12,213,565
Sea based Total	3,034,553	2,236,363
Grand Total	16,426,854	14,449,928
Monthly Remittance Average	1,368,905	1,204,161

Source: http://www.poea.gov.ph

The remittances of OFW have increased continuously due to the increase of Filipinos working overseas. The 2008 report shows that Filipinos working in America have the highest remittances as compared to the other continents.

The increasing number of OFW in various parts of the world influences the people's perception of English in the Philippines. Learning English for Filipinos is no longer a choice but a necessity. Learning the language is not just for the sake of communicating internationally but for economic access to the global world. The English learned is however of a distinct Philippine English variety (Dumanig & David, 2010). It is a New English variety that is influenced by the local languages in the Philippines (Dumanig & David, 2010). This is evident in the lexical, syntactic, and prosodic features of Philippine English. When Filipinos work overseas they communicate in this variety of English (Dumanig & Manueli, 2009).

At present, there is a huge number of Filipinos working overseas and they are referred to as Overseas Filipino workers (OFW). Statistics shows that the number of Overseas Filipino Workers who worked abroad from April to September 2007 was registered at 1.75 million (National Statistics Office, July 30, 2008). Based on the special report released by the Philippine National Statistics Office in July 2008 the percentage of Filipinos working in other countries had increased up to 15.3% from 2006-2007.

Table 1.2 Percentage Distribution of Overseas Filipino Workers   by Region of Origin in 2006 and 2007

	2007	2006
Region	*100.0*	*100.0*
National Capital Region	16.0	16.4
Cordillera Administrative Region	2.1	2.2
I - Ilocos	7.7	7.6
II – Cagayan Valley	5.9	5.3
III – Central Luzon	14.3	14.5
IVA - CALABARZON	17.7	16.8
IVB - MIMAROPA	1.7	1.3
V - Bicol	3.0	2.5
VI – Western Visayas	8.5	9.5
VII – Central Visayas	5.1	5.5
VIII – Eastern Visayas	2.1	2.2
IX – Zamboanga Peninsula	2.0	2.2
X – Norhtern Mindanao	3.1	2.8
XI - Davao	2.6	3.1
XII - SOCCSKSARGEN	4.2	4.0
XIII - Caraga	1.0	1.1
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	3.1	3.1

Source: Survey on Overseas Filipinos Income and Employment Statistics Division Household Statistics Department Philippines National Statistics Office Manila, Philippines. (http://www.census.gov.ph).

Table 1.2 shows the percentage of Filipinos working overseas and their place of origin in the Philippines. It is clear that the Filipinos who work abroad come from the various regions in the Philippines. The data reveal that most Filipino overseas workers come from

the Tagalog region like the CALABARZON and the National Capital region (see Table

1.2).

Table 1.3 Percentage Distributions of Overseas Filipino Workers   by Place of Work Abroad in 2006 and 2007

	2007	2006
Place of Work	*100.0*	*100.0*
Africa	1.2	1.7
Asia	78.1	78.3
Hongkong	6.7	7.0
Japan	5.6	6.0
Taiwan	5.5	6.1
Other countries in East Asia (ex. China, South Korea)	3.1	3.5
Southeast and South Central Asia	10.3	9.9
Malaysia	2.5	2.8
Singapore	6.0	5.0
Other countries in Southeast and South Central Asia (ex. Brunei)	1.7	2.1
Western Asia	46.8	45.8
Kuwait	4.4	4.8
Saudi Arabia	19.8	21.8
United Arab Emirates	12.1	9.2
Qatar	4.5	3.7
Other countries in Western Asia (ex. Bahrain, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan)	6.0	6.3
Australia	1.9	1.2
Europe	9.2	9.5
North and South America	9.3	9.2
Other countries	0.3	-
Country not reported	0.1	0.2

Source: Survey on Overseas Filipinos Income and Employment Statistics Division Household Statistics Department Philippines National Statistics Office Manila, Philippines. (http://www.census.gov.ph).

Table 1.3 shows the percentage of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) in various parts of the

world. In Southeast Asia, a huge number of overseas Filipino workers and 6.0% of the

11,000,000 OFW work in Singapore while 2.5% work in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, Filipinos are found in various professions. However, domestic help outnumbers other professions. Based from the interview conducted in the Philippine Embassy at the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) there are 10,972 registered legal Filipino domestic helpers in Malaysia. Filipino workers in Malaysia (see Table 1.2) do not stay for long because after a few years some of them return to the Philippines. Those who have married the Malays, Malaysian Chinese, Malaysian Indians and other ethnic groups remain in Malaysia.

1.4.2 Malaysia

Figure 1.2. Map of Malaysia

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multilingual society with a population of 28.31 million (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2009, see map of Malaysian in figure 1.2). Malaysia has three major ethnic groups; Malays, Chinese, and Indians and there are also other minority groups like the Orang Asli and other ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak.

Religions in Malaysia

6.3%   9.1%

19.2%

60%

- Islam
- Buddhism
- Hinduism
- Christianity
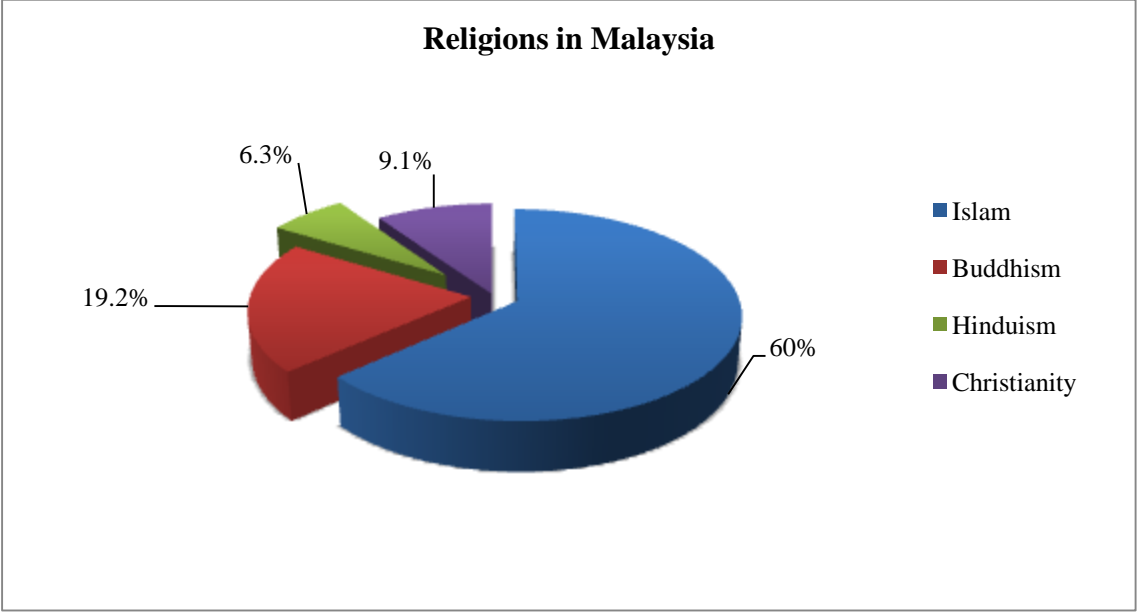
Chart 1.1 Religious Affiliations in Malaysia

Most Malaysians are Muslims which comprise 60% of the total population, followed by Buddhists (19.2%), Hindus (6.3%), and Christians (9.1%) (Manalansan, 2008). Bahasa Malaysia is the national language and English is the country's second language. Many people can speak English but have different levels of proficiency. The major languages spoken are Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese (Mandarin), and Indian (Tamil).

In the past, English was widely spoken in Malaysia and used as the medium of instruction in school. However, in 1960 Bahasa Malaysia was introduced and eventually replaced English as the medium of instruction (Venugopal, 2000). Different ethnic groups

are loyal to their own ethnic languages because the vernacular languages are used as the medium of instruction in the formative years in vernacular schools. According to David (2007) and Abdul Rahman Arshad (2007) there are 1,800 vernacular schools consisting of 1,286 Chinese primary schools and 514 Tamil primary schools. In 1976, all English-medium primary schools were converted into schools where Malay was used as the medium of instruction (David, 2007). In 1982, all English-medium secondary schools were converted to National Schools in Peninsular Malaysia; however it was only in 1985 that the use of Malay as the medium of instruction was fully implemented in Sabah and Sarawak (Solomon, 1988 as cited in David, 2007). Consequently, Bahasa Malaysia was given a high status while the status of English was changed from the medium of instruction to that of a subject (David, 2007:7).

The use of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction led to a decline in the standard of English (David, 2007). With the fast development of information technology, the emergence and popularity of globalization and the increasing importance of English resulted in a change in the language policy. The Private Educational Institutions Bill (1996) allows the use of English as the medium of instruction with the approval from the Ministry of Higher Education. Slowly, English was introduced in the national and national-type schools as second most important language. Consequently, in 2003 English was introduced as the medium of instruction to teach Mathematics and Science. However, this policy has recently been changed in 2009 where Bahasa Malaysia was again implemented as the medium of instruction in teaching Mathematics and Science.

At present, English has become an important language to many Malaysians. Some families particularly the Chinese and Indians have started using English as the medium of communication even at home (David, 2006).

1.4.3 Migration of Filipinos to Malaysia

The migration of Filipinos to Malaysia can be traced in two Diasporas. The first diaspora began during Marcos regime, when Filipino families escaped to Malaysia because of Martial Law as well as the hostilities between the Philippine military and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) (Manalansan, 2008:4). Those Filipinos who migrated in Malaysia were considered refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). As of 2008, there were many Filipino refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia.

Table 1.4 Refugees in Malaysia as of 2008

Refugees & asylum seekers	171,500
Myanmar	79,000
Philippines	72,000
Indonesia	17,700

Source:
http://www.worldrefugeesurvey.org/index.php?title=Malaysia#Statistics_for_Malaysia

Table 4.3 shows the number of refugees in Malaysia as 2008. The data shows that there are 171,500 refugees and asylum seekers. Most of the refugees are from Myanmar (79,000) followed by 72,000 Filipinos.

The second diaspora happened in the latter part of 1970s in which Filipinos came to Malaysia as economic migrants (Manalansan, 2008). In the early 1980s more Filipinos came to Malaysia to work as domestic helpers without working permits. However, in the mid 1980s a group of authorized Filipino workers came to Malaysia to work as domestic helpers (Manalansan, 2008).

The migration of Filipinos to Malaysia for economic reasons has continued up to the present. The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) data show that Malaysia hired and re-hired some 19,073 documented Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) or an average of 6,357 per year from 2001 to 2003 and another 3,502 from January to July in 2004 (Department of Labor and Employment, 2005 as cited in Uy, 2009). Uy (2009) reported that as of December 2007, there were 245,000 Filipinos in Malaysia, 26,002 are permanent residents, 90,965 temporary and an estimated 128,000 irregular. The continuous increase of Filipino migration in Malaysia has resulted in an increase in the number of intermarriages between Filipinos and Malaysians.

1.4.4 Interracial Marriages

Interracial marriages among Asians were not common in the past, however due to the emergence of new technological advancements and other means of transportation, people today are mobile. Globalization has increased cross-cultural flow and resulted in a high tolerance in dealing with people who come from different cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds. The result of such interactions across cultures has resulted in an increasing number of intermarriages (Holmes, 2008). Acceptability of Filipino and Malaysian marriages has not been a major problem because the two races share almost similar roots.

However, the differences in the cultural practices, values, and languages of two races are evident. (Lumayag, 2004).

In the past interracial marriages between Filipinos and Malaysians occurred in Sabah and Mindanao particularly among the Muslims because of the proximity of the two countries (Manalansan, 2008). The geographical location of the Philippines and Malaysia specifically Sabah and Mindanao has led to easy access in entering both countries (see Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Proximity of Location between the Philippines and Malaysia

At present, interracial marriages between Filipinos and Malaysians occur due to migration of Filipinos who work in Malaysia. Most Filipinos specifically Filipino women came to Malaysia to work as doctors, physical therapists, nurses, accountants, IT professionals, engineers, architects, teachers, entertainers, technicians, caregivers, and domestic helpers. As of December 2007, there were 245,000 Filipinos in Malaysia and more or less 40% of them were employed as domestic helpers (Uy, 2009). Among these groups, those who came

to Malaysia as single, widow or separated and eventually found their life partners. According to Lumayag (2004) Filipino women who marry Malaysians are entertainers and domestic helpers. These entertainers have more chances of marrying Malaysians because of their type of work which allows them to interact and socialize often with their customers.

Language has been viewed by many Filipinos as a problem in dealing with the Malaysians (Dumanig & David, 2010). Although both races can speak a common language like English, they still find some problems in their interactions due to some differences in lexical, grammatical, and prosodic features of the English variety they speak. Despite these communication problems, Filipino and Malaysian couples believe that they achieve happy and successful marriages (Dumanig, 2009).

1.5 Research Questions

Language choice is an important feature in interracial couple's communication. Inappropriate choice of language may lead to misunderstanding and communication breakdown. To explore and investigate the language choices of interracial couples, this study was conducted to examine and analyze the language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching patterns of Filipino-Malaysian couples' communication in the home domain.

More specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the preferred language of Filipino-Malaysian couples in the home domain?

2. How do ethnicity, first language, and gender influence language choice?

3. What accommodation strategies are used by couples in verbal communication in the home domain?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it investigates, explains, and analyzes the language choice, accommodation strategies and code switching of interracial couples when communicating with their spouse. Consequently, this research may provide some suggestions and recommendations in dealing with problems emerging in cross-cultural communication specifically among Filipino-Malaysian couples. To discuss the significance of this research, explanations on the theoretical contribution, extension of empirical data base and usefulness of findings are given emphasis.

1.6.1 Theoretical Contribution

This research makes use of Giles and Powesland's (1975) Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). The theory posits that speakers accommodate each other either to converge or diverge in interactions. Divergence and convergence can either be upward or downward accommodation. In a study conducted by Harwood, Soliz and Lin (2006) it was found that Communication Accommodation Theory is not limited to common cross-cultural or inter-cultural interactions but can be applied in family interactions. The occurrence of approximation, interpretability, discourse management, and interpersonal control accommodation strategies are evident in most interactions among family members. This research may provide new insights in interracial couples' language choice, accommodation strategies and code switching in interactions in the home domain. This research also highlights the importance of Conversation Analysis in analyzing the occurrence of code switching in interactions. The examination of turn-takings and sequential order of talk provides a clearer understanding on how code switching occurs when communicating with others who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (see Chapters 2 and 3).

1.6.2 Extension of Empirical Database

This research aims to contribute to the existing studies on language choice, accommodation strategies and code switching in communication in interracial marriages. Studies on language choice show that factors such as age, social network, social status (Tan 1993, Nor Azni Abdullah 2004); power (Heller 1995), education (Kioko & Muthiwii 2003, Mugambi 2003); media (Ledesma & Morris 2005), ethnicity, relationship of speakers (Goebel 2002), referee (Yau, 1997), numeric factor and neutrality of language (Degefa 2004), first language (Piller 2004), community language (Johansson, 1991), dominant language and language exposure (Warshauer, El Said, & Zohry 2002; Ferrer & Sankoff 2004) and gender (Esdahl 2003) influence a speaker's language choice.

Language choice of mixed married couples can be triggered by ethnicity, religion and gender. Even in more private communication between husband and wife; the previously mentioned sociolinguistic factors can influence the couples' language choice. Consequently, ethnicity, religion and gender are explored and analyzed in this research to provide an explanation on the occurrence of language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching in interracial couples'' communication. It is hoped that the findings of this research may contribute in understanding the reasons for language choice and accommodation strategies of Filipino-Malaysian couples.

1.6.3 Usefulness of Findings

The findings of this study will fill the gap in determining language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching in interracial marriages between Filipinos and Malaysians. This will also provide an explanation on the patterns of language choice and the reasons for

language choice, communication strategies and code switching in interracial couples' communication.

Previous studies on interracial communication focused on conversations among friends and strangers but limited studies have been conducted in communication between husband and wife in interracial marriages. This research may bridge the gap and provide explanations on language choice, accommodation strategies and code switching in interracial couples' communication.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research limits its scope to language choice, accommodation strategies, and code switching in interracial marriages between Filipino and Malaysian couples in the home domain only. Communication at home is believed to be more ideal to study because speakers are not distracted by outside factors like the context, presence of other interlocutors and place.

The participants of the study were limited to 60 spouses however this is compensated by a mixed methodology. Interviews, questionnaire, and recording of couples' actual conversation were the instruments used. The use of snowball sampling, description of participants, and data gathering procedure are explained in detailed in Chapter 3 and the steps for analysis is illustrated in Chapter 3 (see figure 3.3).

1.8 Definition of Terms

To provide clarification of the terminologies used in this study, the following terms are defined operationally.

Accommodation strategies – are sociolinguistic encoding strategies that describe the communication accommodation behavior of speakers both in interpersonal and intergroup level (Harwood, Soliz & Lin, 2006: 27).

Interracial couples – are Filipino-Malaysian couples from two different races or ethnic groups who do not share similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They do not belong to the same speech community and community of practice.

Interracial marriages – refer to the marriages between Filipinos and Malaysians who come from different ethnic affiliations such as Malay, Chinese and Indians.

Language choice - refers to the language preference of Filipino-Malaysian couples in their communication in the home domain.

Verbal communication – refers to the interracial couples' oral form of communication in exchanging messages using certain linguistic and non-linguistic features to convey their message.