

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The present study focused on code switching by male and female participants among upper primary learners in a school in Malaysia. The study also examined the frequency and functions of code switching by the male and female participants. Besides, it also investigated the speech acts that occur in the conversations.

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the findings based on the analysis given in chapter four. The researcher made a detail analysis of the data from a series of code-switching utterances by the upper primary learners. The researcher showed how code-switching gives effect to the learning process. The researcher feels that future research is needed in code-switching from many other linguistics points of view.

In this chapter, each research questions will be reviewed and the implications of the findings from this study on inter-gender code switching among upper primary learners will be presented. The chapter will conclude with possible recommendations for further research.

### **5.2 Research Questions Revisited**

In this section, the three research questions will be reviewed and the major findings of this study will be discussed. The discussion will be presented based on the following research questions.

1. What are the functions of code switching found in group interactions among upper primary learners?

2. How similar or different are the functions of code switching in single gender and mixed-gender group interactions among male and female participants?
3. What types of speech acts are identified when code switching happens during inter gender group interaction?

### **5.2.1 Research Question 1**

*“What are the functions of code switching found in group interactions among upper primary learners?”*

The research was conducted to analyse code switching utterances in a second language classroom of eight upper primary learners that comprises of four male participants and four female participants. The main objective of this research is to identify the functions of code switching that occur when two gender groups of upper primary learners interact.

In this study, an unexpected finding was the consistent use of Bahasa Malaysia (the learner’s native language) as the base language in all conversations. A possible explanation to these findings is that the learners might have felt some pressure in carrying out the interaction, in order to report back to the adult researcher who is also their language teacher. Therefore, the learners were more comfortable using Bahasa Malaysia to deliver ideas smoothly in their communications. The main function found here was that the learners generally code-switch from English to Malay for quick delivery of ideas in the subject matter. The researcher noted that the learners interacted well when they used Bahasa Malaysia.

It was noted by the researcher that the learners in this study, code-switched to create a fear-free environment among themselves as some of them feel that they are weak in

English language and lack confidence to interact in the language. As the choice of language selection was given to them and there was no restriction in communication, those who had vocabulary problems chose to interact in Bahasa Malaysia more as their motivation factor was to take control of the floor and win the argument without taking into consideration the language used.

In a way, the learners also code switch because of habitual reasons. Since Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and a multi-lingual country, many languages are being spoken. It is a norm or habit to use more than one language in discourse. According to David (2003), "It is seen as a habitual reason to code-switch between a word or phrase level not because of the lack of vocabulary by the interlocutors but an accustomed and a habitual reason".

Besides habitual reasons, the learners also code switch because of influence of other subjects such as Bahasa Malaysia, Kajian Tempatan, Kemahiran Hidup and Moral which are being taught in the national language which is also the learner's native language. Code-switching is used as a learning tool for them to understand the learning items in L2. So, pupils tend to use more of Bahasa Malaysia in their L2 classes and indirectly code switch through out their learning process.

This school is located in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur; many of these students are not exposed to English language much in their daily life except in school while learning L2. Through this study, the researcher also felt that lack of exposure and communication skills in the English language caused the students to pause during interactions. So, in arguments, the pupils have to clarify, emphasize and accommodate their turns besides topic shifting in the Bahasa Malaysia.

The results in a way shows that code switching could be an indicator of bilingual learners' L2 learning abilities. However in a bigger picture, children should not be discriminated against by the school or the teachers if they engaged in code switching behaviour. This is because when teachers understand this language phenomenon and the advantages it provides for bilingual learners, they can help these learners improve their literacy through using their own linguistic "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1992-135).

### **5.2.2 Research Question 2**

*“How similar or different are the functions of code switching in single gender and mixed-gender group interactions among male and female participants?”*

As the focus of this study is to investigate and to compare the functions of code switching between Bahasa Malaysia and English Language among upper primary learners in inter-gender and intra-gender peer interaction, the researcher noted that different gender code switched for different or various reasons. There were many differences in function of code switching by the male participants compared to the female participants. At such, some of the functions identified for the male participants were topic shift where they tend to use this as a tool to change from a topic to another either in the same or different context of communication. In this aspect, male participants feel more confident to use Bahasa Malaysia instead of English language during shifting of one topic to another and they feel they could hold the floor in between the shifting without passing it over to the female participants. Other than that, the male participants also code switch when they emphasize on particular statement to make their standing in the interaction. They use Bahasa Malaysia to emphasize their fact in order to gain trust from the other participants regardless of gender. The third function identified in the research was to facilitate clarification in their conversation. Whenever they

clarify certain proclamation, they tend to code switch. Other functions of code switching recognized in the study were situation shift, representation of speech, quotation, insistence and few others that show very little impact on the research.

As for the female participants, they too code switch in order to shift topic from one to another as their male counterparts. This is also based on their confidence. Other than that, female participants code switch in interest of turn accommodation and to gain clarification in their interaction. These are the few functions of code switching that occurred habitually in both single gender interactions and mixed gender interaction for both gender. The other functions that identified were very in-frequent or in-distinct in overall conversations.

Gender does make a difference. As said by Tannen (1993), but this difference is not universal - so there will be male who exhibit “feminine” conversational qualities - or female who follow the conversational styles associated with men. In this study, with gender as a variable, males and females do not show any broad differences in the way they choose the functions of code switching in their interactions either in single gender interaction or mixed gender discussion.

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In “Living Language”, Keith and Shuttleworth (2008) suggested that women talk more than men, talk too much, are more polite, are indecisive/hesitant, complain and nag, ask more questions, support each other, are more co-operative, whereas men swear more, don't talk about emotions, talk about sport more, talk about women and machines in the same way, insult each other frequently, are competitive in conversation, dominate conversation, speak with more authority, give more commands and interrupt more.

In this study, the frequency of code switching was dominated by the male participants compared to the female participants in both types of conversation which were single gender interaction and mixed gender interaction. This can be seen in Figures 4.1 (76) and 4.2 (86) where the male participants showed 47% and 41% in single gender interactions and a 11% in mixed gender interaction whereas the females scored low in two over three conversations with 19% and 50% in single gender interaction and a 11% in mixed gender conversation. High frequency shown by the male participants is most probably due to lower proficiency in English Language and lack of vocabulary in English as we can see in their grading as in Table 4.7 which was given by their class teacher based on their mid term score.

Another reason for code-switching is to save time where the male participants have higher proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia. The pupils have already mastered the basic principles of Bahasa Malaysia. There are Malay words for many terms that they could use in the interaction. The male participants save time when they give the equivalents in Malay to substitute English words. This for sure made the other participants understand and comprehend the meanings easily and to make the environment fun and interesting. The usage of code switching has also established a friendly relationship among the participants in the interaction. This in a way was a creative method to make the conversation interesting. Using two languages to discuss also seem to be more effective between the male participants to pass their ideas and continue with their debate as they are very familiar with Bahasa Malaysia.

As for the female participants, frequency of code switching differs from the male participants. This can be identified again through Figure 4.1 and 4.2. It was seen that females code switched slightly less in comparison to the male participants. This may be

due to their proficiency which is much higher than the males. They could communicate fluently in English language without any intervention of Bahasa Malaysia. The female participants were also very comfortable and confident in using the English language as they have wide understanding of vocabulary. The pressure of giving out a good English presentation could be another reason for the female participants to deliver more of their arguments in English language as the assignment was given to them by the researcher who is also their English teacher.

Findings from this study suggest that all bilingual learners in the study engaged in code switching behavior although the frequency of this behavior varied. A focused analysis on gender roles yielded several patterns. Overall, the learners' choice of language was not very motivated by the changes in participants involved in the discourse. As for the males, they tend to code switch more regardless of the gender factor and contrary to common expectation. English in this study was seen as the language of preference for female participants to hold their arguments.

### **5.2.3 Research Question 3**

“What types of speech acts are identified when code switching happens during inter gender group interaction?”

Speech act is a way to look at purpose for code switching. Speech acts that occur between male and female in single gender interactions and mixed gender interaction supports the reason for learners to code switch. In this study, there were many types of speech acts that occurred in the interactions recorded. Frequent and obvious speech acts that were identified in the transcription were Directives, Declarations, Commissives, Expressives and Representatives based on the Searle's Theory. The male participants

were identified to use more declaratives while the female participants observed as using more directives in the interactions.

Taking the culture-specific notion of power, Adachi (2009) investigates how gender plays a key role in understanding the production of Japanese speech acts between different genders. The results show stylistic differences (casual vs. careful speech) in the production of compliments across gender. In this study, stylistic difference could also be identified among different genders where the males used more declaratives compared to female who preferred directives.

Several studies suggest that females are more prone to produce directives whilst males prone for other speech acts (Mulac, Bradac and Gibbons, 2001) and McCaulay, 2001 examined how different genders comprehend various speech acts. In current study, this is found to be true as the female participants were found to be using more directives in their interactions.

Generally, gender and speech behaviour are also seen as two interwoven, interrelated variables (Lakoff 1975; Tannen 1993; Boxer 1993; Holmes 1995). In other words, speech behaviours depend on the gender relationship between interlocutors. Thus refusing people of either the same or the opposite gender requires different linguistic patterns.

### **5.3 Implications**

The evidence from this study strongly supports the argument that there is a great need for educators to view bilingual learners' code switching behaviors in a positive light. International Reading Association (IRA) and The National Association for the



Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1998) express a similar stance by stating, linguistically and culturally diverse learners bring multiple perspectives and impressive skills, such as code switching (the ability to go back and forth between two languages to deepen conceptual understanding), to the tasks of learning to speak, read, and write a second language. These self-motivated, self-initiating, constructive thinking processes should be celebrated and used as rich teaching and learning resources for all learners.

When educators look at code switching as a natural and constructive behavior in bilingual discourse, they can enhance the instructional effects when teaching L2 in Malaysian schools. Allowing bilingual learners regardless of their gender to use their linguistic and cultural resources supports their learning needs (Laliberty and Berzins, 2000), and building on learners' understanding of their native languages can increase their chance for academic success (Flood, Lapp, & Hurley, 1996)

Currently, bilingualism and bilingual education are under heated debate and scrutiny in the public and political forums. Although a small-scaled study, the information gathered from this cross-linguistic study has significant educational implications. The researcher also calls for more studies on code switching of other language contact phenomena in public school settings so that educators can obtain a better understanding of how bilingual learners use languages and learn through languages. With more students coming from different linguistic backgrounds, teachers are more likely to face children demonstrating code switching behaviours. Studies of this nature can help teachers provide appropriate instructional support to maximize bilingual learners' linguistics ability.

The education community has paid little attention to the simultaneous development of the two languages in bilingual learners. In particular, bilingual learners mixing of languages in the process of language acquisition has been viewed unfavorably by the mainstream society, and it has been "the least systematically studied" (Romaine, 1989). As a result, there is a great need to examine bilingual children's code switching behavior in an educational setting so that a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon can be reached and be used to inform the instructional practices of the teachers of bilingual learners in Malaysian schools.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

It can be viewed that code-switching can be seen as a common scenario in the context of teaching and learning in the Malaysian education system regardless of gender in English language classes. The researcher feels that code-switching does not adversely affect the English language. But in a way, it is sad to note that although English language plays an important part in life, learners are still not very proficient or confident to debate or argue their ideas fully in English without the help of their native language. Consequently, they do not become proficient in the English language. As a result, the students would be over dependent on the mother tongue to communicate even in their L2 classes.

Regardless of gender difference, as can be seen in the findings of this study, the researcher feels that learners must be able to communicate more in English language during their L2 classes and minimize usage of native language in their arguments or debates in future so that the quality of teaching and learning of English language is maintained and further improved so that future generations can compete in the globalise

world. It must be stressed that code-switching is a universal phenomena which occurs at all levels of society, irrespective of race, religion, gender and age.

### **5.5 Further Investigations**

The study of socio-linguistics focuses on the relationship between language and society. The complexity of human society of linguistic codes and registers underline the fact that it is patterned, and it is embedded in the human social experience. In Malaysia, there is still a need to conduct further research from other socio-linguistic point of view.

The future research in the field of sociolinguistics should also focus on socio-cultural aspects that affect learning of English language. Future researchers should conduct research on how socio-economic backgrounds of bilingual learners affect code-switching. Besides the aspect of gender studied by the researcher in this study, family background and education too play a vital role on why bilinguals or learners code-switch. Pupils' social background affects the learning strategy. Besides that, ever-changing new educational policies have to be monitored at all times because it has a domino effect on the teachers and pupils. Implementers and planners have to conduct in-depth research before coming up with a policy. Policy-makers have to foster greater multicultural values when a policy is implemented because the infrastructure of knowledge is not only based on the instructors but also the policy that they are heavily dependent upon.

The psycholinguistic point of view also affects code-switching. A Freudian slip, also called parapraxis, is an error in speech, memory, or physical action that is interpreted as occurring due to the interference of some unconscious ("dynamically repressed") wish, conflict, or train of thought. This named after Sigmund Freud (1901) says that an error in speech or physical action is believed to be caused by the "subconscious mind". These

thoughts are consciously repressed and then subconsciously released. The researcher feels that further research should be done on the working of the subconscious mind to find out to what extent the subconscious mind affects code switching. Even though, this study is based from sociolinguistic point of view, in some way psycholinguistic does have an influence on sociolinguistic studies.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The study was an attempt to bring attention to the code switching among primary learners by male and female participants in Malaysian school setting. Code switching is seen more frequently in daily life and is a growing trend among the Malaysian learners regardless of their education level. This research has investigated the functions of code switching used by taking into consideration the gender factor among learners in a primary school besides looking at speech acts that is also comprehended as a way to look at reasons for using code switching. Eight learners from Year Six comprises of male and female participated in this study and it is found that regardless of the gender factor, both male and females were found to be code switching and most of the functions are identified as being similar to each other.

To date, we are living in an ever-changing world, and the only thing that is constant is change. Therefore, we need to keep on doing research on pedagogy to create a knowledge- based nation, to achieve success in globalise and current competitive world.