CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.0   Introduction

The present study investigated the frequency of code switching, the functions fulfilled when code switching occurs and their frequency of occurance during meetings attended by professionals from various departments of Company X. The professionals are bilinguals or multilinguals. Twelve out of the fourteen participants are Malaysians while the remaining two are Irish and Argentinean. The research also attempted to ascertain whether code switching occurred deliberately or involuntarily during meetings.

5.1   Summary of Findings

This study shows evidence that code switching, though limited, does take place during meetings in Company X. The limited instances of code switching could be attributed to the fact that Company X is a multinational company and English is the medium of communication.

As indicated in Table 4.2, out of 750 words spoken during Meeting 1, thirty seven or 4.9% of the words were in the other language, that is, in Malay. In Meeting 2, the words spoken were 842 and fifteen or 1.8% of the words were code switched. In Meeting 3, 1448 words were spoken and two or 0.1% of the words were code switched. Overall out of 3040 words spoken fifty four or 1.8% of the words were code switched.

Meeting 1 accounted for most of the code switches and this can be attributed to the fact that the attendees at this meeting were of lower rank and received their formal education in Malay. It is not surprising that code switching during Meeting 3 was practically non-existent. The majority of the attendees of Meeting 3 held senior positions in the organization. They would have received their education in English and were comfortable using English even in social interaction and home. In addition the presence of two non Malaysians could have reduced the use of Malay.

As shown in Table 4.2, 63 switches were identified and they fulfilled seven functions. Out of the seven functions of code switching, "To emphasise a point" was the major reason for code switching during meetings and accounted for 26% of the switches.

The breakdown of the other switches are : "Used to express colloquial Malaysian English" (22%), "As sentence filler" and "As a strategy of neutrality" (15% each), "Economy of articulation" (11%), "To maintain a particular concept" (7%) and "Triggering" (4%).

Based on the interview carried out with the participants, the data of which is presented in Table 4.6, it can be stated that all participants who code switched were not aware of the fact that they code switched. The participants were surprised that they code switched at the particular instant and could not provide any explanation for this behaviour. Most of the participants who code switched tended to agree with the reasons provided by the researcher. It can be deduced from Table 4.6, which is a summary of the interview findings, that code switching occurs involuntarily. This supports Wong's argument, as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4, that involuntary code switching is difficult to explain.

5.2   Limitation of the Study

Although code switching does take place, it depends on the attendees of the meeting. Company X being a multi-national organization employs people of various races and nationalities. As such, most of the meetings are carried out in English and Malay is the preferred alternative. However, when other nationalities are present, code switching is non existent or very minimal. In addition when senior staff participate in the meetings, code switching is also not prevalent (meeting 3).

This study focuses on Malaysian professionals working in Company X and studies their code switching behaviour during meetings in the work place. The study

does not shed any light on the way the non Professional Malaysians working in Company X speak during meetings.

Company X is only one of the organizations in Malaysia. It will be interesting to gain insights into the code switching phenomenon in other organizations in Malaysia as well as organizations which are based outside Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. It would also be interesting to study whether code switching occurs in Company X's overseas offices.

A point to note is that the number of participants in each meeting was relatively small, four to six. The participants' behaviour when the number of participants at the meetings are larger will be of interest. The participants' behaviour in larger meetings may be different from that exhibited in smaller meetings.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has established that code switching occurs at formal meetings in the workplace and that it occurs involuntarily . The predominant code switching functions employed during meetings among bilingual or multilingual Malaysian professionals in Company X have been identified. This may be true of other Malaysian professionals who are bilinguals or multilinguals. Code switching has become a common feature of bilingual conversations almost every where in Malaysia.

Code switching has become a way of life in Malaysia and no one gives it a second thought.