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Code Switching Among Teachers and Students
in an ESL Classroom

Field of Study: Second Language Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

English is a compulsory subject, which is taught as a second language (ESL) in Malaysian classrooms. Despite the Ministry of Education and school principals’ instructions against code switching in the ESL classrooms, code switching from English to Bahasa Melayu still occurs in some ESL classrooms. Hence, the objectives of this study are to investigate the reasons and analyze the functions of code switching among teachers and students in an ESL classroom. The sample comprises three English teachers and forty Form Two students from a secondary school in Kuala Lumpur. Data was obtained from a questionnaire, classroom observations and interviews. The observations were video-taped and the interviews were audio-taped. The data obtained were then transcribed for qualitative and quantitative analyses. Theories on reasons of code switching by Crystal (2001), Cook (2001) and Cristmore (2005); and the theory of functions of code switching by Sert (2005) are adapted for data analyses. The findings of this study indicated that all the teachers and students code-switched to Bahasa Melayu in the ESL classroom. The reasons why teachers and students code switched are to understand certain words better, comprehend the lessons better, ensure that the students are on the same track, make classroom conversations more interesting, use as a short cut to explain tasks and avoid educational inferiority among the students who don’t understand the content taught. This study also revealed that the functions of code switching include topic switch, repetitive or reiteration functions, affective functions, floor-holding, equivalence and conflict control. One implication of this study is that in theory, the teachers disapprove of code switching but in reality, they practice it in the ESL classroom. This study recommends that further research should be done with a bigger sample from both urban and rural schools. Interviews with the officers from the Ministry of Education and principals of schools should also be conducted in order to
obtain a deeper insight into their negative perceptions towards code switching in the ESL classrooms.
ABSTRAK

pengajaran tergendala, menghalang ketidakbolehan pelajar untuk berkomunikasi dengan baik dan penggunaan perkataan serta ayat yang betul. Kajian yang dicadangkan berikut dari hasil kajian ini ialah pihak pengkaji boleh menggunakan jumlah guru dan pelajar yang lebih banyak dari sekolah-sekolah bandar dan luar bandar. Pegawai-pegawai dari Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia dan para pengetua perlu di temuduga untuk mendapatkan maklumat yang lebih terperinci mengenai pendapat negatif mereka dalam pertukaran kod di dalam kelas Bahasa Inggeris.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURE</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 English in Malaysia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Classroom</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Focus of This Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Problem Statement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Purpose</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Objectives</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Research Questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Significance of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Scope</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Theoretical Framework of This Study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Limitations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Relevant Terminologies of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11 Organization of Chapters</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction
2.1 English in Malaysian Education Context
2.2 Code Switching in a Second Language Classroom
2.3 Theoretical Framework on Reasons and Functions of Code Switching
   2.3.1 Reasons for Code Switching
   2.3.2 Functions of Code Switching
2.4 Studies Related to Code Switching
   2.4.1 Studies on Reasons for Code Switching of Non-Asian Context
   2.4.2 Studies on Reasons for Code Switching of Malaysian Context
   2.4.3 Studies on Functions for Code Switching of Non-Asian Context
   2.4.4 Studies on Functions for Code Switching of Malaysian Context
2.5 Summary

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction
3.1 Research Design
3.2 Sample
3.3 Instrument Involved in Data Collection
   3.3.1 Questionnaire
   3.3.2 Observation
   3.3.3 Interview
3.4 Procedure
3.5 Data Analysis
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

4.0.1 Questionnaire for Teachers

4.0.2 Observation for Teachers and Students

4.0.3 Interview for Teachers and Students

4.1 Analysis on Teachers

4.1.1 Analysis on Teachers’ Reasons of Code Switching

4.1.1.1 A Short Cut to Explain Task

4.1.1.2 Avoid Educational Inferiority of the Students

4.1.1.3 Understand Certain Words Better

4.1.1.4 Better Understanding on the Lesson

4.1.1.5 The Situation Where Instructor was Upset

4.1.1.6 Uneasy Using the Second Language

4.1.1.7 Other Reasons of Code Switching

4.1.1.8 Disagreement on Reasons of Code Switching

4.1.2 Analysis on Teachers’ Functions of Code Switching

4.1.2.1 Topic Switch

4.1.2.2 Repetitive Functions

4.1.2.3 Affective Functions

4.2 Analysis on Students

4.2.1 Analysis on Students’ Reasons of Code Switching

4.2.1.1 Educational Inferiority

4.2.1.2 Lack of Vocabulary
4.2.1.3 Understand Words Better 72
4.2.1.4 Improve Grammar 72
4.2.2 Analysis on Students’ Functions of Code Switching 73
  4.2.2.1 Floor-holding 73
  4.2.2.2 Equivalence 76
  4.2.2.3 Conflict control 78
  4.2.2.4 Reiterations 80
4.6 Discussions 83
4.7 Summary 87

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction 89
5.1 Summary of the Findings 89
5.2 Pedagogical Implications of the Study 92
5.3 Suggestions for Future Research 93
5.4 Conclusion 94
References 95
Appendices 100
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1  Analysis of Teachers’ Demographic Profile  47
Table 4.2  Teachers’ Questionnaire  48
Table 4.3  Findings on Functions of Code Switching by Teacher A, Teacher B and Teacher C  51
Table 4.4  Findings on Students’ Functions of Code Switching  52

LIST OF FIGURE

Figure 4.1  A Short Cut to Explain Task  55
Figure 4.2  Avoid Educational Inferiority of the Students  56
Figure 4.3  Understand Certain Words Better  57
Figure 4.4  Better Understanding on the Lesson  58
Figure 4.5  The Situation Where Instructor was Upset  59
Figure 4.6  Uneasy Using the Second Language  60
Figure 4.7  Other Reasons of Code Switching  61
Figure 4.8  Disagreement on Reasons of Code Switching  62
Figure 4.9  Topic Switch  63
Figure 4.10  Repetitive Functions  65
Figure 4.11  Affective Functions  67
Figure 4.12  Floor Holding  73
Figure 4.13  Equivalence  76
Figure 4.14  Conflict Control  78
Figure 4.15  Reiterations  80
Figure 5.1  Findings on Reasons and Functions of Code Switching among Teachers in an ESL Classroom  

Figure 5.2  Findings on Reasons and Functions of Code Switching among Students in an ESL Classroom
# LIST OF APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>Letter from the School Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Form 2 Topics from Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>Data Collections Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td>Students’ Sitting Arrangement in the Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Classroom Observation Chart for Teachers and Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Application for Permission to Collect Data from the School Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Sample of Consent Form for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>Sample of Consent Form for Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>Questionnaire for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>Sample of Findings of Questionnaire for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>Sample of Classroom Observation Dialogue between a Teacher and Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>List of Functions of Code Switching Detected in Teachers’ Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix M</td>
<td>List of Functions of Code Switching Detected in Students’ Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix N</td>
<td>Interview Questions for Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix O</td>
<td>Transcriptions of Interviews from Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix P</td>
<td>Interview Questions for Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Q</td>
<td>Transcriptions of Group Interviews with Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>