

# INTER-SENTENTIAL AND INTRA-SENTENTIAL CODE SWITCHING IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

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**Abstract:** Malaysians generally use two languages which are Malay and English in professional discourse. Bahasa Melayu or the Malay language is the national language of Malaysia and is used in formal discourse in government administration, while English is the nation's second language that is used in professional discourse in private organizations in Malaysia. Although the use of English in government administration has been a hotly debated topic, but in reality both languages are used interchangeably since many Malaysian professionals are bilinguals of Malay and English. This paper looks into two types of code-switching and how it is used in a Malaysian parliamentary debate. The findings revealed that inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching were used during the parliamentary debate due to social factors as well as linguistic elements.

**Keywords:** code switching, parliamentary debate, inter-sentential, intra-sentential

## 1. Introduction

### *Background of Issue*

Malaysia is a multilingual nation with a variety of languages used in discourse. Bahasa Malaysia or the Malay language is the national language that is predominantly used in professional discourse in government organizations nationwide. On the other hand, English is the second language of the nation which is widely used in professional discourse in private organizations. Other languages such as Mandarin, Tamil, Iban, Melanau, Hokkien and Cantonese are generally spoken in daily informal discourse. The use of English language and Malay language among professionals are common and at times both languages are used interchangeably in professional discourse which includes business documents, business meetings and even parliamentary debates. As stated in the Standing Orders of the Dewan Rakyat, the official language to be used is Bahasa Malaysia, but Tuan Yang Di-Pertua may permit the use of English Language. Most of the interactions and debates were conducted in Bahasa Malaysia. However code switching also occurred where Members of Parliament (MP) used both Malay and English in their speeches. Thus, code-switching is apparent in professional communication in Malaysia.

### *Objective of Study*

1. To analyse the types of code switching used in Malaysian Parliamentary debate.

### *Research Questions*

1. How is inter-sentential code-switching used during Malaysian Parliamentary debate?
2. How is intra-sentential code-switching used during Malaysian Parliamentary debate?

## **2. Problem Statement**

The use of English language at the workplace, especially in government administration has always been an issue that is hotly debated in Malaysia. Despite of opposing views on the use of English in government administration, Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye, the vice-chairman of the Malaysia Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) said that the ministries and other government agencies should start using English to ensure a more effective two-way communication in language (Muhammad Yusri, 2018).

Subsequently, this brings about the issue of Malay-English code-switching language in professional communication. In an early study on code-switching by Poplack (1980), it was discovered that bilinguals of varying abilities (both fluent and non-fluent) were found to produce code switches regularly in which less fluent bilinguals tended to switch at sentence or clause boundaries, while fluent bilinguals tended to switch within a sentence itself. Zirker (2007) explained that inter-sentential switching are language switches at phrasal, sentence, or discourse boundaries while intra-sentential switching involves a shift in language in the middle of a sentence that is usually performed without pause, interruption or hesitation. The use of inter-sentential code-switching can be influenced by social factors such as mood of the speaker, lack of equivalent terminology and to amplify and emphasize a point.

Meanwhile, intra-sentential code switching may involve linguistics elements like nouns, verbs and discourse markers. Therefore, this study aims to look at how inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching are used during a government administration parliamentary debate in Malaysia.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Inter-sentential Code-Switching**

Inter-sentential switching is a type of code-switching that occurs in two different sentences in which the first sentence is in full primary language (L1) and then followed by the second sentence in full second language (L2). Musyken (2011) defined inter-sentential switching as the code-switching that happens between two isolated sentences or two corresponding clauses that belongs to the same utterance. The study by Marzeih, Vigneswari and Shuh Jie (2016) showed that inter-sentential switching happens because of several reasons including to address different audiences, lack of the ability to use proper register, pragmatic reasons, to emphasize a certain point and mood of the speaker. Another study by Nur Syazwani and Marlyna (2014) showed that inter-sentential switching is used when the speaker wants to emphasise, clarify and to quote a statement. Furthermore, Poplack (2000) defined inter-sentential switching as code-switching that happens at the sentence or speech boundaries. The study by Mabule (2017) indicated that inter-sentential switching happens daily whether consciously or unconsciously in conversations due to lack of proper or equivalent terminology, to gain social acceptance, to elicit confirmation, to be understood better and to exclude people in conversations and to show ability of speaking more than one language. Therefore, inter-sentential switching occurs in two separate sentences in an utterance because the bilingual speaker lacks proper or equivalent lexical resource, wants to be understood better by the other party of similar language ability and wants to show belonging to a certain group.

## 2.2 Intra-sentential Code-Switching

Intra-Sentential code Switching is a type of code-switching. Yule (2014) defined it as a switching that occurs in a sentence where a word was switch to another or secondary language of the speaker. A study by Rasdi (2016) has identified that there are two patterns of Intra-Sentential Code Switching among Malays on their Facebook interactions; 1) Insertional Code-Switching and 2) Alternational Code-Switching. It was also found that there are six patterns of linguistics elements in the code switch samples which are Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverb, Conjunctions and Discourse Markers. Out of all six, Nouns recorded the highest percentage at 49.4%, followed by Verbs at 27%, Adjectives at 10.3%, Discourse Markers at 4.7%, Conjunctions at 4.5% and lastly Adverbs at 4.1%. Hidayat (2012) found 45% of the switching was instigated by real lexical needs, 40% was used for a certain topic while the other 5% was used for content clarifications. San (2009) stated that higher number of code switching and code mixing were recorded if there is a strong emotion when discussing a certain topic.

## 2.3 Summary of Past Studies

Code-switching appears in many forms which include borrowing or intra-sentential; using a single word from a different language but with similar grammatical usage as the primary language, calque; directly translating an expression from another language without observing the proper use of syntax, and inter-sentential; using an entire sentence or phrase from one language and putting it into the primary language (Brice & Brice, 2000; Hammink, 2000; Poplack, 1980) as cited in Hughes et al. (2006). Another study by Yusuf, Fata and Cynthia (2018) in their study of Indonesia-English code-switching found a list of four types of code-switching which included inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching, tag switching and continuity in code-switching.

As for code-switching in Malaysia, there are several reasons for bilingual speakers of Malay and English language to use code-switching in their conversation at the workplace. The findings of a study on Malaysian bilingual speakers by Marzeih, Vigneswari and Shuh Jie (2016) indicated that some of the motivation factors include the ability of both the speaker and listener to speak and understand more than one language, the need to show identity or belonging to a certain group, lack of registral competence, emphasizing a point, pragmatic reasons, semantic significance and addressing different audience are the underlying reasons to why bilingual speakers in Malaysia use code-switching in their discourse. According to a study done by Matiini (2017), the results showed that the participant code switch from English to Malay frequently than Mandarin. It was also found that the participant used inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching to code switch between English, Mandarin and Malay.

Overall, previous studies have suggested that code-switching happens naturally among bilingual and multilingual speakers. Therefore, in the context of this research, the Malaysian parliamentary members are all bilinguals and multi-linguals since they come from a multiracial background and thus are capable of code-switching between Malay and English effectively.

## 3. Methodology

The nature of this research is a qualitative study which aims to identify how code-switching is used in Malaysian Parliamentary debate. A qualitative research is a broad frame that consists of various approach and method including an analysis of text and images in which facts and hypothesis are drawn from (Ritchie et al, 2014). A content analysis was used to analyse a Parliamentary debate video with a duration of 1 hour and 3 minutes using the theoretical framework on code-switching by Hoffman (2014). The sample video was taken from an open database which is an official YouTube account that archives Malaysian Parliamentary Debates. The data is then analysed and compared with past studies on code-switching in professional communication. Findings of the data analysis are later discussed in the summary of findings in this research.

The researchers chose to use purposive sampling to choose the sample in this study. Purposive sampling is “the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses” (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2015). The sample of study was a Parliamentary Debate video that was taken from a Youtube channel. The chosen parliamentary session was held on the afternoon of 7th August 2018. The duration of the video was 1 hour and 3 minutes. In the Parliamentary debate video, the topic of discussion was mainly about Government Service Tax (GST) and Sales and Service Tax (SST). The researchers chose to use this sample due to the content which is high in code-switching.

The research instrument is a tool used by researchers when conducting research. The research instrument is used as the basis for obtaining data as required by the researcher to achieve the objective of the study. In this study, the researchers used the content analysis for analyze the data.

The researchers watched the video of Parliamentary debate in Youtube. Each researcher transcribed a portion from the video which added up to a transcription of 1 hour and 3 minutes worth of one afternoon session in the Parliament. The transcription was then analysed using a qualitative method.

The data from the video transcription was analysed using the theoretical framework on code-switching by Hoffman (2014). The subcategories and characteristics of each type of code-switching is drawn from the framework and later used to identify the type of code-switching available in the video transcription. Last but not least, the code-switching used during the parliamentary debate is taken out and analysed by comparing it to past literatures on code-switching.

#### 4. Findings

The findings will be presented in a form of answering the research questions of this study. The findings below will answer to the first research question; how is inter-sentential code-switching used during Malaysian Parliamentary debate?

Musyken (2011) defined inter-sentential switching as the code-switching that happens between two isolated sentences or two corresponding clauses that belongs to the same utterance. The use of inter-sentential code-switching can be influenced by social factors such as mood of the speaker, lack of equivalent terminology and to amplify and emphasize a point.

<b>Mood of the Speaker</b>
<p><b>Line 346-349:</b> Tuan Yang di-Pertua, Yang Berhormat Jelutong sahabat saya tetapi Yang Berhormat Jelutong ini sejak dia jadi Ahli Parlimen, dia sangat-sangat beria-ia desperate hendak jadi seperti mana mendiang Karpal Singh, Yang Berhormat Jelutong dulu ya. <i>My friend, I had the honor of being in this Dewan with Karpal Singh for many years. You are nowhere near Karpal Singh lah. Sit down.</i></p>

Table 4.1

The english code-switching in Table 4.1 happened because the speaker was emotional when he uttered the statement and possibly felt that by uttering the comment in English would better communicate what he wanted to say. This supports the study by Marzeih, Vigneswari and Shuh Jie (2016) which showed that inter-sentential switching happens because of several reasons including the speaker’s mood.

<b>Lack of equivalent terminology</b>
<b>Line 283-284:</b> Akan tetapi yang jelas di sini adalah apabila kita melihat kepada angka CPI daripada dahulu sampai ke hari ini, <i>it has always been, dengan izin, on the upward trend.</i>

Table 4.2

The English code switching in Table 4.2 took place in the clause boundary as a strategy to cope with the absence of an equal terminology in Malay that can be used to describe the matter discussed. This finding supports the study by Mabule (2017) which indicated that inter-sentential switching happens daily whether consciously or unconsciously in conversations due to lack of proper or equivalent terminology.

<b>To amplify and emphasize a point</b>
<b>Line 63-65:</b> Jadi, saya mohon satu ruling daripada Tuan Yang di-Pertua, dua-dua point of order ini, <i>because he cannot use such words and if, is he allowed to do it without apologizing and detracting, then we are setting a very dangerous precedence in the Dewan Rakyat.</i>

Table 4.3

The English code-switching in Table 4.3 occurred because the speaker wanted to magnify and highlight her point in the argument as to why she wants a ruling from the chairperson (the House Speaker). This supports the study by Nur Syazwani and Marlyna (2014) that intersentential switching is used when the speaker wants to emphasise a statement.

On the other hand, this section will answer the second research question; how is intra-sentential code-switching used during Malaysian Parliamentary debate?

Intra-sentential code switching happens as a speaker speaks in a certain language and then switched to another language in the same sentence (Yule, 2014). As code switch in general happens due to various reasons such as personalization of speech by a speaker, fulfilling communication function and others, there are a few parts of speech that are commonly code switched. Linguistics elements of nouns, verbs and discourse markers were among the commonly found to be code switch (Hidayat, 2012).

<b>Discourse Markers</b>
<b>Line 14-15:</b> Saya tidak kata apa-apa, Jelutong duduk diam. <i>In fact, the press has reported it correctly.</i> Yang Berhormat Beluran, tarik balik tuduhan itu

Table 4.4

Table 4.4 shows the usage of a discourse marker ‘in fact’, which was inserted by the speaker into his speech as he was showing a common expression of attitude. Hidayat (2012) found that the code switched discourse marker was used for content clarifications. This is shown as the speaker used the discourse marker, and then followed up with a supporting statement to defend himself.

<b>Nouns</b>
<u>Line 14-15:</u> Tuan Yang di-Pertua, <i>point of order</i> tadi.

Table 4.5

In the Dewan Rakyat, when an MP is giving a speech, the MP from opposing party would tend to interrupt the speech and cause distractions. In preventing these incidents, a ‘point of order’ will be raised to get the attention of the house Speaker, where he then would set a ruling on the MP that caused the distraction and then let the MP to continue debating. Now, despite having Bahasa Malaysia as the official language, these MPs tend to code switch and use ‘point of order’ as the switching was instigated by a real lexical need as shown in Table 4.5.

<b>Verbs</b>
<u>Line 14-15:</u> Akan tetapi setelah <i>zero rated ini GST</i> , harga barang di pasar borong meningkat

Table 4.6

Table 4.6 shows the usage of ‘zero rated GST’ which refers to the rate of GST which was brought down to 0% for a few months. Code switch occurred when a speaker want to talk about a particular topic (Hoffman, 1991) and the code switch in Table 4.6 occurred as the term has always been used by other MPs in their previous interactions in regards to the certain same topic.

## 5. Discussions

### 5.1. Summary of Findings

The findings of this study indicated that both inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching were used in the Malaysian Parliamentary Debate dated on 7th August 2018. Intersentential code-switching was used during the debate due to social factors such as mood of the speaker, lack of equivalent terminology and to amplify and emphasize a point. As for intrasentential code-switching, linguistic elements such as discourse markers, nouns and verbs were used during the intra-sentential switching. Thus, the use of English-Malay code-switching at sentence boundary and within a sentence are all present in the afternoon session of the Malaysian Parliamentary Debate dated on 7th August 2018.



## 5.2. Implication of study

Code switch has various functions depending on the context of the conversation between speakers. This study showed the pragmatic approach used by these MPs in their parliamentary speech to distinguish themselves with one another. The reason of this may vary as a speaker may code switch to increase a social distance by using complex English terms in their Malay speeches or decrease perceived difference between speakers by using common English terminology that could be understood by every MPs

## 5.3. Suggestion for Future Research

One suggestion for future research is to look at other types of code-switching that might be present in Malaysian parliamentary debates. Apart from that, future research on code-switching in Malaysian parliamentary debates can look at different topics discussed in the parliament such as issues on housing development, education and others.

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