

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**CODE SWITCHING AMONG PEERS
IN ORAL INTERACTIONS AT
THE WORKPLACE**

AMEER SYAFIQ RHYME

MA

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of the requirements for the degree of
Master of English for Professional Communication

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ABSTRACT

This research is an investigation of the use of code-switching (CS) in the oral interaction of peers at a Malaysian workplace. It particularly wanted to determine the reasons and the extent in which CS is used in a formal work setting. A number of CS research has been conducted locally on informal everyday conversations, but CS at work remains scarce. To address this gap in local CS literature, this study therefore invited participants from three business-oriented departments of three different organizations to contribute meaningful data by way of a survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The two survey findings most relevant to CS at work refer to firstly, how it is most likely used by peers to narrow their personal space when interacting with other professionals thus making them appear as more pleasant co-workers and secondly, how CS is most effectively used to present ideas and argue cases in a friendlier work atmosphere. The interview confirms the accommodating role of CS in promoting solidarity at work through oral communication. This study also highlights a significant finding in relation to the three known levels of CS currently used at the workplace. Peers in the local workplace naturally and effortlessly switched between English and Malay at word, phrase and sentence levels interchangeably and equally, thus establishing a new multilevel use of CS at the workplace. The implication drawn from the findings of this study is that CS is not a hindrance to workplace communication and is in fact effectively used by peers to smoothen exchanges which could have otherwise been problematic due to misunderstanding and miscomprehension of intended meanings of workplace tasks.

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