



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**CODE-SWITCHING IN TEACHING PRACTICE: THE USE OF  
CODE-SWITCHING AMONG UNIMAS FOURTH YEAR TESL  
STUDENTS**

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## BORANG PENYERAHAN TESIS

Judul: CODE-SWITCHING IN TEACHING PRACTICE: THE USE OF  
CODE-SWITCHING AMONG UNIMAS FOURTH YEAR TESL STUDENTS

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**CODE-SWITCHING IN TEACHING PRACTICE: THE USE OF CODE-SWITCHING AMONG UNIMAS FOURTH YEAR TESL STUDENTS**

by

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This final year project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
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## ABSTRACT

### CODE-SWITCHING IN TEACHING PRACTICE: THE USE OF CODE-SWITCHING AMONG UNIMAS FOURTH YEAR TESL STUDENTS

Then Chen On

This study aims to study the use of code-switching by UNIMAS fourth year TESL students who underwent teaching practice in their English lessons. It looks into their perceptions towards the use of code-switching and the code-switching functions in their English lesson. The findings indicated the teachers' perceptions towards code-switching influenced their frequency of code-switching in class. Teachers with positive perception towards code-switching code-switched more often in class and vice versa. Six functions of code-switching in the English lesson identified were **revoicing**, **calling attention**, **personalization**, **resource**, **need analyst**, and **communication facilitator** (Lin, n.d.; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The most common function of code-switching in the English lesson was acting as **resource** (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Seven out of nine sample teachers code-switched in their English lessons suggested teachers' code-switching in the English lesson is a common phenomenon. Therefore, code-switching should not be viewed as interference in the English lesson. Instead, it should be viewed as an alternative approach or technique to the teaching of English. Teachers code-switched in the English lesson to fulfil six code-switching functions in the English lesson. Teachers could consider the different functions of code-switching in the English lesson and utilize it as an approach to teaching English or to add to the variety of teaching techniques available to them.



## ABSTRAK

### CODE-SWITCHING IN TEACHING PRACTICE: THE USE OF CODE-SWITCHING AMONG UNIMAS FOURTH YEAR TESL STUDENTS

Then Chen On

Kajian ini bertujuan mengkaji betapa meluasnya penggunaan pertukaran bahasa oleh pelajar TESL tahun keempat dari UNIMAS yang telah melalui latihan mengajar mereka dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris mereka. Kajian ini melihat persepsi guru-guru ini terhadap penggunaan pertukaran bahasa oleh guru dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris mereka dan fungsi-fungsi pertukaran bahasa ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan persepsi guru-guru tersebut terhadap pertukaran bahasa dalam kelas mempengaruhi frekuensi penggunaan pertukaran bahasa dalam kelas mereka. Persepsi yang positif terhadap penggunaan pertukaran bahasa menyebabkan lebih banyak pertukaran bahasa dan sebaliknya dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris mereka. Enam fungsi pertukaran bahasa dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris yang dikenalpasti termasuk **revoicing**, **calling attention**, **personalization**, **resource**, **need analyst**, dan **communication facilitator** (Lin, n.d.; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Fungsi utama pertukaran bahasa dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris adalah **resource** (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Tujuh daripada sembilan sample guru membuat pertukaran bahasa dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris mereka menunjukkan fenomena guru membuat pertukaran bahasa dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris adalah fenomena yang biasa. Oleh itu, pertukaran bahasa dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris tidak sepatutnya dianggap sebagai penghalang kepada proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Sebaliknya, ia sepatutnya dilihat sebagai alternatif kepada teknik dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggeris. Para guru membuat pertukaran bahasa untuk memenuhi enam fungsi pertukaran bahasa dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris. Para guru boleh mempertimbangkan fungsi pertukaran bahasa ini dan menggunakannya dengan sebaik mungkin sebagai teknik dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggeris atau mempelbagaikan variasi teknik pengajaran yang dimiliki oleh mereka.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
UNIMAS	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

## **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of Research Problem**

#### **1.1.1 Setting the Research Problem**

The Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) programme is unique in terms of the training provided for its students. With the exposure to the monolingual principle of language teaching and the latest methodologies such as Communicative Language Teaching, TESL graduates are faced with the outstanding feat of teaching students ranging from high English proficiency to those with limited exposure to English language. Under such circumstances, some teachers are thrown into situations where they are unable to fully utilise the methodologies that they have been trained with. Some of them may opt to code-switch to ensure a better understanding of the instruction among such students. This practice goes against the monolingual principle of language teaching that teachers were exposed to in their training.

In countries where English is taught as a second language, code-switching is not an unusual phenomenon among students (Penaflorida, 1996). In Malaysia,

bilingualism and code-switching appears to be a norm since most people speak two or more languages at home, in school and elsewhere. TESL students may not be able to isolate themselves from such social norm. The question of whether teachers should code-switch in their lessons has been a constant debate (Reynold, 1928, Saer, 1963 cited in Grosjean, 1982; Ben-Zeef, 1977, Bialystok, 1987, Doyle, 1978, Ianco-Worrall, 1973, Pearl & Lambert, 1962 cited in De Klerk, 1995; Penaflorida, 1996). The question now is no longer on whether English teachers should code-switch in English lessons but rather to examine the functions of code-switching in order to determine the best way to respond to it in the classroom (Penaflorida, 1996).

The monolingual principle of teaching a target language with the target language is a summarised view of many scholars in the teaching field of the twentieth century (Howatt, 1984 cited in Lin, n.d.). There is considerable amount of literature available that supports the monolingual principle to teaching a language (Willis, 1981 cited in Lin, n.d.; Swain, 1982 cited in Lin, n.d.; Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982, cited in Lin, n.d.).

### **1.1.2 Code-switching in Multilingual Communities**

Code-switching is a phenomenon of switching from one language or code to another language or code in the same written or oral discourse (Gumperz, 1982; Nunan & Carter, 2001). It occurs when a bilingual individual alternates between two different languages when communicating with another bilingual person that shares the same knowledge of the languages used (Crystal, 1987 cited in Skiba, 1997).

A bilingual is a person who is capable of at least communicating in both the first language and a second language to a certain extent (Skiba, 1997). This includes people who are able to use a second language but have not done so for quite some time creating what is called a dormant language phenomenon who makes irregular use of the second language, and those who have considerable

skills and proficiency in the second language (Crystal, 1987 cited in Skiba, 1997). Code-switching may happen anytime and anywhere where appropriate. David (2003) claimed that code-switching is not only a norm but also an integral part of Malaysian speech style.

According to David (2003), code-switching is common among professionals, young adults and even children as young as the age of four. Some of the most common reasons for code-switching is to exert power and indicate regional alliances, and as a tool in aiding meaning making (David, 2003).

### **1.1.3 Code-switching by English Teachers**

Code-switching goes against the monolingual principle and Communicative Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Lin, n.d.) that stresses on using the target language only in class. It also opposes the communicative competence that emphasises on the knowledge and ability of the target language as depicted by the Communicative Language Teaching (Hymes, 1972 cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Nonetheless, there are still English teachers who practise code-switching in the English classrooms despite their exposure to the monolingual principles of teaching English and the Communicative Language Teaching approach in their TESL training.

Code-switching among teachers in English lessons is common. However, there may be a need to further understand the nature of such occurrence. It is necessary to examine the functions of code-switching to determine the best way to respond to code-switching in the classroom (Penaflorida, 1996). This is because despite it going against the pedagogical norm, code-switching still holds a role in the teaching and learning process. The benefits of code-switching in assisting students' learning are discussed extensively in the literature (Ben-Zeef, 1977, Bialystok, 1987, Doyle, 1978, Ianco-Worrall, 1973, Pearl & Lambert, 1962 cited in De Klerk, 1995; Perozzi, 1985). Some of the functions code-switching support in the classroom will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Two.

## 1.2 Statement of Problem

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) is one of the many universities in Malaysia that offers Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) programme. In this programme, TESL students are exposed to various teaching methodologies in their training. However, the methodologies and language teaching principles learnt are not always suitable for all teaching situations. There are certain cases whereby the monolingual principle of language teaching and Communicative Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Lin, n.d.) are not suitable for the teaching scenario. In cases where students have low level of English proficiency to comprehend English input or students being too reluctant to participate in learning because they feel incompetent in the English language learning environment are common encounters for almost all English teachers. What should the English teacher do under such circumstances? Would they code-switch to compensate for the weaknesses in the methodologies and principle of language teaching that they have learnt? Or could it be due to the situation they are in and the students who they teach?

There are also a considerable amount of literature that maintained code-switching by teachers in their lessons have negative effects on language development, educational attainment, cognitive growth and intelligence of students (Reynold, 1928, Saer, 1963 cited in Grosjean, 1982). However, there are also a considerable amount of literature that claimed code-switching by teachers during lessons have positive effects on the learning process (Ben-Zeef, 1977, Bialystok, 1987, Doyle, 1978, Ianco-Worrall, 1973, Pearl & Lambert, 1962 cited in De Klerk, 1995). With such amount of literature supporting code-switching in the classroom and the fact that it is still practiced in teachers' lessons, it suggests that there are certain valid functions to the use of code-switching within the classroom.

Code-switching in class helps students to understand, motivates them to learn, helps maintain discipline, helps to give individual help to especially weak

students, saves time, and helps students enrich their general knowledge (Ho & Van Naerssen, 1986 cited in Lin, n.d.). It may also fulfill the different role-relationships played by the teacher and the students within the classroom (Lin, n.d.). Choi and Kuipers (2003) suggested code-switching as a tool to fulfill discursive functions such as calling attention, revoicing, clarification, objectivization and personalization. Mattson and Burenhult (1999) cited in Sert (2005) mentioned the similar finding as Choi and Kuipers (2003) but look at the functions of code-switching from three different categories (Sert, 2005). They were topic shift, affective shift and repetitive shift (Mattson & Burenhult, 1999 cited in Sert, 2005). Thus, there are a considerable amount of possible functions held by code-switching within the classroom.

Despite the various studies done on code-switching in native language, second language and foreign language setting, most of the studies were carried out on code-switching for general communication purposes and code-switching among students as a communication strategy. There is little research done on code-switching among English teachers in an English lesson. Besides that, there is also little research that study how widespread is the use of code-switching among English teachers. As such, this study will examine the use of code-switching among English teachers in the English lesson.

There is a need to examine the functions of code-switching to determine the best way to respond to it in the classroom (Penaflorida, 1996). This study will investigate the use of code-switching by UNIMAS TESL pre-service teachers who underwent teaching practice in the English lesson. It will look into their perceptions on code-switching in the English lesson. It will also examine the possible functions of code-switching among these trainee teachers in the English lessons.



### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to investigate the use of code-switching by UNIMAS fourth year TESL students who underwent teaching practice in their English lessons. This study has two objectives which include identifying:

- 1) What are the perceptions of the UNIMAS TESL pre-service teachers who underwent teaching practice towards the use of code-switching among teachers in an English lesson?
- 2) Do they code-switch in their English lessons? If yes, what are the functions of code-switching prevalent among these UNIMAS TESL pre-service teachers in the English lessons?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that the findings of this study can provide useful information on the use of code-switching by UNIMAS TESL pre-service teachers who underwent teaching practice in a Malaysian English classroom and act as reference for the future development of TESL programmes. It is also hoped that the findings can provide a better understanding of the going against the pedagogical norm of English language lesson phenomena among UNIMAS pre-service teachers who underwent teaching practice; using the target language as much as possible to maximize the exposure of the target language as well as the gap between theory; the monolingual principle and the practice; the bilingual principle (Lin, n.d.). This study also hopes to provide some useful information in assisting English teachers in their teaching through the use of code-switching.

### **1.5 Operational Definition of Terms**

Code-switch is a phenomenon of switching from one language to another language in the same written or oral discourse (Gumperz, 1982; Nunan & Carter, 2001).

## **CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a wide range of literature regarding code-switching and the effects of code-switching by teachers in their lessons. It will also discuss some of the function of code-switching in the classroom. In addition, some of the local and foreign studies will also be included in this chapter.

### **2.1 Overview of previous research**

There have been various studies done on code-switching. Among those studies, some have tried to identify the possible functions of code-switching among teachers. Scotton (1983) cited in Lin (n.d.) discussed the possible set of rights and obligations of teachers in the classroom during their interaction with the students in their English lessons (Scotton, 1983 cited in Lin, n.d.). Breen and Cadlin (1980) cited in Richards and Rodgers (1986) further suggested some of these possible sets of rights and obligations of the teacher (Breen & Cadlin, 1980 cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986). For example, in Communicative Language Teaching, the teacher has to take up the roles of a communication facilitator

among all participants of the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and text, and act as independent participant within the teaching and learning group (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The teacher's role can later be divided into smaller categories either as a resource organizer or as a resource himself, a guide within the classroom procedure and activities, and a researcher and learner that provides the appropriate knowledge and abilities (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Other roles include the teacher acting as a "needs analyst, counselor, and group process manager" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p.77). These indicate some of the possible functions of a teacher have to play in the English classroom.

Gumperz (1982) on the other hand looked into the discursive and pragmatics function of code-switching. Gumperz (1982) argued that a teacher code-switched in order to fulfill certain discursive and pragmatics function in the classroom (Lin, n.d.; Choi & Kuipers, 2003). Five discursive functions identified by Gumperz (1982) included calling attention, revoicing, clarification, objectivization, and personalization (Lin, n.d.; Choi & Kuiper, 2003).

Code-switching might also be the result of the conflicting demand within a teacher of wanting to teach the subject matter [in this case, it is English language] and at the same time trying to ensure the comprehension of the students (Lin, 1990). Zantella (1981) cited in Martin-Jones (1998) claimed that a teacher occasionally switches to the language choice of students for comprehension purposes (Zantella, 1981 cited in Martin-Jones, 1998).

Other studies discussed the possible positive and negative effects of code-switching in a lesson. Montague (1998) cited in Montague and Meza-Zaragosa (1999) argued teachers may be tempted to code-switch important information such as instructions and announcements (Montague, 1998 cited in Montague & Meza-Zaragosa, 1999). Ho (1985) cited in Lin (n.d.) claimed an English teacher that supported the monolingual principle abandoned the monolingual principle and ended up preferring code-switching (Ho, 1985 cited in Lin, n.d.). Other

studies maintained code-switching by teachers in their lessons had negative effects on language development, educational attainment, cognitive growth and intelligence of students (Reynold, 1928, Saer, 1963 cited in Grosjean, 1982).

There are also studies that claimed code-switching by teachers during lessons had positive effects on the learning process (Ben-Zeef, 1977, Bialystok, 1987, Doyle, 1978, Ianco-Worrall, 1973, Pearl & Lambert, 1962 cited in De Klerk, 1995). Perozzi (1985) supported this claim and argued the use of first language is able to help students' target language learning.

## **2.2 Code-switching**

Code-switching is a phenomenon of switching from one language to another language in the same written or oral discourse (Gumperz, 1982; Nunan & Carter, 2001). It occurs when a bilingual individual alternates between two different languages when communicating with another bilingual person that shares the same knowledge of the language used (Crystal, 1987 cited in Skiba, 1997). Thus code-switching may only occur if both the speaker and the listener are bilinguals who share the same knowledge of the language used. A bilingual is a person who is capable of at least communicating in both the first language and a second language to a certain extent (Skiba, 1997). This includes people who are able to use a second language but have not done so for quite some time creating what is called a dormant language phenomenon that makes irregular use of the second language, and those who have considerable skills and proficiency in the second language (Crystal, 1987 cited in Skiba, 1997).

## **2.3 Code-switching in Malaysia**

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multilingual country with co-existence of languages like Malay, English, Mandarin, Tamil and a variety of dialects (David, 2003). Majority of Malaysians have exposure to more than one language and have these languages at their disposal; Malaysian ethnic groups like Malay, Chinese

and Indian speakers are faced with options of making significant and meaningful language choices in their interaction in both inter-group and intra-group interaction (David, 1999, Jamaliah Mohd. Ali, 1995, Le Vassan, 1996, Morraais, 1991 cited in David, 2003).

The use of code-switching is thus long dominant in both formal and informal settings by professionals, young adults and even children at the age of four (David, 2003). It is no longer just a norm for Malaysians to code-switch but rather code-switching itself has become a part of the Malaysian unique speech style (David, 2003).

#### 2.4 Types of Code-switching

Cook (1991) cited in Skiba (1997) stated that code-switching among bilinguals in a normal conversation may consist of up to eighty four percent (84 percent) single word switches, ten percent (10 percent) phrase switches, and six percent (6 percent) clause switching (Cook, 1991 cited in Skiba, 1997).

This is further supported by Chengappa, Daniel & Bhat (2004) that suggest there are three levels of code-switching:

- 1) **Word level code-switching,**
- 2) **Phrase level code-switching,**
- 3) **Syntactic level code-switching,**

(Chengappa, Daniel & Bhat, 2004)

**Word level code-switching** happens when a sentence in one language has a word substituted with a word from another language (Chengappa, Daniel & Bhat, 2004). This can be observed in the following examples of code-switching between English and Malayam language:

“ **Original sentence** : Bus *vanilla*

**English translation** : Bus *has not come*

**Original sentence :** One boy and girl standing under the tree, *appam* crow is sitting on the tree.

**English translation:** One boy and girl are standing under the tree. *Then* a crow is sitting on the tree.”

(Chengappa, Daniel & Bhat, 2004)

**Phrase level code-switching** happens when a sentence in one language has a string of words substituted with a string of words from another language (Chengappa, Daniel & Bhat, 2004). This can be observed from the following example of code-switching between English and Malayam language:

“ **Original sentence** : *randò pilla : rò pinnò* wife is there

**English translation** : *Two children then* wife is there

**Original sentence** : The and .... of the box ..... send of the .....

*sarija : vunilla* anottò

**English translation** : The and ... of the box ..... send of the ..... *It is not coming*”

(Chengappa, Daniel & Bhat, 2004)

**Syntactic level code-switching** happens when there is a use of “the grammar of one language with the lexical item of the other language” (Chengappa, Daniel & Bhat, 2004, p.72). This happens when the grammatical rule of one language is applied while the lexical item of another language is used instead. The following example shows how the syntactic structure of Malayam language is applied while the lexical items are in English:

“**Original sentence** : Yesterday you saw a boy that was my brother.

**Malayalam equivalent** : *innale ni: kanda a:nkutti enteð saho:daranañ*

**Correct translation** : The boy whom you saw yesterday is my brother.

**Original sentence** : One who eating salt, he will drink water.

**Malayalam equivalent** : uppu tinnunnaven vellam kudikkum

**Correct translation** : One who eats salt shall drink water.

**Original sentence** : I was going the house that is in this way.

**Malayalam equivalent** : na:n po:ja vidð e: varijila:nð

**Correct translation** : The house where I went to is in this way”

(Chengappa, Daniel & Bhat, 2004)

There are also literature that discussed code-switching in terms of “**situational code-switching**” that involves the conversants code-switching from one language to another language according to the situation disregarding any change of topic, and the “**metaphorical code-switching**” that involves the conversants code-switching from one language to another language due to a change in topic of communication (Wardhaugh, 1992). For example, while the previous studies mentioned looked at code-switching from the linguistic point of view, these studies looked at code-switching from the social-linguistic perspective. This would mean that speakers of the language code-switch according to the situation and context of the conversation (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Auer, 1998).

## **2.5 Positive Effects of Code-switching by Teachers in the Classroom**

Studies have been done to look into the possible implications of teachers’ code-switching in the classroom. While some of these studies claimed code-switching to be beneficial for learning (Ben-Zeef, 1977, Bialystok, 1987, Doyle, 1978, Ianco-Worrall, 1973, Pearl & Lambert, 1962 cited in De Klerk, 1995; Perozzi, 1985), others claimed it to be disruptive to students’ learning (Reynold, 1928, Saer, 1963 cited in Grosjean, 1982).

There are a number of studies that argued code-switching by teachers can assist the learning process (Ben-Zeef, 1977, Bialystok, 1987, Doyle, 1978, Ianco-Worrall, 1973, Pearl & Lambert, 1962 cited in De Klerk, 1995; Perozzi, 1985). For instance, Perozzi (1985) argued that the use of students' first language by the teacher can help students to learn the target second language.

Perozzi (1985) conducted a research on vocabulary learning of six children. The children were engaged in the learning task of learning unfamiliar vocabulary items presented in Spanish and English. Under the first condition, the subjects were taught the receptive vocabulary in the first language followed by the second language while under the second condition, the receptive vocabulary was taught in the second language followed by the first language to the subjects. The results indicated that when the words were taught in the first language followed by the second language, the subjects learned both the first language and the second language faster as compared to the words being taught in the second language followed by the first language (Perozzi, 1985). With this, Perozzi concluded that the use of first language in the teaching of a second language might be able to assist students' learning of the target second language (Perozzi, 1985).

## **2.6 Negative Effects of Code-switching**

Montague (1998) cited in Montague and Zaragosa (1999) argued that code-switching might result in the teacher being tempted to codes-switch for important information in class such as announcements and directions and end up abandoning the monolingual principle (Montague, 1998 cited in Montague & Zaragosa, 1999). The use of code-switching by teachers might end up invalidating the second language of students rather than helping them to learn (Montague & Zaragosa, 1999).