

## Code-Mixing in Sabah and Sarawak English Short Stories

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### ABSTRACT

This research delves into the phenomenon of code-mixing as observed in a carefully selected corpus of English short stories from Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia. The investigation encompasses an in-depth analysis of the various displays of code-mixing present in these literary works, while also offering insights into the underlying motivations for code-mixing occurrences. A total of 20 short stories were selected from the anthologies "Chronicles of KK" and "Short Stories from Sarawak: Death of a Longhouse & Other Stories." Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study draws upon theoretical frameworks provided by Musyken (2000) and Hoffman (1991) to scrutinize the linguistic data. The research discerns two prominent types of code-mixing, namely insertion and alternation, with insertion emerging as the predominant form, notably incorporating lexical elements from the local and Indigenous languages of Sabah and Sarawak. The findings illuminate that code-mixing is strategically employed in these narratives to address specific thematic content, enhance comprehensibility for the interlocutor, signify group identity, facilitate repetition for clarification, and serve as a means of interjection. This study contributes to a richer understanding of the intricate dynamics of code-mixing in the literary context of these regions.

Keywords: Code-mixing, Sabah, Sarawak, short stories

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### INTRODUCTION

Code-mixing is a common occurrence in a multilingual setting. It is defined as the practice of switching from one language to another in the same sentence without affecting the meaning and occurs when words, affixes, phrases, and clauses are used in the same sentence and in more than one language at the same time (Novianti & Said, 2021; Yao, 2011).

Scholars have identified several reasons as to why speakers tend to code mix. Saville-Troike (1986, as cited in Luke, 2015) stated that speakers code mix to strengthen or soften request or command, due to lexical need, or to exclude other people when a comment is intended for only a limited audience. Hoffman (1991), on the hand, stated seven reasons as to why people code mix, including talking about a particular topic, quoting somebody else, being emphatic about something, interjection, repetition used for clarification, intention of clarifying the speech content for interlocutor, and expressing group identity. Code mixing is also often used to overcome communication difficulties such as misunderstanding or misinterpretation (Luke, 2015). In this sense, code-mixing can assist interlocutors who lack vocabulary in both their first and second languages.

Code-mixing is not only limited to verbal everyday spoken communication but may occur in written forms of communication (Yuanita & Sumardi, 2018). Code mixing in written communication, in this case, fictional narratives such as novels, short stories, scripts and even poetry seems to be the norm especially in multilingual communities. Several studies done on fictional narratives such as studies done on novels by Siregar et. al (2018), Hasibuan and Saragih (2019), Meigasuri and Soethama (2020), Vanessa et. al (2021), Larassati and Suyudi (2021) revealed that code mixing is found in these creative works.

The reasons that code mixing is used in these works are not as different as the reasons they are used in verbal communication. These include expression of group identity, talking of a particular topic, intention of clarifying speech content for interlocutor, repetition of clarification, interjection and showing empathy as well as for lexical needs, to soften and strengthen the request or command as well as to expressing intimacy (Hasibuan & Saragih, 2019; Larassati & Suyudi, 2021; Vanessa et. al., 2021)

In Malaysia, most studies on code mixing in creative writings have focused on code mixing between the four main languages – English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil. The number of studies on code-mixing in the other languages, especially the Indigenous languages of Sabah and Sarawak is still lacking (Martin, 2005), and these mainly focused on code-mixing in spoken communication (Salleh et al., 2022; Stephen, Osup & Bakar, 2017). Hashim (2007) stated that the use of code-mixing enables the speaker to express his or her cultural identity when writing Malaysian English creative writing. This is because some of the lexical items from local languages describing food, kinship and cultural expressions do not have English equivalents. Therefore, code-alternation and collocation of local words with English words could be found in these creative writings.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate the phenomenon of code-mixing in selected English short stories from Sabah and Sarawak by exploring the types of code-mixing used in these stories and by identifying the reasons for these code-mixing. Creative writings and literary works are a mirror of society (Kuswanto et. al., 2018). They are the author’s response to the social reality encountered (Sangidu, 2005) and symbolises a reality of segments of the people who live between cultures and languages as literary language actualizes bilingual or bicultural societies (Torres, 2007).

## METHOD OF STUDY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyse the data derived from 20 selected English short stories from Sabah and Sarawak. These short stories are taken from two anthologies, “Chronicles of KK” and “Short Stories from Sarawak: Death of a Longhouse & other stories”. “Chronicles of KK” was written by several Sabahan writers as well as authors who are not Sabahan but wrote about Sabah. It contained 20 short stories based on Kota Kinabalu, Sabah and was edited by Ann Lee. “Short Stories from Sarawak: Death of a Longhouse & other stories”, is a compilation of 35 short stories written by Kuching born, Cecilia Ong.

In this study, only ten short stories from each book were selected. The stories chosen for this study were the ones which featured code-mixing languages of Sabah and Sarawak only.

The code-mixing occurrences in the short stories were manually highlighting and then listed. To analyse the data, Musyken’s (2000) types of code-mixing and Hoffman’s (1991) reasons for code-mixing were used in this study. After identifying the words, phrases and sentences which contained code-mixing occurrences, they were then categorised based on Musyken’s (2000) types of code mixing as well as Holmes’ (2008) reasons for code mixing. Holmes’ (2008) reasons for code mixing was then used to identify the reasons for the occurrence of code mixing in the stories after determining the types of code mixing.

### Types of code mixing

According to Musyken (2000), there are three types of code-mixing, which are insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalisation.

Insertion is when the lexical item of one language is inserted into the structure of another language. In Figure 1, “a” & “b” are word(s) or constituent of “A” and “B” languages correspondingly. The word (constituent) “b” is inserted into structure of “A” language.

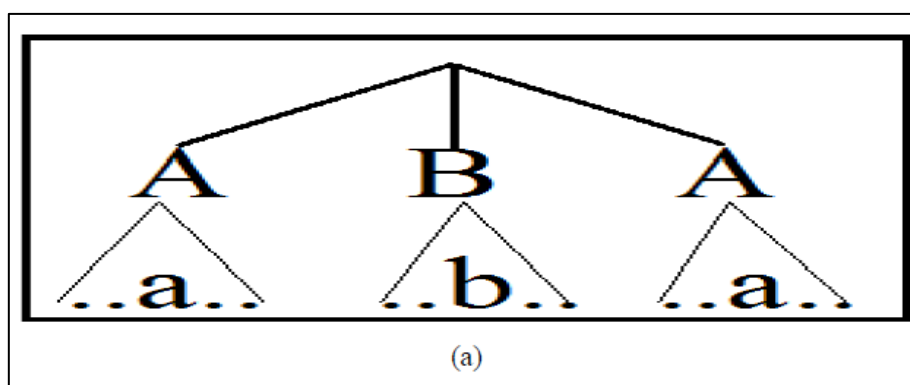


Figure 1. The pattern of insertion code-mixing