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ANALYSIS OF TYPES OF CODE SWITCHING AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN SABAH MALAYSIA

Johan Severinus Tati¹, Luke Kenny Doring^{2*} and Suthagar Narasuman³

^{1,3} Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam, MALAYSIA

² Kolej Komuniti Kuching, Kuching, MALAYSIA

*Corresponding author: luke@kkkg.edu.my

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Abstract: *This study aims to describe the occurrence of code switching in the spoken language of Community College students in Sabah, Malaysia. More specifically, this study investigates the types of code switching production in a multilingual ESL classroom setting. All the students are from different ethnic groups in Sabah such as Kadazan, Dusun, Bajau, Murut, Rungus, and Lundayeh. They conversed in their mother tongue proficiently. The students were sampled purposively for this study. This study employed a qualitative design and the data were obtained from the interviews of ten Community College students. The interviews were transcribed and analysed thematically according to the types of code switching by Poplack (1980). The finding reveals that the students employed the three types of code switching: inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag switching. The insertion of single-word or multi-words occurred in all types of code switching. Sabah Malay dialect was commonly used in the code switching. The Sabah Malay dialect was found dominantly used in all the types of code switching among the Community College students. Although the students were from a different linguistics background, the Sabah Malay dialect is still the choice for them to communicate and interact among themselves in the multilingual ESL classroom setting.*

Keywords: code switching, multilingual ESL classroom, ESL classroom setting.

1. Introduction

Sabah is located at the Borneo island which the second largest state in Malaysia. Sabah is a home for 32 ethnic groups including Dusun, Kadazan, Murut, Rungus, and Bajau. Among other populace are Malays, Indian, Chinese and immigrants from the Philippines and Indonesia. The richness of culture, ethnic languages, and socio background, multilingual community environment is realistic with authentic uniqueness. The sharing of social-economic, enterprises, education opportunity, and interethnic marriages enhance the visibility of multilingual speakers among the communities in Sabah. Meanwhile, the multilingual languages in Malaysia and Sabah mainly made up of plurality of ethnic groups, cultures and languages. It is common for the people in Sabah to speak in other languages besides the mother tongue, national language, other dialects or languages during the communication in society. The multilingual environment nurtures the code switching phenomena naturally in every edge of interaction amongst the communities regardless of gender, age, status and society.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Code Switching

Code switching phenomenon is observed as the shifting from one code to another language code during interaction which commonly used by multilingual people (Wardhaugh, 2006). It also emerges as a new language variety for multilingual countries (Rosario, 2019). Many researchers have given varieties of definitions for code switching. As defined by (Gumperz, Cook-Gumperz, & Gumperz, 1982), code switching is the juxtaposition of two grammatical systems or sub-systems. Meanwhile, Poplack (2001) defined code switching as the mixing of codes by bilinguals or multilingual of two or more languages in a discourse with a change on a topic or interlocutor. In sociolinguistic perspective, code switching is a common linguistic outcome in language contact of multilingual communities (Rusmawaty, D.,2018) and it functions to fulfil the relational and referential functions of language that amounts to effective communication and interlingual unity (Muthusamy, 2010).

2.2 Types of Code Switching

Code switching has been described in three different perspectives; grammatical, sociolinguistic and interactional. Linguists divided code switching into three types of categories in terms of grammatical perspectives (Poplack, 1908., Romaine, 1995 and Appel & Musyken, 2006). The three types of code switching are; inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching and tag switching.

2.3 Inter-sentential Code Switching

Inter-sentential code-switching is the second type of code-switching identified by Poplack (1980). This particular type of code-switching described a switch of language at sentence boundary or between the sentences. It occurs in one sentence or part of the sentence in a language and the other following part in another language (Romaine, 1989). In inter-sentential switch, the alteration occurs at clause or sentence level where the sentences or the clause is in one language or another language. It may occur between speech turn where the utterance certain to the rules of the both languages. So Poplack (1980) described that inter-sentential code-switching requires a high degree of proficiency in both languages than tag switching. An example of inter-sentential code-switching in Sabah is “I quit my job since last month, dia tidak bagi tau kau?”. “dia tidak bagi tau kau” means “he did not tell you”. The sentence should be read “I quit my job since last month, didn’t he tell you?”. The second sentence uses Malay language while the former is in English.

2.4 Intra-sentential Code Switching

Poplack (1980) and Appel & Musyken (2006) argue that intra-sentential code switching refers to the switch from one language to another in a sentence that involves the syntactic units of words, phrases or clauses. In inter-sentential code switching, the language switch is occurred at the sentence boundaries (Rusmawaty, D.,2018 and Koban, D.,2013). Intra-sentential code-switching is the third type of code-switching identified by Polack (1980). This type of code-switching refers to the switch within a sentence. It is accurate to mention that the switch to another language occur within clause boundary or within the word boundary. This phenomenon requires speaker fluency in both languages. As mentioned by (Romaine, 1989) intra-sentential type of code-switching is risky because it can violate the syntactic rules of the language therefore it is often avoided even by fluent multilingual speakers. Intra-sentential code-switching can be regarded as the highest syntactic risk since only speaker with greatest fluency on both languages can perform this type of code-switching with violating the language rules of grammar. An example of inter-sentential code-switching in Sabah is “The flowers are so olumis here”. “Olumis” means “beautiful” in English. The sentence should be “The flowers are so beautiful here”. A Kadazandusun word is embedded in the sentence.

2.5 Tag-switching

Tag switching includes the insertion of tag or exclamation in a language in the sentences. It occurs in other languages too. These types of switching refer to the addition of tag that a speaker utters easily and constitute freely. Poplack (1980) stated that tag switching involves the interjections, fillers, tags and idiomatic expression, which can be produced in second language (L2) and requires minimal knowledge of grammar of that language. This means, when a speaker produce tag switching it does not break the rules of grammar of the language. An example of tag switching used in Sabah is “You can come to my house anytime bah”. “Bah” is a particle widely used in among local Sabah people in their colloquial speech. The tag “bah” is always used in informal conversation context and normally occur in clause-final position in a sentence.

Code switching has widespread its intelligibility in vast dimensions of settings ranging from interaction, media, business, politics, and education, especially in the ESL classroom. The multicultural and multilingual background of students in Sabah, attribute the code switching occurrence in most of the ESL classrooms. In language classroom, it becomes the major aspects of the multilingual development process. There are many studies have been conducted to describe the types of code switching produced by the multilingual students in ESL classroom settings (Azlan, N. M. N. I., & Narasuman, S.,2013; Gulzar, Koban, D.,2013; M. A., Farooq, M. U., & Umer, M.,2013; Yulandari, R., Muhaimi, L., & Azis, A. D.,2019 and Mabule, D. R., 2015).

In Sabah Malaysia, the code switching phenomenon is commonly occurring in daily communication. It is because most of the Sabah people acquire at least two languages, their native language and the Sabah Malay dialect (Wong, J. K. L. (2012). Most of the Community College in Sabah speak and use their mother tongue and the Sabah Malay dialect proficiently. They code-switch between mother tongue and the Sabah Malay dialect commonly in daily conversation. Lack of practice in speaking English affects the student’s proficiency in English. Therefore, they always intersperse between mother tongue, the Sabah Malay dialect and English language during the interaction among themselves in the ESL classroom. Many researchers have examined the phenomenon of code-switching among ethnic groups either in Malaysia or abroad, but not much is known about the phenomenon of code-switching with regards the Community College in Sabah Malaysia where English is regarded as a second or foreign language. Thus, there is a lack of information on the types of code switching produced with the Community College students. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill this gap by identifying the styles of code-switching among Community College students in Sabah especially in multilingual ESL classroom setting.

2.6 Problem Statement

Based on the overview, this study aims to investigate the types of code switching in the multilingual ESL classroom setting specifically in Sabah, Malaysia. This issue is deduced with the assumption that the finding will significantly broaden the understanding of code switching phenomenon especially the types of code switching production during the interaction in a multilingual ESL classroom.

3. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design by employing the interview method to obtain the data. The determined research design allows the researcher to explore the natural occurrence of code switching in the speaking discourse of the students during the interaction in a multilingual ESL classroom.

3.1 Data Collection

The researcher employed interviews to ten of the respondents. The students were aware that the interview session was being audio recorded. The researcher allowed the respondents to use any of the languages they wanted to in expressing their ideas. The entire interview sessions were audio-recorded with the permission and consent from the participants.

3.2 Participants

A total of ten Community College students in Sabah, Malaysia had been selected to participate in this research. For the purpose of this research, participants are selected using non-probability sampling and purposive sampling the technique used is purposive sampling. The samples taken are from the whole population of ESL students in Sabah who were studying in Community Colleges in Sabah. All the respondents were from semester 1 who registered for Communicative English course in their respective colleges. In this Communicative English course, students are encouraged to communicate in English throughout the lesson. The participants came from various ethnic groups and linguistic backgrounds aged rangers 18 to 23 years old. Each of the participant is able to converse in at least three languages, mainly their native language, Sabah Malay dialect, and English language. They were more proficient speaking their own native language and Sabah Malay dialect.

3.3 Data Analysis

The verbal aspects of the interviews with the respondents were transcribed. Eradication of misinterpretation was carefully ensured (Flick, Von Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004). The data obtained through the interview was analysed using the inductive approach which involves the theme identification. All the data obtained were categorised based on the types of code switching by Poplack (1980). The translation of scripts to the respondents was not needed because the researcher himself is proficient in Kadazandusun, the Sabah Malay dialect, and English language.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Inter-sentential switching

Respondent 1:

...*Malay and English saja la*...

...*Listening skill la gitu*...

...*change pigi*...

...*gitu la* always...

... *basic* *begitu*...

...*effective juga la*...

Respondent 2:

...*belajar pelan-pelan la sa becakap in English*...

...*sebab it's easy to speak*

Respondent 3:

...*Mungkin tidak dapat explain*...

...*tidak pandai translate*...

...*language tu mcam tu la*...

Respondent 4:

...*No, sebab terbiasa sudah*...

...*boleh la try*...

Respondent 5:

...*sebab lama kita boleh cakap dan boleh understand*...

Respondent 6:
...sometimes sa kurang cakap Dusun ...

Respondent 8:
...nda telampau speak in Bajau ...

4.2 Intra-sentential switching

Respondent 1:
...tapi kadang kadang apa mix juga la...
...kalau boleh kasi mix dia la...
...kasi basic English senang mau faham....
...buli sa kasi translate pigi bahasa English...

Respondent 2:
Sometimes I speak in English la but tempat cousin...
...dia punya husband Kadazan...
...tapi kalau sama classmates yang rapat, memang akan cakap Sabah Malay...
Sometimes kalau sama friends apa la English pigi Malay Sabah...
...ya sejak masuk kolej dengan after sa left form five dengan masuk kolej ni...

Respondent 3:
...kalau di rumah, mungkin selalu sa cakap dengan family kebiasaan dia dalam bahasa Dusun la...

Respondent 4:
...sometimes ada yang full mau cakap tu mix la...
...Kalau yang pendek mau cakap tu full in English la...

Respondent 5:

...full in English **kalau** basic...

...klau nda faham **just simple** ayat...

Respondent 6:

...ada juga la sama **cousin** sa **speak English** sebab memang dari kecil speak English...

...Sabah Malay tapi **sometimes** sia **mix** juga dengan English...

... English class supposed to be English **la kan tapi** mix...

...dia punya **improvement** ka...

...bagi sa dia bagi **improvement** la...

...apa **words** ni dalam **English** begitu **then speak again** la...

Respondent 7:

...di kelas tidak **effective** guna **code switch** ...

Respondent 8:

...English class **saya campur** English with bahasa Malaysia...

Respondent 9:

...terpaksa **translate** pigi melayu...

4.1.3 Tag switching

Respondent 1:

...Malay and Kadayan tapi mix lah ...

...tapi kadang-kadang mix juga lah ...

...Malay lah ...

...English and Malay lah ...

Respondent 2:

...sometimes I speak in English lah ...

...sometimes Dusun lah ...

...supaya diorang tidak bingung apa yang kita cakap bah ...

...tidak teragak-agak mau cakap bah ...

Respondent 3:

...sometimes lah ...

Respondent 4:

...kalau ayat yang pendek mau cakap tu full in English lah ...

Respondent 6:

...English class supposed to be English lah ...

...dia bagi improvement lah ...

...then speak again lah ...

Respondent 7:

...so other people more understand lah...

Respondent 9:

...speak in Bajau lah...

...but if my lecturer English speak, I will speak in English lah...

5. Discussion

The types of code switching proposed by Poplack (1980) were used in this study. The three types of code switching are inter-sentential, intra-sentential and tag switching.

5.1 Inter-sentential code switching

One of the types of code switching, as mentioned by Poplack (1980), is inter-sentential code switching. This particular type of code switching is found and identified in the speaking discourse of the Community College students in Sabah during the interview. The inter-sentential code switching occurred after a sentence in the first language has been completed and the next sentence starts with a new language. The occurrence is seen between English to the Sabah Malay dialect and from the Sabah Malay dialect to English. The inter-sentential type of code switching occurred at a single-word or multi-words either in English or in the Sabah Malay dialect.

The alternate inter-sentential style of code switching seems appropriate since Community College students in Sabah, are the product of a multilingual environment. The students switched to the Sabah Malay dialect in the interaction when they felt that the thought, they have been explaining used to be a bit challenging and wished a clear rationalisation for the inexperienced persons to understand. inter-sentential switches appeared to be as an attention focusing device. The evaluation of these switches also virtually indicated that these switches had pure academic effects, with the essential aim to facilitate the students' learning. The findings are parallel studies conducted by (Azlan, & Narasuman, 2013; Bhatti, Shamsudin, & Said, 2018 & Kustati, 2014).

5.2 Intra-sentential code switching

The second type of code switching found in the research is the intra-sentential code switching. The intra-sentential type of code switching occurred when the shift is done in the middle of a sentence. The researcher had found that intra-sentential code switching is produced more than the inter-sentential code switching of the Community College students. There were Sabah Malay dialect words or English words inserted in the middle of a sentence in an utterance.

This means that the more the students report their language skills to be good, the more intra-sentential code switching they use in their utterances. In fact, intra-sentential code switching requires the students to be a balanced speaker to make greater use of it (Poplack, 1980). This technique is useful to enable students to associate concepts and definitions explained in a second language with that of their mother tongue. These findings are intriguing in that they suggest that without exposure to the production of code switching, multilingual ESL students even at a lower proficiency level show evidence of linguistic competence regarding constraints on intra-sentential code switching. Similar studies have been reported by (Bhatti et al., 2018; Hua, Nor, & Jaradat, 2012; Koban, 2013; Koronkiewicz, 2018).

The researcher had found out that, the occurrences of these types of code switching are influenced by other social factors such as the students' proficiency, the setting where they are talking in and the topic of conversations. A proficient learner produces minimal code switching since he or she can utter a full sentence in English. A good English language speaker also would be able to speak consistently in English regardless of which setting and what topic he or she is dealing with. Being raised in the multilingual speaking community, the Community College students depict code switching as an authentic communicative strategy in daily interaction. These findings are parallel to studies by (Azlan et al., 2013; Dente et al., 2016; Fachriyah, 2017; Kustati, 2014).

5.3 Tag switching

Meanwhile, the researcher also found the production of tag-switching in the speaking discourse of ESL students. The tag-switching occurred in a single word or phrase in the sentences uttered by the learners. The common single-word used in the tag was "lah". The word "lah" is commonly used among the Community College students. It becomes a habit to code-switch "lah" as the result of incompetence in the English language.

6. Conclusion

Considering the findings of this research, it is proposed that the use of the Sabah Malay dialect is helpful for the students to attain a certain degree of understanding. In addition, by allowing the students to code switch, it is expected that the students can build their self-confidence for communicating messages in interaction. The findings also confirmed the argument of how code switching is useful as one of the alternatives to a communication strategy that can facilitate students' interaction in English. It is obvious that code switching is prevalent and pervasive (Sumartono & Tan, 2018), it is of interest to study a larger number of participants to gain the full complexities of multilingual linguistics ecology and for the multilingual students to understand code switching as a communication device and not a linguistic defect.

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