Code switching in daily conversation

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Abstract: **This case study examined the occurrences of code switching in daily conversation among five Jordanian speakers in Malaysia. It attempts to study the circumstances and the factors that affect code switching among the Jordanian speakers within their daily conversation. The data include recordings of conversation and short interviews among five bilingual Jordanian speakers who are living in Malaysia. The results of the study revealed that there are four circumstances which can influences the respondents to code switch and these are: familiarity among respondents, the setting, change of topics in discussion and their ages.**

Keywords: **Code switching, Familiarity, daily conversation, bilingual speakers.**

I. INTRODUCTION

As human beings we tend to express our thoughts, ideas, and emotion through language. Although, we can use non verbal gestures to communicate these human expressions. Without language, it would have been difficult to understand mankind but with language there are all kinds of things to understand. Thus, language plays a crucial role in our lives but we do not always live in a society which uses only one particular language to communicate among themselves. As more and more people embark on travelling across countries and pursuing further education, they are also exposed to other cultures. So, in bilingual or multilingual societies such as Malaysia, speakers tend to share a range of common languages. Therefore, they are also more vulnerable to mix these common languages within their conversation. The phenomenon of switching two or more languages within one's conversation is known as code switching (Yao, 2011).

Arabic-English Code switching phenomenon is widely observed among Arab speakers. Abalhassan and Alshalawi (2000: 183) in their study on code switching behavior of Arab speakers of English as a second language in the United States mentioned that "without exception, all respondents switched into English to some degree". In examining the phenomenon of code switching, this research will provide data of spontaneous conversations acquired from bilingual Jordanian speakers who are currently residing in Malaysia.

Code switching appears to be a common practice of bilingual or multilingual, it may have developed as a result of the speakers' habit and maybe for specific purposes. Gumperz (1982) found that code switching was not entirely random. He stated that this phenomenon tend to take place at certain purposes within different interactions. Thus, the current paper aims to investigate the factors that affect the phenomenon of Arabic-English code switching among Jordanian speakers in their daily life in Malaysia. This paper which composes of natural interaction may provide a number of important clues for a better understanding of the factors that affect the phenomenon of code switching among Jordanian speakers in Malaysia. The findings may also able to assemble a vivid picture of the factors that affect the phenomenon of code switching during interactions among Jordanian speakers in Malaysia.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

For many years, researchers have investigated the phenomenon of code switching. Lots of studies were conducted on the phenomenon of code switching among bilingual speakers in different contexts. Among the authors that have done research on this topic are as follows.

Koziol (2000) investigated the function of code switching by categorizing and quantifying the various circumstances and functions of this linguistic practice. She presented most of the major functions that code switching can serve in discourse. These functions are: personalization, reiteration, designation, substitution, emphasis, clarification, objectification, aggravating messages, interjections, parenthesis, quotation, and topic shift. She concluded that although several code switching could not be classified, nearly quarter of it was due to the speaker's effort to personalize his/her message for his/her listener.

Abedelbadie's (2003) paper reports on an investigation on the phenomena of code mixing and code switching among numbers of different Arab speakers. These Arab speakers had lived in the United States of America, thus they had English in their linguistic repertoire but because they were from different regions, they also spoke different varieties of Arabic. These speakers were composed of Egyptians, Sudanese, Saudi Arabians, Moroccans and Jordanian. Abedelbadi's study found that when these speakers were communicating among themselves, they tend to code switch depending on the kinds of topics discussed, the context of the situations and also that they do not necessarily resort to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in cross-dialectical conversations. Further, this study also provides evidence to suggest that the phenomena of code mixing and code switching was not always employed as a means of enhancing verbal communications but rather as a way of poking fun at other dialects that may not be very popular or less refined. He further suggests that the two occurrences of code mixing and code switching between Arabic and English occur in a continuum.

Moreover, Champdoizeau (2006) also examined issues related to the relationship between the two languages comprised in a bilingual child's linguistic competence. The data investigated came from a longitudinal case study of an English-French bilingual child. The first topic under investigation is related to the reasons behind code switching as well as the constraints on the manifestations of this phenomenon. These constraints result in morpho-syntactic combinations that can or cannot occur in code switching utterances. The data are also analyzed from the perspective of the acoustic manifestation of stress in each language. The result of this acoustic investigation suggest that the child has two separate stress systems and that she has mastered the main phonetic cues related to the manifestation of stress in each language.

Lastly, Zerg (2006) investigated the functions of code switching; the researcher studied code alternation among Libyan Arab speakers notifying that she was using code alternation to refer to code switching as well. In her study, she collected data from sixty subjects, thirty six females and twenty four males. Thirty hours of spontaneous recording and observation notes were used to collect data required for the purpose of the study. The researcher identifies seventeen functions by Libyan speakers.

As discussed earlier, research on the phenomenon of code switching has been conducted by many researchers in several countries. Most of the researchers have studied this phenomenon between two languages where one of them is the mother tongue of the country where the study took place, while the current study will investigate the factors that affect the code switching between Arabic and English language in Malaysia. Thus, the two languages are used as a second or foreign languages. Also, the majority of Arab researchers has studied this phenomenon among Arab speakers in general but this study will be in depth for Jordanian speakers in Malaysia by using different methods.

3. Methodology

Participants

The participants of the study are 5 Jordanian speakers who are residing in Kajang, Malaysia. Their age ranged from 25 to 32 years old. The criteria of the participants are based solely on their Arabic-English bilingualism. All of them are bilingual Jordanian speakers who are able to express themselves fully in either language.

Research design

This paper was carried out as a case study. According to punch (1998) he stated that the basic idea of a case study is that one case or small number of cases will be studied in detail using whatever methods that seem appropriate to understand the case in depth.

Case study is a research method with its own designs (Yin 2003) and as with any research design, issues of validity and reliability should be addressed in a case study. Techniques used to ensure that the research is trust worthy and credible include collection of data using a variety of instruments (House & Lapan 1994). Therefore, the specific research design uses in this study is qualitative method. In qualitative research the researcher relies on the views of the participants and collects data largely consisting of words. These words are then described and analyzed (Creswell, 2008).

Instruments

Researchers in code switching tend to prefer certain types of data. For instance, Myers-Scotton (2006b) has argued that only naturalistic data can inform code switching research, since it is the only type of data that occurs in everyday situations. So, the researcher will be used the following instruments.

Recording

Code switching pays strict to systematic qualitative analysis of natural data and so there is a strict policy within code switching with regard to the use of materials collected from natural conversations as basic data which recording. Approximately 3 hours of spontaneous interaction was recorded with each session having 60 minutes.

The recorded data were obtained from the participants. It is from this method that most of the instances of code switching will be audio taped. Audio taping were used so that the recorded materials could document the respondents' language switching.

Interview

Using Interview is suitable for research that requires several types of information (Wray & Bloomer, 2006). The interview allows the researcher to discover the reasons behind the language switching and also to identify some pertinent points that are relevant to the study and would not have been obtained through the other methods discussed above as stated by Creswell (2007), the interviewer has better control over the types of information received, because the interviewer can ask specific questions to elicit this information.

The Interview was divided into two parts. The first part consists of background questions, age, name, and period of speaking English. It also incorporates questions that provide reliable information to establish the respondents' bilingualism. The second part consists of the main open-ended questions itself by asking about the factors that affect the phenomenon of code switching. The interview were prepared in order to gather maximum qualitative data.

4. Findings of the study

Before starting with analysis of the data, it is significant to remind ourselves of the aim of this research which is identifying the factors that affect the phenomenon of code switching among Jordanian speakers in Kajang, Malaysia. The study looks at the utterances of a total of five male respondents with ages ranged between 25 to 32 years old. The data collected shows that these respondents applied code switching in their daily conversation and the interviews support that there are different factors that affect their code switching.

The findings in figure 1 which were driven from the researcher's interview and recording with the five respondents shows that familiarity is cited as a major factor in their code switching. According to the respondents, they reported that they would generally code switch when they knew their co-respondents and when instigated by family members or friends. Most of the respondents agreed that setting was a big factor because they were more likely to code switch when at home but rarely in a classroom. Also, they stated that change of topics could prompt the speakers to switch from one language to another. One of them stated that the age affects the phenomenon of code switching.
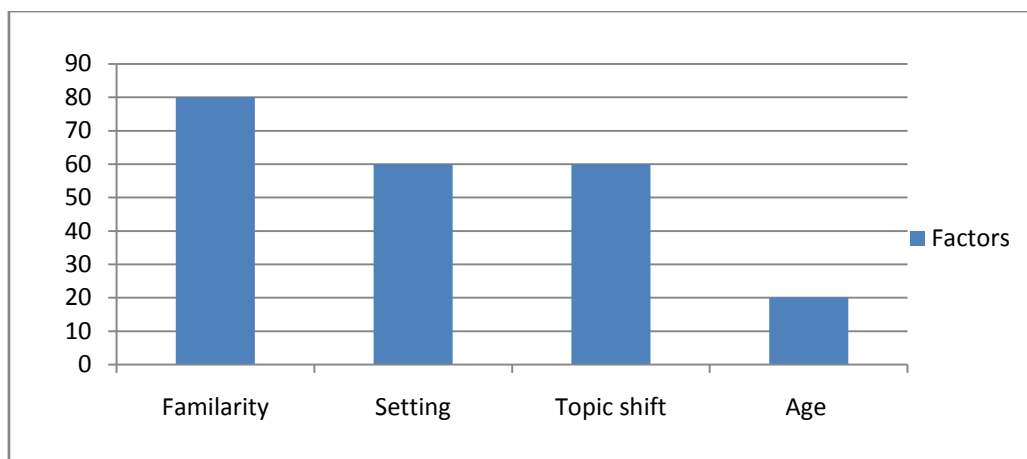

Figure 1: Factors that affect code switching

The result shows that there are four circumstances which can influences the respondents to code switch and these are: familiarity among respondents, the setting, change of topics in discussion and their ages. It seems that the familiarity of the respondent's relationship is on the highest of 80%, followed by the setting and the change of topic at 60% and lastly at the lowest rank of 20% is the ages. Thus, the first three circumstances induced more code switching instances.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study show how the Jordanian participants in Malaysia interact in their conversation through code switching by identifying the factors that affect the phenomenon of code switching. The researcher suggests that the current study can be elaborated further in future studies by investigating the functions of Arabic-English code switching among bilingual Jordanian speakers in Malaysia. As a conclusion, the researcher hopes that this study will give readers a wider insight into the Jordanian's tendencies to switch languages, besides serving as a useful guide for other researchers in investigating the phenomenon of code switching in Malaysia.

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