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## **Code switching in Mixed Couples' Interaction: A Conversation Analysis**

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## **Abstract**

Code switching has become an emerging communication strategy in mixed couples' conversation which influences the sequence, turn-taking and outcome of the conversation. This is crucial because the success and failure of couples' conversation may create an impact in their relationship. Taking this issue into account, this paper analysed the occurrence of code switching in the conversation of Filipino-Malaysian couples. Twelve (12) Filipino-Malaysian couples from Kuching and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia who were married for at least one year took part in the study. Twelve (12) conversations at home were recorded by the couples themselves. The study used Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) as its theoretical framework to analyse the occurrence of language choice and code switching. CAT focuses on divergence and convergence in communication between interlocutors and later expanded and applied to family communication including communication among the family members living in a multilingual society. The occurrence of language choice and code switching in the data was analysed using the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach. The findings reveal that Filipino-Malaysian couples' use English most of the time in their conversations despite of their preference to code switch to Malay and Filipino in English dominated conversations. Moreover, it is evident in the interactions that they code switch to show politeness, solidarity and confirmation.

**Keywords:** Filipino-Malaysian couples, language choice, code switching, conversation analysis

## **Introduction**

Language choice provides the multilingual speakers an opportunity to express themselves clearly in whatever language they prefer. It helps them to facilitate communication clearly and with ease. Such choice of language may sometimes come naturally or intentionally. However, it must be noted that either it is natural or intentional the choice is still a product of some sociolinguistic factors such as social status, gender, educational attainment, ethnicity, age, occupation, rural and urban origin, speakers themselves, topic, place media and formality of the situation (Piller, 2004; Johansson, 1991; Burhanudeen, 2003; Warshauer, 2002 & Degefa, 2004). It is clear that language is chosen in various ways which can be done by simply borrowing some lexical items from another language or by switching from one language to another. Therefore code switching can be considered as a common phenomenon in interactions among multilingual speakers.

The study of code switching has become a trend in many parts of the world. In fact, code switching has continually developed its scope of study since 1950 up to the present. It was initially perceived as a peculiar act and has developed into a subject matter which sheds light in understanding the fundamental linguistic issues from universal grammar to the formation of group identities and ethnic boundaries through verbal behaviour (Auer, 2003). Several studies on code switching emphasize more on the regularities of alternating two or more languages in a specific speech community. Usually, the focus is on the syntactic constraints which include the intersentential and intra-sentential code switching (Bautista, 2004). However, this concept of code switching fails to consider the speaker's ability to process the language and code selection during the actual conversation.

It must be noted that code switching, in some aspects, provides a built-in sensibility that conversational regularities are both content-independent and context-sensitive (Auer, 2003:4). They could not be separated from the context of conversation, therefore code switching can be studied and analysed by looking at the discourse-related switching, discourse-related insertion, and preference-related switching. Discourse-related code switching may refer to the use of code switching to organize the conversation by contributing to the interactional meaning of a particular utterance (Auer, 2003:5). This means that speakers alternate the code in a sequential order which can be considered as discourse-related insertion (Auer, 2003:6). Therefore analysing code switching through conversation offers a more comprehensive analysis on how speakers switch from one language to another in various conversational turns.

The occurrence of code switching can be natural but has underlying reasons. Bautista (2000) argued that Tagalog-English speakers code switch because it is the fastest and easiest way of saying something. This means that switching from Tagalog to English has a better way of expressing a particular idea. In fact, code switching is done for precision, transition, comic effect, atmosphere, bridging or creating social distance, snob appeal and secrecy (Bautista, 2004). In addition, Goulet (1971) found that code-switching

is done for ease in understanding, brevity, lack of indigenous terms, emphasis and clarity. Similarly, Tan (1992) emphasised that code switching is used for precision and ease of expression, for metaphoric reasons which include emphatic, emotional utterances and social reasons. Studies also show that code switching occurs for other reasons such as group identification, solidarity, and distancing (Saville-Troike, 2003). It is also used to clarify certain vague statements in communication.

On the other hand, code switching is used to emphasise the identity of the speaker. Morais (1995) argued that code switching in Malaysia is often practiced to show group identification of various ethnic groups specifically to show the speaker's identity. For instance, switching from English to Malay, Chinese or Indians may reveal the ethnic affiliation of the speaker. Such identity construction in code switching is supported by Venogopal (2000) who explained that code switching in Malaysian context particularly from English to Bahasa Malaysia signals a conscious act of group identification.

There are a number of reasons and factors that trigger code switching. One of those is the occurrence of code switching which affects the flow of talk that defines the success of any conversation. Therefore, code switching is an important phenomenon to examine in an interaction where the interlocutors speak different languages and belong to different cultures. Specifically, this will be more interesting to explore in mixed couples' interactions more particularly between Filipinos and Malaysians.

Studies show that mixed marriages between Filipinos and Malaysians lead to language issues in the family such as the language to be used at home and the implementation of the family language policy (Dumanig, David & Shanmuganathan, 2013). However, no studies have been conducted that explore the conversation of Filipino-Malaysian couples which put emphasis on the occurrence of code switching. It is therefore the aim of this paper to examine the occurrence of code switching in mixed couples' interaction. More specifically, it also seeks to understand the reasons that trigger code switching and the impact of code switching in the conversation.

### **Code Switching and Conversation Analysis**

Several models have emerged such as the Markedness Theory of code switching, Language Matrix Frame (MLF) Model and the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach to conversational code switching. These models provide the analytical framework in analyzing the occurrence of code switching in different context. Of the three models, CA approach to conversation analysis code switching seems appropriate when analyzing the occurrence of code switching in intercultural and interracial encounters for some reasons.

- (1) "The sequential implicativeness of language choice in conversation, i.e. the fact that whatever language a participant chooses for the organization of his or her turn, or for an utterance which is part of the turn, the choice exerts an influence on subsequent language choices by the same or other speakers" (Auer, 2003).

(2) “It limits the external analyst’s interpretational leeway because it relates his or her interpretations back to the members’ mutual understanding of tier utterances as manifest in their behavior” (Auer, 2003).

It is essential to focus in the entire conversational discourse to analyse code switching in conversation. In adopting the CA approach to analyze a conversational code switching, three fundamental points have to be considered such as relevance, procedural consequentiality and the balance between social structure and conversation structure (Li Wei, 2003:162). There is relevance in conversational code switching when the analysis is demonstratively relevant to the participants. This means that the analyst must understand thoroughly the language and context of the entire conversation. On the other hand, the procedural consequentiality in conversational code switching requires the analyst to understand how the extra-linguistic context influences the outcome of the conversational interaction. This is essential because the context influences the sequence of interaction which is shaped, maintained, and changed by the speakers in the entire conversation. Understanding the context contributes in explaining the reasons why speakers switch from one code to another. Researchers must also maintain the balance between social structure and conversation structure. This means that it is not appropriate to assume that a speaker switches in order to index his or her identity, ethnicity or attitude but the researchers must explain how identity, ethnicity, and attitude are presented, understood, accepted or changed throughout the conversation (Li Wei, 2003). Using the CA approach when analyzing code switching in interactions, requires a thorough understanding on the concept of conversation analysis.

Conversation analysis can be a good model when analysing code switching in interactions. Observation in interactions between two multilingual speakers will provide an idea to understand the way in which language figures in everyday interaction and cognition (Ochs, Shegloff & Thompson as cited in Chad Nilep, 2006). To analyse code switching there is a need to examine the entire discourse. As Auer (1984) argued that code switching is not essentially semantic but it is embedded in the sequential development of the conversation. In fact, studies show that various studies have been conducted on the sequential patterns of code switching which captures the entire discourse. Li Wei (1998) found that code switching is used to enhance turn selection in conversation. This means that the switching in every turn is influenced by the previous turn made by the speaker. Therefore, it is difficult to isolate the entire discourse in code switching analysis.

Some studies on code switching reveal that even their functions can be analysed using the conversation analysis. Findings reveal that code switching has multiple

functions and it can be used to soften refusal (Bani-Shoraka, 2005; Li Wei, 2005), to perform repair in a conversation (Auer, 1995; Sebba and Wooten, 1998), to show dispreferred remarks (Li Wei 1998; Bani-Shoraka, 2005) and to show speakers' identity (Li Wei 2002; David 2006). To analyse how code switching occurs in conversation, CAT is seen to be a useful theory to show how code switching occurs in conversation.

### **Communication Accommodation Theory**

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor 1977) is commonly used to explain how speakers converge and diverge in communication. It also explains the occurrence of communication in interracial or intercultural communication (Dumanig and David 2011). In this paper Communication Accommodation Theory is used as the theoretical framework in understanding how couples interact and how they code switch from one language to another. When a speaker approves of his/her speech partner and uses the preferred or dominant language of the other "convergence" takes place. However, when a speaker disapproves of his/her speech partner and uses another language this is considered "divergence."

The concept of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) was expanded and applied to family communication including communication among the family members living in a multilingual society. Harwood, Soliz & Lin (2006) explain that there are different strategies in family communication, i.e. approximation strategies, interpretability strategies, discourse management strategies and interpersonal control. Approximation strategy is a form of accommodation to the interlocutor's productive performance which focuses on the partner's speech style (p.23). Interpretability strategies involve accommodating to the partner's perceived interpretive abilities, which refer to the ability to understand. Discourse management strategies focus on the person's conversational needs and are often discussed in terms of topic selection, face management, and the like (p.26). Interpersonal control strategies attempt to direct the course of a particular conversation or more generally a relationship by strategies such as interruption or even direct power claims (p.27). Such accommodation strategies have contributed in the language choice of speakers.

It is assumed in this study that speakers code switch when they accommodate each other in an interaction. Therefore, the occurrence of code switching will reveal in various turns of the conversation. The methodology of this study will explain how the data were collected and analysed using the CA approach.

## **2. Methodology**

The study used a qualitative approach which focuses on mixed couples' conversation in the home domain. The participants of the study were Filipinos-Malaysian couples who stayed in Malaysia for at least one year. Kuala Lumpur and Kuching were the two cities chosen as research sites. Twelve (12) conversations at home were recorded by Filipino-Malaysian couples (24 spouses). They were grouped into three such as Filipino-Malay, Filipino- Chinese Malaysian and Filipino-Indian Malaysian couples. All spouses speak at least two or more languages, either their own ethnic language (mother tongue), or English (international language), Bahasa Malaysia (national language of Malaysia), and Filipino (national language of the Philippines).

Snowball sampling was used by selecting participants who possess certain characteristics needed in the research who also refer other participants with similar characteristics (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2006). Considering the marital aspect of the research, the sampling technique helped in minimizing the chance of refusal from the potential participants.

The data were recorded by the couples themselves at home. They were given the choice to record any topic as long as the conversation was a casual conversation between husband and wife. The couples were free to edit or erase any recordings that they did not want to include in their conversations. Some recordings were interrupted by members of the family who wanted to participate in the conversations. Circumstances like these were expected especially in families with children and other family members like the parents-in-law, brother-in-law or sister-in-law who are staying in the same household.

All the recorded conversations were transcribed and analysed using the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach.

## **3. Findings**

When analysing the functions of code switching in interactions, conversation analysis (CA) approach can be effective if the focus of the analysis is on conversational code switching. In this study, interactions between Filipino and Malaysian spouses reveal that code switching occurs for different reasons.

### 3.1 Code switching as politeness strategy

Politeness is a social variable that determines the choice of a register or style (Coulmas, 2005). Speakers are sometimes careful in using the lexicon of another language in order to minimize a face-threatening act (Holmes, 2008). In cultures that consider directness as impolite motivates speakers to carefully choose appropriate lexical items so as not to be perceived as impolite. It is evident in the conversations between Filipino-Malaysian couples, politeness manifests through code switching.

**1 W:** This one is nice

**2 H:** No **lah**, the curry (...)

**3 W:** You want water? (...) **wala na ba?** (*nothing?*)

**4 H:** A little bit only (...)

**5 W:** **Wala pa, wala pa ta naka booking hon, sa hospital ba wala pa ang booking.**  
(*No, no, we haven't booked hon, the booking is not in the hospital yet*)

**6 H:** If not today tomorrow morning I will get.

**Conversation 3.1** Conversation of a Filipino wife (W) and a Malay husband (H) while having lunch

Conversation 3.1 shows the interaction between a Filipino wife (W) and a Malaysian husband (H). The conversation took place at home during lunch. While having their meal, the husband pointed at something which suggested that the wife had to get something for him. The wife got the fish and said “*This one is nice.*” The wife’s utterance in turn 1 can be considered as invitation or suggestion to try the fish. In turn 2, the husband refused the offer and softened it by using the Malaysian particle “lah” in the utterance “*No lah, the curry*”. The wife in turn 3, offered water to compensate the mistake she made for giving the fish instead of curry. In turn 4, the husband accepted the wife’s offer by saying “*A little bit only*”. However, in turn 5, the wife suddenly changed the topic by asking the husband “**Wala pa wala pa ta naka booking hon, sa hospital ba**

*wala pa ang booking* (no, no, we haven't booked hon, the booking for the hospital).” The husband replied that “*If not today tomorrow morning I will get.*”

The switching from English to Filipino in line 3 was initiated by the wife. It is evident that the husband did not alter his code choice despite the wife's continuous switching from English to Filipino. In turn 3, switching from English to Filipino is an utterance with the intention to compensate and soften the previous utterance because the husband may not have been satisfied with the offer. The intention to compensate and to soften the previous utterance can be interpreted as politeness strategy to minimize the impact of the other speakers' dissatisfaction.

In the conversation, the occurrence of “with-in turn” code switching between Filipino and Malaysian spouses is evident. Such occurrence of code switching can be analysed in terms of language negotiation and the preferred conversational organization of speakers.

The occurrence of politeness in conversation 3.1 is not explicitly uttered by the wife (W). In the Philippine context, doing something to compensate any mistake is interpreted as polite behaviour (Dumanig and Manuelli, 2009). The use of appropriate language and discourse organisation in conversation has played an important role in maintaining a polite manner of making a request. In fact, the wife's request in turn 5 occurs only after four turns in conversation. In turn 3, the wife had a long pause then she started switching from English to Filipino so as to make the interaction informal thus making a request less intimidating (Bautista, 2004). The wife's initiative of offering something to drink is a form of compensation, which can be interpreted as polite way of accommodating the spouse. It is also evident when the offer was made the wife switched from English to Filipino to mitigate a face threatening act. The switching in turn 3 may signal a transition that the wife would utter her request soon. In turn 5, the wife switches to Filipino instead of English to make the request more polite.

Schematically, the relationship between conversational structure and code choice follows a sequential order:-

- |   |
|---|
| 1 A: <i>offer (English)</i>                           |
| 2 H: <i>refusal (English)</i>                         |
| 3 A: <i>offer (English) – confirmation (Filipino)</i> |
| 4 H: <i>acceptance (English)</i>                      |
| 5 A: <i>request (Filipino)</i>                        |
| 6 H: <i>approval (English)</i>                        |

The sequential order in conversation has helped to organise the interaction so as to achieve approval on the request in turn 5. In turn 1, the wife used English in giving an offer which was accommodated by the husband (H) in turn 2 by using a similar language. When the wife attempted another offer in turn 3, code switching in Filipino occurred to show confirmation. The confirmation in Filipino may signal the wife's intention to make a request in the next turn. In turn 5, the request was made by switching from English to Filipino thus making a request polite. Politeness through code switching is also revealed in conversation 3.2.

1. **H:** His place **belakang** (*behind*) Giant?
2. **W:** Yeah, **Alam mo ba yan?** (*Do you know it?*)
3. **H:** **Alam ko** (*I know*) before reaching the place **ada** (*there is*) McDonalds, right?
4. **W:** Yeah **lah. Pwede?** you drive him later. (*can*)
5. **H:** No problem.
6. **W:** Remember, we passed by several times in that area.

### **Conversation 3.2** Interaction between a Filipino wife (W) and a Malay husband (H)

Conversation 3.2 happened at home. In turn 1, the husband asked his wife “*His place belakang* (behind) *Giant?*” where he switched from English to Bahasa Malaysia. The wife responded in turn 2 in Filipino “*Yeah, alam mo ba yan?* (*Do you know it?*). The husband accommodated the wife by answering in Filipino in turn 3 as “**Alam ko** (*I know*)”. In turn 4, the wife agreed with her husband but it was accompanied by a request “*Yeah lah. Pwede?* (*can*) *you drive him later?*” In turn 5, the husband agreed to drive the visitor home.

The conversation can be analysed by examining the discourse pattern and the code choice of the speaker in the interaction. Code switching with-in turns from English to Filipino in turns 1 to 6 is prevalent in the conversation. It is also evident that politeness is uttered by the wife in turn 4 by using a polite word “**pwede**” (*can*). The request which is the main focus of the conversation did not occur in turn 1 but it was uttered in Filipino in turn 4. Such a pattern of discourse and code choice is similar in conversation 3.1 where

switching from English to Filipino in making a request is seen as a polite act. Making a request in the latter part of the conversation can be considered as indirect request and such indirectness is deemed to be polite in some cultures (David, 2008).

The sequential order of conversation in relation to the speaker's code choices is represented as follows:-

1. H: *Question (English and Bahasa Malaysia)*
2. W: *Confirmation (Filipino)*
3. H: *Answer (Filipino, English and Bahasa Malaysia)*
4. W: *Agreement (Filipino)*
5. H: *Comment (English).*
6. W: *Reminder (English)*

The sequential order in conversation shows the occurrence of code switching from turn 1 to turn 6. In turn 1, the husband asked a question in English and Bahasa Malaysia where the switching signals that the husband would like to establish solidarity in conversation. In turn 2, the wife answered the question in Filipino. The use of Filipino in turn 2 is a marked choice because such use of code is unexpected. The wife's marked choice can also be interpreted as a signal for a favour that she would ask in the next turns. In turn 3, the husband answered and accommodated the wife by using Filipino but later switched to English and Bahasa Malaysia. The switching in Filipino signals the husband's accommodative behaviour thus creating solidarity in interaction. Consequently, the wife made a request in turn 4 in Filipino. Using the Filipino language in turn 4 can be interpreted as a face saving strategy to show politeness in making a request. A similar function of code switching is also revealed in conversation 3.3.

1. H: Then, if you go, **berapa hari kau akan di sana?**(*How many days will you be there?*)
2. W: Maybe **lima blas hari** (*fifteen days*).
3. H: Huh, **lima blas hari** (*fifteen days*)? Quite long ah.

4. W: I seldom see them.

5. H: Yeah, I know but what about our child?

6. W: I will bring him.

Note: The Malay husband can understand Filipino.

**Conversation 3.3** A conversation between a Malay husband (H) and a Filipino wife (W) after dinner.

Conversation 3.3 shows the interaction between a Filipino wife and a Malay husband. In turn 1 the husband asked his wife “*Then, if you go, **berapa hari kau akan di sana** (how many days will you be there?).*” The husband switched from English to Bahasa Malaysia when asking the question. In turn 2, W responded by switching code (English and Bahasa Malaysia) “*Maybe **lima blas hari** (fifteen days).*” H answered in turn 3 in Bahasa Malaysia then switched to English “*Huh, **lima blas hari** (fifteen days)? Quite long ah*”. The conversation continues in turns 4, 5, and 6 where English was used.

Conversation 3.3 reveals the switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia in an interaction between a Filipino wife and a Malaysian husband. When H asked his wife the number of days that W would stay in the Philippines, he switched from English to Bahasa Malaysia. The switching can be interpreted as a strategy to initiate a casual conversation so as to mitigate a face-threatening act if he would refuse the wife’s request. In turn 2, the wife responded in English then switched to Bahasa Malaysia to convince her husband to agree with her plan to stay in the Philippines for fifteen days. Switching to Bahasa Malaysia is considered an unmarked choice because H is a Malay and using Bahasa Malaysia would make the utterance more convincing. In turn 3, H responded in Bahasa Malaysia then switched to English to show his indirect disapproval of the request. There is a sign of disapproval in turn 3 because the utterance in English appeared to be a complaint “Quite long ah.”

In the conversation, it is evident that the use of Bahasa Malaysia has helped to establish solidarity in the interaction and maintain politeness even when showing disapproval (see turns 1-3). On the other hand, English is used to create social distance and to reinforce the disapproval.

In conversation 3.3, the relationship between conversational structure and code choice follows a sequential order:-

1. **H:** *Question (English and Malay)*
2. **W:** *Answer (English and Malay)*
3. **H:** *Objection (Malay and English)*
4. **W:** *Reason (English)*
5. **H:** *Question (English)*
6. **W:** *Answer (English)*

The sequential order in conversation shows that code switching occurs with-in turns which is evident in turns 1 to 3. This question-answer sequence in conversation provides an idea that the conversational structure and the code choice of the speaker are interrelated. This is evident in turns 1 to 3 and turns 4 to 6. The choice of a mixed code for instance occurs because one speaker initiated it in turn 1. Then the following turns in the conversation used a similar pattern of code choice. Similarly, the use of English from turns 4 to 6 occurs because it is initiated by W in turn 3 and in the next turns English was used.

The sequential order in conversation has influenced the speaker's language choice and the flow of the entire discourse. For instance, the choice of two languages (English and Filipino) can be used to show politeness in interactions. In addition, politeness is not only shown in the language used by the speaker but it can be evident in the order of conversation how both interlocutors take turns. For example in a situation where the speaker controls the conversation and does not allow other interlocutor to speak signals impoliteness.

### 3.2 Code Switching to Show Solidarity

Code switching may function to show solidarity. The languages selected consciously or unconsciously establish closer relationship among the speakers.

Conversation 3.4 shows an interaction between Filipino and Malaysian couple.

- 1 W:** Let's go to the hospital hon, check up **lang ba** (*just for a check up*).
- 2 H:** Is that Bandar Baru or Taman Putra?
- 3 W:** **Pa scan daw ta hon** (*hon can we go for scanning*).
- 4 H:** Can, can
- 5 W:** In Taman Putra **ada** (*There is in Taman Putra*)
- 6 H:** **Wala** (*none*)

**Conversation 3.4** A conversation between a Filipino wife (W) and a Malay husband (H)

In turn 1, the wife (W) told the husband (H) to have a check up. However, in turn 2 instead of answering the request, H asked the location of the hospital “*Is that Bandar Baru or Taman Putra?*” In turn 3, W made a request “*Pa scan daw ta hon. (hon can we go for scanning).*” H responded in turn 4 by agreeing to W’s request. In turn 5, W suggested “*In Taman Putra ada (There is in Taman Putra)*” but in turn 6, H rejected the suggestion by saying “*wala*” (*none*).

In turn 1, the wife’s request was uttered in English and Filipino. The switching from English to Filipino can help the requestee to get what she wanted because it builds solidarity between the speakers. In the conversation, code switching is used to obtain a positive response from the other speaker. W repeated the request and switched again to Filipino to pursue her goal to get H’s approval. The switch from English to Filipino in the second and third turns signals a collaborative interaction to establish solidarity between two interlocutors. The use of the ethnic language appears to have helped in establishing solidarity between speakers. In turn 4, H’s reply was in basilectal Malaysian English which can be interpreted as a positive response. Code switching between Filipino and Malaysian English in turns 3 and 4 signals solidarity. As a result, W got H’s approval.

Solidarity was built through code switching from English to Bahasa Malaysia. Such switching can also be interpreted as way of showing gratitude for the approval of W's request. Turn 6 shows H's answer in Filipino to show solidarity. Even though he replied negatively, he softened it by using the wife's language and thus minimized a face-threatening act. It can be said that the use of the partner's language neutralises a negative response.

The conversation follows a sequential order:-

1 A: *request (English and Filipino)*

2 H: *clarification (English)*

3 A: *request (Filipino)*

4 H: *approval (English)*

5 A: *clarification (Malay)*

6 H: *answer (Filipino)*

The request-approval sequence reveals that establishing solidarity in conversation can be used as a strategy in mitigating a face-threatening act. In conversation 3.5, solidarity is also shown in mixed couples' interaction.

1. **W:** He wants to buy.

2. **H:** Underwear?

3. **W:** **Oo, at saka** (*yes, and also*) stocking, black. Later you bring them.

4. **H:** Office one.

5. **W:** **Oo, at saka** (*Yes, and*)

6. **H:** **yung maganda** (*the good ones*)

**7. W:** Uhm yung magandang quality at saka yung underwear yung magandang quality, [addidas] (*the one with good quality and the underwear must be of good quality, addidas*)

**8. H:** [Addidas?]

**9. W:** Ano bang magandang quality doon? (*What's the good quality there?*)

**10. H:** Lee Cooper

**11. W:** Ayun, Lee Cooper. Large lang yata sya. Kapag malaki, big size. Nakita mo na sya. Baka medium ok na kaysa large. (*That's it, Lee Cooper. It's only large. You saw him. Maybe medium is ok for him*)

**12. H:** Magandang quality. (*Good quality*)

**Conversation 3.5** Conversation between a Filipino wife (W) and a Malaysian Chinese husband (H).

Conversation 3.5 shows how a Filipino and Malaysian Chinese couple established solidarity in interaction through code switching. In turns 1 and 2, English is used by both speakers. However, in turn 3 the wife (W) switched to Filipino and English. In turns 5 to 12, it is evident that Filipino has become prevalent. This shows that both husband and wife show cooperation in switching from English to Filipino.

The conversation follows the following order of languages used:-

1. *W: request (English)*
2. *H: clarification (English)*
3. *W: request (Filipino and English)*
4. *H: suggestion (English)*
5. *W: acceptance (Filipino)*
6. *H: suggestion (Filipino)*
7. *W: confirmation and suggestion (Filipino)*
8. *H: confirmation*
9. *W: question (Filipino)*
10. *H: reply*
11. *W: suggestion (Filipino)*
12. *H: confirmation (Filipino)*

The switching from English to Filipino shows that both spouses cooperate with each other and when one spouse speaks in Filipino the other spouse uses the same language. A similar pattern occurred when English was used. Such convergence in conversation through code switching indicates solidarity.

### **3.3 Code Switching to Show Confirmation**

Code switching can be used to grant a request or to show confirmation. In Filipino-Malaysian couples' interactions request is granted and indicated by a switch from one language to another as shown in Conversation 3.6.

**1 D:** My husband also speaks Filipino.

**2 J:** Yeah, **kumain ka na, halika na.** (*Have you eaten? Come*).

**3 D:** You sometimes talk to me in Tagalog, **di ba?** (*Don't you?*)

**4 J:** Yeah, because we often use it, it's like getting married daily with the Filipino language (( )).

**Conversation 3.6** A conversation between a Filipino wife (D) and Malaysian Indian husband (J)

In the conversation, the Filipino spouse uttered a statement in turn 1 to motivate the Malaysian Indian spouse to speak in Filipino by saying “*My husband also speaks Filipino.*” The utterance in turn 1 can be interpreted as a request to prove that the Malaysian spouse can speak Filipino. In turn 2, the husband replied by saying “**Yeah, kumain ka na? halika na**” (*Yeah, have you eaten? come*) which proves that he can speak Filipino. The utterance in turn 2 is a switch from English to Filipino and shows that the request made by the Filipino spouse has been granted. In turn 3, the Filipino spouse said, “*You sometimes talk to me in Tagalog, di ba (don't you?)*” which is a request for him to confirm. It is evident that the tag phrase “**di ba? (don't you?)**” is used to show confirmation.

Code switching in the conversation is evident in turns 2 and 3. The switching in turn 2 is an answer to the wife's utterance in turn 1 which initiates the Malaysian spouse to speak in Filipino. The switching can be interpreted as a grant to the wife's request. Conversation 3.6 reveals that code switching in turns 2 and 3 occur in between turns and within turns. Turn 1 shows the switching between turns and in turn 2 and turn 3 code switching occurs within turns like saying “*you sometimes talk to me in Tagalog, di ba?*” (*Don't you?*) indicates confirmation.

The conversation follows a sequential order.

- 1 D: request (English)
- 2 J: grant (English; Filipino)
- 3 D: request for confirmation (English; Filipino)
- 4 J: confirmation (English)

The request-confirmation sequence shows that switching from English to Filipino has helped in granting a request. The switching of codes with-in turns are evident in turns 2 and 3 where J granted the request and requested a confirmation.

The next example in Conversation 3.7 is a conversation between a Filipino wife and a Malaysian husband. The conversation took place in the couples' house while having a coffee with the researcher in the presence of their two young children aged 9 and 4. The conversation was centred on the researchers' research which encouraged the couple to discuss and share the names of possible participants the researcher could interview.

Below is the excerpt of the conversation where only the couples exchange their messages.

- 1 **L:** **Si koan hon yung Eurasian.** (*The Eurasian hon*).
- 2 **F:** I think, Jeffrey.
- 3 **L:** yeah
- 4 **F:** Mixed **ma.** (*"ma" particle*)
- 5 **L:** **Filipino iyang wife** (*His wife is a Filipino*)
- 6 **F:** Yeah, Jo
- 7 **L:** Yeah lah (*"lah" particle*)
- 8 **F:** What is the title of his paper?
- 9 **L:** Interracial communication.
- 10 **F:** Oh, is it about interethnic communication.
- 11 **L:** Yeah, there you go (( )).

**Conversation 3.7** Filipino wife (L) and Malaysian Chinese husband (F)

Conversation 3.7 reveals that code switching occurs from English to Filipino. In turn 1, the wife (L) made an inquiry by saying in Filipino, "**si koan hon yung Eurasian.** *the Eurasian hon*" which impliedly asked the name of the Eurasian who married to a

Filipino. The inquiry in Filipino was answered in turn 2 by the Malaysian husband (F) in English “*I think, Jeffrey* “ and is confirmed by L in turn 3. The utterance in turn 3 is a confirmation which is an agreement of F’s answer. H made an assertion in turn 4 that the couple is mixed “*Mixed ma. (“ma” particle).*” The particle “*ma*” is common among Malaysians which appears to be frequent in Malaysian English. The assertion made in turn 4 is agreed by L. This was done by giving more information about the couple. In turn 5, L uttered in Filipino “**Filipino iyang wife** (*his wife is a Filipino*)” which is an agreement to H. In turn 7, L said “*yeah lah*” to show an agreement.

In the conversation, it is clear that in turn 5, L confirmed F’s request in turn 4. Such confirmation was made by switching from English to Filipino. Such occurrence of confirmation is similar to Conversation 3.6. However, it is noticeable in the conversation that most switching in Filipino is done by the Filipino wife. It is appears that the Malaysian husband comprehends the Filipino language because he answered all the queries. The conversation shows that the husband did not attempt to speak any word of Filipino even when the wife asked the questions in Filipino. Instead the husband used the Malaysian English variety.

The conversation between the Filipino spouse and the Malaysian Chinese spouse can be arranged in the following sequential order.

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 | L: inquiry (Filipino)            |
| 1 | F: answer (English)              |
| 2 | L: agreement (English)           |
| 3 | F: assertion (Malaysian English) |
| 4 | L: confirmation (Filipino)       |
| 5 | F: agreement (English)           |
| 6 | L: agreement (Malaysian English) |

The sequential order reveals that code switching in conversation occurs between turns from English to Filipino. However, the occurrence of confirmation in turn 5 is uttered in Filipino.

#### 4. Conclusion

The occurrence of code switching in mixed couples' interaction has become an emerging language variety. It reveals that such communication provides speakers the chance and opportunity to interact with others effectively. When mixed couples converge, solidarity in interactions occurred.

The findings reveal that code switching occurs in the conversational turns. This means that the allocation of turns to each speaker contributes in the selection of code. Therefore, it can be said that when analysing code switching in conversation, turn taking plays a vital role. Moreover, it is also evident that the functions of code switching are noticeable in the turn-taking. Turns therefore in conversation could not be isolated when analysing the functions of code switching.

In Filipino-Malaysian couples' interaction, code switching from English to another language (Filipino or Malay) is used as politeness strategy, to show solidarity and to show confirmation. These functions of code switching are actually can be considered as an output of accommodation. Interlocutors show politeness, solidarity and confirmation because they try to accommodate the other which results either convergence or divergence in conversation.

From the findings, it also reveals that the occurrence of code switching appears between turns and with-in turns in conversation. Such turns signal the intention of an interlocutor for switching from one language to the other.

Generally, code switching is inevitable for Filipino-Malaysian couples. Switching from one code to another has become an emerging language in Filipino-Malaysian families. The switching follows a pattern where English serves as the matrix language while Malay and Filipino function as embedded language.

In interracial marriages, the occurrence of code switching plays a crucial role in identifying the position of the speaker. As observed in most contexts upon which conversations take place, attempts to persuade, convince, affirm, confirm or disapprove hinge on the ability of the speaker to use language creatively just so to accomplish what speaker wants to achieve in the first place. While it is not shown in the various social contexts where English is used in all turns, it suggests that when conversations do not purport to show confirmation or disapproval but merely to present an idea, as a matter of sharing information, then code switching may not seem to rule in the conversation. However, as shown in the various social situations presented in this paper, code switching somehow indicates a tendency towards making attempts to convince the spouse to either confirm or disapprove a request. Therefore, code switching could also be a

negotiating strategy in husband-wife relationships in a multilingual setting. In Malaysia where multilingualism seems to be the norm rather than an exception, husband-wife's everyday interaction swings from one language system to another, with each spouse attempting to put a mark of approbation or disagreement. Attempts by Filipino wives to make a convincing move to succeed in the negotiation of even a simple request depends of course to what extent the wife is able to speak, in the first place, the national language of the broader community. Even then, the wife is doubly challenged when the Malaysian husband's mother tongue is Mandarin, or its variety, or Tamil, in which case, the Filipino wife has to learn a lot more. The more the Filipino wife embraces the different language systems she is exposed to, the stronger her opportunity to strengthen her position in negotiating in any social situation.

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