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THE FUNCTIONS OF CODE-SWITCHING AMONG YEAR 5 ENGLISH LEARNERS

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Abstract*: This study examines the functions of code-switching (CS) employed by Year 5 pupils during English lessons in selected national primary schools in Penang Island. Eldridge's (1996) framework on functions of CS, which comprises seven functions, is employed in this study to identify the functions of CS used by the pupils during English lessons. The samples for this study are multiethnic and were purposely chosen for this study. This study involves a mixed-methods design where data were obtained via questionnaire and semi-structured interview focusing on how pupils use CS to enhance communication and learning. Findings indicate that pupils frequently engage in CS for a number of reasons, such as to express equivalence when a concept may be more easily articulated in their native language, to hold the conversational floor where the speaker controls the conversation while searching and formulating the right word in thoughts, and to utilize metalanguage for discussing language use. Additionally, CS serves as a means of reiteration where the year 5 pupils repeat in another language for emphasis or clarity, as group membership where CS creates a bond between year 5 pupils that emphasises identity and solidarity, as conflict control in order to avoid any conflict, and as alignment and disalignment where the pupils code-switch to build rapport or to distance themselves from other speaker perspectives. Understanding these functions provides insight into how bilingual pupils navigate linguistic challenges and maintain social bonds in the classroom.*

Keywords*: functions, code-switching, pupils*

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Introduction

Code-switching (CS) is the alternate use of multiple languages in the same discourse or even within a single utterance (Milroy and Muysken, 1995). This phenomenon is frequently observed in countries that are multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious, where many people are bilingual or multilingual. The communication patterns in such communities are influenced by the languages spoken by different groups. According to Abubakar, Hassan, and Muhedeeen (2019), CS is a common occurrence in communities where people speak multiple languages, as it helps in achieving effective communication by mixing different linguistic varieties within a single discourse. Therefore, CS is inevitable in educational settings such as Malaysia, where bilingual and multilingual learners utilize different utterances. Pupils often switch between English and their native languages, such as Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil, to facilitate communication. Kamisah and Misyana (2011) suggest that CS is a natural part of classroom interaction in settings with multi-ethnic, bilingual, or multilingual learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds, making it challenging to have classroom discourse entirely in a single language. Ernie (2011), in a study on teacher CS in ESL classrooms focusing on linguistic patterns, functions, and student perceptions, finds that it is typical for teachers and students in multilingual settings to switch between languages. In contrast, Al-Qaysi (2018) argues that CS serves as a means of societal interaction, bridging the linguistic gap between the native and target languages to enhance clarity and communication. While CS may be viewed as a hindrance to language learning, it serves multiple practical functions in the classroom. This study seeks to investigate the specific functions of CS among Year 5 pupils during English lessons, highlighting how these switches aid both communication and social interaction.

Literature Review

Functions of Code-switching

The phenomenon of code-switching (CS), especially within multilingual contexts, has been the subject of considerable scholarly inquiry aimed at elucidating the rationale behind speakers' alternation between languages in conversational settings. Gumperz (1982) underscores the necessity of a meticulous examination of succinct spoken interactions to discern and articulate the diverse functions of CS. According to Myers-Scotton (1997), speakers engage in CS as a way to negotiate shifts in social distance between themselves and other participants in a conversation, indicating that social conditions play a key role in determining language use within communities. Verschueren (1999) views the functions of CS as enabling individuals to choose flexibly from various linguistic options to meet their communicative needs (p. 61). Wardaugh (2006) similarly argues that various factors influence the choice of codes in specific contexts. Cook (2008) proposes that bilingual speakers code-switch for several reasons, highlighting some of the most common motivations. One key reason is to report what another speaker has said. Additionally, speakers may code-switch to emphasize certain information or when they perceive that one language is more appropriate for discussing particular topics. Cook also notes that the choice of language can reflect a speaker's social role. Bullock and Toribio (2009) assert that CS functions as an indicator of group membership and a means of expressing solidarity among individuals within a community. Ferguson (2009) points out that CS is often multifunctional, making it difficult to assign a single explanation to every instance of switching. Ewert (2010) underscores the complexity and variability of the reasons behind CS. Ammar (2016) categorizes the functions of CS into three major areas: social, linguistic, and psychological motivations. He describes CS as a skilled communicative practice with specific intent. Social and linguistic motivations arise when speakers switch languages to facilitate easier and quicker communication, particularly when they cannot recall certain words in their native language. This is often due to the widespread use of foreign words within their

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community, which may surpass the use of equivalent terms in their first language. Ammar (2016) also highlights psychological motivations for CS, noting that in the Arab community, English is frequently used to avoid uncomfortable or embarrassing situations. For example, speakers may opt for English phrases such as "sorry" or "thank you" rather than their Arabic equivalents, as they perceive the English terms to carry less emotional weight or personal implication. In conclusion, the functions of CS are diverse and context-dependent, varying according to the situation and the participants involved. Speakers code-switch purposefully, and their reasons for doing so range from social and linguistic considerations to psychological motivations. In conclusion, research indicates that CS serves a range of purposes, from managing interpersonal interactions to filling in communication gaps. Each instance of CS is shaped by the linguistic, social, and psychological needs of the speakers involved.

The Functional Models of Code-Switching

The functions of code-switching (CS) refer to the various purposes it serves in communication, such as bridging language gaps, emphasizing points, managing conversations, and signaling social identity. Scholars emphasize that CS helps bilingual speakers fulfill communicative needs and adapt to social contexts (Gumperz, 1982; Appel & Muysken, 2006). According to Neo (2011), functional models of CS often focus on how speakers use their multilingual linguistic resources to fulfill communication goals, highlighting how communicative needs trigger CS and result in specific communicative outcomes.

Gumperz's (1982) Conversational Functions of Code-switching

Gumperz (1982) created a typology that outlines the typical functions of metaphorical CS, which is a specific form of conversational CS. He posits that CS serves as a conversational strategy to express social meanings, which encompass quotation, addressee specification, interjection, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization versus objectivization. According to Gumperz (1982), CS serves as a quotation when one speaker reports another's speech within a conversation, preserving the original content or style. This function also helps avoid translation between languages, thereby reducing the risk of inaccuracies in message transmission. CS also plays a crucial role in addressing specific individuals within a conversation, particularly when the addressee is not directly involved. This function often occurs in group discussions, where the switch signals an invitation for the specified addressee to participate in the discourse. Beyond directing messages, code-switching is used for interjections or sentence fillers, enhancing clarity, understanding, or expression. Another important function is reiteration, where the message is repeated in another language, either in its original form or with modifications, to enhance clarity or emphasize the point. CS also functions to qualify messages, where one language introduces a topic and another language elaborates on it. Finally, the distinction between personalization and objectivization in CS allows speakers to differentiate between factual statements and opinions, reflecting personal feelings, thoughts, or knowledge.

Appel and Muysken's (2006) Functions of Code-switching

Appel and Muysken (1987) expanded on Muhlhausler's (1981) functional model of CS, influenced by the research of Jakobson (1960) and Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens (1964). They determined six functions of CS, and the functions are known as referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic. Referential switching occurs when a speaker lacks proficiency in a specific language regarding a particular topic and chooses to switch to another language to bridge the linguistic deficiency (Appel & Muysken, 2006, p.118). This phenomenon is frequently observed among bilingual individuals who resort to their second language when they are uncertain about the correct word or phrase in their primary language.The directive function of CS involves

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including or excluding specific individuals from a conversation, directly influencing the hearer (Appel & Muysken, 2006, p. 119). Expressive switching highlights the speaker's multilingual identity, while phatic switching, similar to Gumperz's (1982) metaphorical CS, uses language switching to adjust the conversational tone. Metalinguistic switching occurs when speakers reflect on their own language choices, and poetic switching refers to language alternation for aesthetic purposes, such as making puns, telling jokes, or generating poetic effects. While these functional models of CS have been developed based on studies in various social contexts, the following section will focus specifically on the functions of CS within educational settings.

Functions of Code-Switching in Educational Settings

Hymes (1962) identifies four fundamental functions of code-switching (CS) in the classroom and categorises them as expressive, directive, metalinguistic, and poetic. The expressive function allows students to convey emotions, while the directive function is employed when a speaker aims to guide or direct someone, effectively capturing the listener's attention. The metalinguistic function serves to define terms, paraphrase concepts, and employ metaphors. The poetic function incorporates humor, anecdotes, or quotations to enhance English conversations. Valdés-Fallis (1978) explains that CS often occurs in classrooms because a bilingual speaker may be less proficient in one language, prompting a switch to their stronger language to emphasize or clarify their points. Sert (2005) adds that CS acts as a strategy to convey intended meanings, helping avoid misunderstandings through repetition. According to Garcia, Bartlett, and Kleifgen (2007), classrooms are environments where students from diverse linguistic backgrounds communicate in multiple languages to make sense of their learning experiences. Garcia (2010) emphasizes that students engage in instructional conversations with their peers and teachers, which may involve languages other than the primary language of instruction. To further explore the functions of CS in classrooms, the following section reviews contributions from various scholars.

Canagarajah (1995) Classroom Functions of Code-Switching

Canagarajah (1995) differentiates between micro and macro functions of CS in educational settings. Micro-functions address specific classroom dynamics, while macro-functions relate to broader socio-educational issues. He subdivides micro-functions into classroom management and content transmission functions. Classroom management functions focus on how code-switching aids teachers and students in effectively regulating interactions, encompassing actions such as negotiating, requesting assistance, managing discipline, giving directions, and facilitating informal interactions. Content transmission functions enhance communication related to lesson content through explanations, parallel translations, definitions, and cultural relevance discussions.

Eldridge (1996) Classroom Functions of Code-Switching

Eldridge (1996) offers a view of code-switching (CS) as a form of negative transfer, suggesting that it should be minimized in classroom settings to encourage greater use of the target language. He observes that CS often occurs when students need to clarify, reinforce, or emphasize messages that were not fully understood in the target language, with students reverting to their native language to ensure comprehension. Through his research, Eldridge (1996) identifies several linguistic and social functions of CS, which are integral to my study. These functions include equivalence, floor-holding, metalanguage, reiteration, group membership, conflict control, alignment, and disalignment. Equivalence involves students using their mother tongue to find an equivalent word or phrase when they do not know the correct term in the target language. Floor-holding refers to students using their native language

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to maintain communication and avoid breakdowns due to limited fluency. Metalanguage refers to using the native language to comment on or discuss tasks presented in the target language, aiding students in processing and understanding the learning material. Reiteration occurs when students repeat a message in their native language to reinforce understanding after it has already been delivered in the target language. Group membership reflects the use of the native language as a marker of in-group identity, signaling a sense of belonging to a particular social or cultural group within the classroom. Conflict control involves using CS to prevent misunderstandings, allowing students to convey their intended meaning more accurately. Finally, alignment and disalignment describe how students adopt or adjust social roles during conversations, either maintaining or shifting these roles through their language choices. By employing Eldridge's (1996) framework, this study explores how Year 5 pupils employ the functions of code-switching during English lessons to enhance communication, navigate social dynamics, and address linguistic challenges.

Ferguson (2003) Classroom Functions of Code-Switching

Ferguson (2003) highlights similarities in findings across studies examining the role of CS in various classroom contexts. He notes the lack of an agreed-upon taxonomy for pedagogical functions and proposes a broad classification of functional CS. His first category, CS for curriculum access, relates to using CS to convey lesson content in ESL classrooms. The second category, CS for classroom discourse management, addresses the transition from lesson-related discussions to managing classroom interactions. CS for classroom management refers to maintaining discipline and managing learner behavior, while CS for interpersonal purposes focuses on establishing and maintaining social relationships between teachers and students, emphasizing the social and emotional dimensions of language education.

Moradkhani (2012) Classroom Functions of Code-Switching

Moradkhani (2012) asserts that the functions of CS encompass the tasks accomplished in the classroom through the use of the first language (L1), distinguishing them from reasons for using CS. For instance, when a teacher translates a term into L1, that act is a function, whereas doing so to save time is a reason. Building on previous studies of CS functions in classrooms, he develops a typology that incorporates instances of teacher CS within a comprehensive framework. Moradkhani (2012) categorizes these functions into two main sections: pedagogical functions, which include translation, metalinguistic, and communicative uses, and social functions, which involve managing the class, building rapport with students, and providing instructions.

Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the functions of code-switching (CS) from English to other languages among Year 5 pupils during their English lessons in selected national primary schools in Penang Island using Eldridge's (1996) framework of CS functions. By examining the various ways in which these pupils use CS, this research seeks to identify the contexts and purposes that drive their linguistic choices. This mixed-methods study utilizes both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather comprehensive data on how pupils employ CS as a communicative strategy to enhance their learning experience and interact effectively with their peers. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of bilingual communication in educational settings, offering insights into how Year 5 pupils navigate their linguistic environments.

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This study is designed to address the following objectives:

i. To examine the functions of code-switching from English to other languages used by Year 5 pupils during English lessons, as outlined in Eldridge's (1996) framework.
ii. To investigate the purposes of code-switching from English to other languages used by Year 5 pupils during English lessons.

Aligned with the objectives mentioned above, this study seeks to address the following research questions.

Research Questions

i. What are the functions of code-switching from English to other languages used by Year 5 pupils during English lessons, as outlined in Eldridge's (1996) framework?
ii. How does code-switching from English to other languages help Year 5 pupils fulfill their communicative needs during English lessons?

Research Methods

This study investigates code-switching (CS) among Year 5 pupils during English lessons, with a focus on identifying its functions and understanding the reasons behind its usage. Employing a mixed method, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed simultaneously. This approach enables the research to address the same questions from multiple perspectives, providing a comprehensive understanding of CS functions among Year 5 pupils. Creswell (2012) suggests that research methods should align with the study's objectives and questions. In line with this, the study uses questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather data. Quantitative data, derived from questionnaires, explore the functions of CS, while qualitative data, obtained through semi-structured interviews, delve into pupils' reasons of CS in the classroom. The mixed-methods approach strengthens the findings, offering deeper insight into how bilingual pupils navigate their linguistic environments.

Participants

The participants for this study consist of Year 5 pupils, aged 11, from five national primary schools on Penang Island. The pupils were selected purposefully to help the researcher understand how and why they code-switch during English lessons. Year 5 pupils, having been exposed to English for five to six years, are considered appropriate for this study due to their age, maturity, and language exposure. Quantitative data were collected from 340 pupils, while qualitative data were obtained from 50 pupils across the five schools. Sample sizes were determined based on guidelines from Sekaran (2003) and Creswell (2012), with the study exceeding recommended participant numbers to reduce potential sampling errors. Pupils were selected from two classes per school, with class sizes ranging from 25 to 35 pupils. Schools A, B, and C contributed 35 pupils per class, School D contributed 35 and 29 pupils from two classes, and School E contributed 33 pupils per class. For the qualitative data, five pupils were selected from each class. Informed consent was obtained through information sheets provided to parents in both English and Bahasa Malaysia, explaining the study's purpose. Parents were given two to three days to review the materials and return signed consent forms, allowing their children to participate. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no risk of harm, and pupils could withdraw at any point. Data were collected respectfully and in a supportive environment. The study employed a closed-item questionnaire in both English and Malay, consisting of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and Likert-scale ratings (1-5) of ten statements. The questionnaires were administered during school hours with the cooperation of school principals

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and teachers, ensuring a smooth process. The research instruments were designed solely to investigate CS among Year 5 pupils during English lessons.

Demography of the participants for Quantitative Study

Table 1: Demography of Participants for Quantitative Study

	Ethnics	Number of Participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Main Ethnics	Malay	122	35.9
	Chinese	91	26.8
	Indian	102	30.0
Other Ethnics	Ceylonese	4	1.2
	Eurasian	11	3.2
	Filipino	2	.6
	Gujarati	1	.3
	Iban	3	.9
	Punjabi	4	1.2
Total		340	100

Table 1 outlines the ethnic composition of participants in the quantitative study, with a total of 340 participants. The largest group was Malays, comprising 35.9% of participants, followed by Chinese at 26.8% and Indians at 30.0%. The remaining 7.3% were from various other ethnic backgrounds, with Eurasians forming the largest subgroup at 3.2%. Other groups included Ceylonese (1.2%), Punjabi (1.2%), Iban (0.9%), Filipino (0.6%), and Gujarati (0.3%). This diverse representation reflects Malaysia's multicultural society, highlighting the importance of considering ethnic backgrounds when analyzing how cultural factors might influence language use and CS among Year 5 pupils during English lessons**.**

Demography of the participants for Qualitative Study

Table 2 : Demography of Participants for Qualitative Study

	Ethnics	Number of Participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Main Ethnics	Malay	14	28
	Chinese	17	34
	Indian	13	26
Others	Eurasian	2	4
	Punjabi	4	8
Total		50	100

Table 2 presents the demographic composition of participants in the qualitative study, consisting of 50 individuals from various ethnic backgrounds. Chinese participants represented the largest group at 34%, followed by Malays at 28% and Indians at 26%, making up a combined 88% of the sample. The remaining 12% included Punjabis (8%) and Eurasians (4%). This distribution reflects Malaysia's multicultural diversity and ensures balanced representation across key ethnic groups. The diversity among participants provides valuable insights into how

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cultural factors impact language use and CS behaviors, offering a thorough understanding of CS patterns among Year 5 pupils during English lessons.

Data Analysis

Ary et al.'s (2010) describe data analysis as a systematic process of examining and organizing data to enhance understanding and effectively communicate findings that is applied to both quantitative and qualitative data. This combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches ensured a comprehensive analysis of CS usage, facilitating a thorough understanding of its functions in the classroom context.

Quantitative Data

The quantitative data was collected from 340 pupils via questionnaires and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The questionnaire helped validate the research findings by providing key insights and personal information about participants' code-switching (CS) during English lessons. To structure the data, variables such as gender, ethnicity, scores, and grades were coded as nominal variables. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to analyze the data, offering an overview of the various functions of CS employed by Year 5 pupils during English lessons.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with 50 pupils. In carrying out this research, the researcher utilized inductive coding to analyze the qualitative data. As noted by Creswell (2012), the inductive coding approach requires the researcher to thoroughly examine detailed data, such as interview transcriptions, before developing or establishing overarching codes and themes derived from the collected data. Consequently, this study adopts Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Phases of Thematic Analysis, which include the following steps:

i. Familiarization with the data.
ii. Generate initial codes.
iii. Identification of themes.
iv. Review themes.
v. Define themes.
vi. Write up the findings.

Moreover, each of the recorded interview sessions was transcribed using verbatim transcription. This method of transcription was chosen to facilitate the extraction of detailed excerpts from the interviews. Thus, the researcher employed thematic analysis to enhance the interpretation of the findings.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion section are organized into two primary parts. The results present the data analysis based on the information obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews conducted with the participants. The research aimed to address two key objectives: (1) to examine the functions of code-switching used by Year 5 pupils during English lessons, and (2) to investigate the purposes behind pupils' use of CS. The mixed method employed in this study explored how these functions manifested and supported the findings of the study. The findings of both methods of the study, quantitative and qualitative, are organized according to the functions of code-switching (CS) outlined in Eldridge's (1996) framework.

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RQ1: What are the functions of code-switching from English to other languages used by Year 5 pupils during English lessons, as outlined in Eldridge's (1996) framework?

A Likert scale with five response options was used to evaluate ten items in the questionnaire. The results, summarized in Table 4.1, highlight key patterns of code-switching among year 5 pupils, shedding light on its various functions in the classroom setting.

Table 3 : Functions of Code-switching among year 5 pupils' during English lessons

No	Items	Never		Hardly ever		Often		Most of the time		Every time		Functions of CS	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	I mix English with other languages when I am unable to communicate in English.	42	12.4	54	15.9	106	31.2	67	19.7	71	20.9	Eq
2	I mix English with other languages to help me in a discussion.	35	10.3	51	15.0	100	29.4	67	19.7	87	25.6	FH
3	I mix English with other languages when explaining difficult words and sentences to my classmates	3	0.9	5	1.5	105	30.9	129	37.9	98	28.8	Re, ML
4	I mix English with other languages to make my classmates understand what I mean.	1	0.3	1	0.3	79	23.2	165	48.5	94	27.6	Re
5	I mix English with other languages with my classmates when I cannot find the right word in English.	6	1.8	48	14.1	82	24.1	84	24.7	120	35.3	Eq, GM
6	I mix English with other languages to discuss a certain topic which is easier to discuss	7	2.1	6	1.8	106	31.2	131	38.5	90	26.5	FH

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	in other languages.											
7	I mix English with other languages because I feel comfortable in using more than one language when I speak.	14	4.1	56	16.5	94	27.6	73	21.5	103	30.3	CC
8	I use mix English with other languages because it helps me to carry out tasks easily.	6	1.8	8	2.4	67	19.7	134	39.4	125	36.8	AD
9	I mix other languages words in between when I am talking in English with my classmates.	5	1.5	5	1.5	53	15.6	108	31.8	169	49.7	Eq,GM
10	I mix the sentences between English and other languages when I am talking with my classmates.	7	2.1	1	0.3	52	15.3	115	33.8	164	48.2	GM

Note. F= frequency %= percentage Eq = Equivalence FH = Floor Holding
ML= Metalanguage Re= Reiteration GM= Group membership CC= Conflict control AD= Alignment and Disalignment

Table 3 outlines the functions of CS as identified among Year 5 pupils during English lessons, based on Eldridge's (1996) framework, which includes seven distinct functions of CS: equivalence, floor-holding, metalanguage, reiteration, group membership, conflict control, and alignment and disalignment. Each questionnaire item has been categorised according to its relevant function, noting that some items may correspond to multiple functions. The findings of each function are presented according to its category.

Equivalence

According to Eldridge (1996) equivalence refers to using the native language to find equivalent terms when students struggle to express themselves in the target language. This is one of the most prominent functions in this study where the pupils code-switch to their native language when they cannot find the right word in English. Equivalence is notably evident in items 1, 5, and 9. The findings reveal that a significant number of pupils utilize CS to find equivalent terms in their native language when they struggle to communicate in English. Item 9 received the highest frequency, with 49.7% of participants indicating they code-switch every time. Additionally, item 5 showed substantial use of equivalence, with 35.3% of pupils reporting that

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they incorporate words from other languages while speaking English with their classmates every time. Conversely, item 1 indicated moderate usage, with 31.2% of participants stating they often mix English with other languages when facing communication difficulties. The results reveal that CS as a crucial tool for overcoming communication barriers, especially for year 5 pupils in multilingual classrooms where it helps to fill lexical gaps.

Floor holding

Floor-holding refers to the use of CS to maintain the flow of conversation and prevent communication breakdowns (Eldridge,1996). Items 2 and 6 reflect this function, where the pupils use CS to help continue discussions or talk about topics that may be easier in their native language. Item 6 reported the highest frequency, with 38.5% of participants indicating they often code-switch. The results demonstrate that the Year 5 pupils actively use CS to prevent pauses or breakdowns in conversation, emphasizing the pragmatic role of CS in classroom interaction.

Meta language

Eldridge (1996) defines metalanguage as using their native language to discuss, comment on, and evaluate tasks presented in the target language. In contrast, the use of metalanguage appears less frequent compared to other functions. Item 3 suggests that some pupils employ CS to clarify difficult words and sentences for their classmates, with 37.9% of participants indicating that they code-switch most of the time. This is consistent with Eldridge's (1996) view that CS serves as a metalinguistic tool, helping pupils navigate complex concepts and enhance their understanding of the lesson.

Reiteration

Reiteration involves using CS to repeat or clarify a message, often to ensure that the listener fully understands. The findings indicates that CS was utilized for reiteration. Items 3 and 4 demonstrated that pupils often use CS to repeat or reinforce messages in their native language to enhance understanding among peers. Specifically, 27.6% of participants indicated they frequently employ CS for this purpose (item 4). Eldridge (1996) suggests that reiteration helps pupils reinforce key points.

Group membership

Group membership also emerged as a significant function. Group membership refers to using CS to foster a sense of belonging, identity, or solidarity with peers. Items 5, 9, and 10 highlighted that pupils mix English with other languages to foster a sense of identity or belonging among their classmates. Item 10 had the highest frequency, with 48.2% of participants indicating they do this every time. Eldridge (1996) discusses how CS is used to signal group membership, allowing students to identify with a peer group. The results revealed that the pupils switch languages to feel connected with their classmates and use CS as a social tool, creating bonds and reinforcing group dynamics.

Conflict Control

Eldridge (1996) states that conflict control involves using CS to avoid misunderstandings, enabling students to express their intended meaning more clearly. Item 7 illustrated that some pupils code-switch to avoid misunderstandings, though this function was reported less frequently, with 30.3% indicating they code-switch every time.

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Alignment and disalignment

Alignment and disalignment refer to the use of CS to either align with or distance oneself from specific social roles, ideologies, or expectations (Eldridge, 1996). In this study it is observed in item 8 which revealed that pupils use CS to align or disalign with certain social roles, with a moderate frequency of 36.8% indicating they code-switch most of the time. In summary, this study highlights the diverse functions of CS observed among pupils during English lessons.

The most prevalent functions include equivalence, where students switch languages to find equivalent terms, and floor-holding, which helps maintain fluency and prevent communication breakdowns. Less frequently noted functions include metalanguage, reiteration, group membership, conflict control, and alignment and disalignment, demonstrating that CS serves a variety of purposes beyond mere language switching. These findings indicate that pupils use CS to express their identity, foster social connections, and navigate social interactions within the classroom. Overall, the study underscores the significance of understanding the functions of CS in educational contexts. Educators can leverage this knowledge to cultivate inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse linguistic needs of students, ultimately promoting effective language learning and enhancing social interactions. experience and facilitate effective interaction with peers and teachers. Ultimately, the findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of bilingual communication in educational settings, shedding light on how Year 5 pupils navigate their linguistic environments. By elucidating the functions of CS, this study aims to inform teaching practices and support bilingual learners in their language development.

RQ 2: How does code-switching from English to other languages help Year 5 pupils fulfil their communicative needs during English lessons?

To answer the second question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 50 participants. Given the confidentiality of the participants' involvement in this study, codes were used to represent the schools, participants, and their ethnic backgrounds. The code for each school is denoted by “S,” followed by “A,” “B,” “C,” “D,” or “E,” where SA represents School A, SB is School B, SC for School C, SD for School D, and SE for School E. On the other hand, the ethnicities are categorised as “M” for Malay, “C” for Chinese, “I” for Indian, and “O” for others, and the participants are referred to as "P,” followed by a number, which indicates the participant’s sequence. For example, “SAMP1” refers to School A, Malay Participant 1. The findings were grouped into nine key themes such as unfamiliarity with English vocabulary, comfortable atmosphere, aiding friends in grasping the lesson, complexity of the language, anxiety about mistakes, restricted sharing, exhibiting feelings, and peer influence. The findings for each of these themes are discussed individually and are aligned with Eldridge’s (1996) functions of CS and supported by other proponents of functions of CS. Notably, some themes are aligned with more than one of Eldridge’s (1996) functions of CS, reflecting the multifaceted nature of CS in the classroom context.

Unfamiliar with English Vocabulary

The findings revealed that a significant reason for CS among participants was their unfamiliarity with English vocabulary. Many pupils reported that they struggled to find the appropriate English words, encountered difficulties with certain terms, felt uncertain about their usage, or did not know the words altogether. This reflects with Eldridge’s (1996) equivalence function of CS, where pupils switch to their first language (L1) to substitute an unknown word or phrase in English. Participants provided numerous examples to illustrate these challenges:

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SAMP1 : "Hmmm... I mix... when I don't know the words in English."
SAIP3 : "When I'm unable to use the right word or words."
SBCP1 : "I mix between languages... when I don't know the words in English."
SBOP2 :"When I'm, I'm unable to use the right word or words."
SCMP1 :"Err... I mix when, when I don't... know the words in English."
SDMP1 : "Hmmm... I mix... mix... because I don't know the words in English."
SDMP3 :"Hmmm... I mix when I'm confused with the words."
SEMP3 : "Errr... I mix because... I don't know the meanings of the words."
SECP2 : "...I mix between languages when... I'm confused with English words."

These responses highlight how unfamiliarity with vocabulary prompts code-switching during English lessons. For instance, SAMP1's statement, "I mix... when I don't know the words in English," illustrates the frequent use of L1 as a fallback when the participant cannot recall or does not know an English term. Similarly, SAIP3's response, "When I'm unable to use the right word or words," reflects difficulties in selecting the correct vocabulary, while SBCP1 confirms, "I mix between languages... when I don't know the words in English." These examples underscore a common pattern: when students encounter unfamiliar or confusing English terms, they resort to using their native language to ensure communication continues smoothly. This behaviour aligns with Hymes' (1962) metalinguistic function of CS, where pupils use their L1 to define, explain, or clarify meanings when their English vocabulary is insufficient. For instance, SEMP3's comment, "I mix because... I don't know the meanings of the words," demonstrates how pupils switch to their L1 to express ideas they cannot articulate in English. Similarly, SECP2's mention of being "confused with English words" supports this, indicating that code-switching is used as a strategy to overcome linguistic uncertainty. Overall, these findings suggest that unfamiliarity with English vocabulary is a major driver of code-switching in Year 5 English lessons. As Eldridge (1996) points out, code-switching often serves as a tool for equivalence when pupils lack the necessary lexical items in the target language. This suggests that to reduce reliance on code-switching, English language teaching should place a stronger emphasis on vocabulary development, particularly on the words and phrases pupils find most challenging. By addressing this gap through targeted vocabulary instruction, teachers can help students build confidence in using English-only responses, thereby minimizing the need for code-switching.

Comfortable Atmosphere

The findings discovered that the Year 5 pupils frequently code-switch during English lessons for a comfortable and engaging environment with their peers. This use of CS involves facilitating communication, making conversations easier, promoting comfort and familiarity, ensuring their classmates feel at ease, and encouraging positive interactions. This theme agrees with more than one of Eldridge's (1996) functions of CS, such as floor-holding, group membership, and equivalence. This function of CS also reflects broader sociolinguistic perspectives on the social functions of CS. The results are classified according to the identified Eldridge's functions of CS. Firstly, the findings highlight how this theme matches with the function of floor-holding CS among year 5 pupils during English. According to Eldridge (1996), floor-holding refers to the way speakers use language switching to keep control of the conversation, especially when they are uncertain about how to express something in the target language. In this study, many participants explained that they switch languages to prevent

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communication breakdowns, making the conversation smoother and easier to follow. For instance:

SACP1 : "Err…memudahkan komunikasi" (easier to communicate).
SAIP1 : "To make…my conversation easier with my calssmates.
SDIP1 : "Hmmm…to make my, my, my…converstion easier with my friends."

These examples reflect pupils' use of CS to maintain the conversational flow and avoid pauses. This aligns directly with Eldridge's floor-holding function, as participants are using CS to avoid silence and maintain control of the conversation while ensuring it continues smoothly. This is similar to Gumperz's (1982) concept of CS as a strategy to avoid interruptions. Gumperz (1982) argues that CS is often employed to manage conversational structure, which is crucial in classroom settings where maintaining participation is important for social interaction. Pupils switch to their familiar language to ensure they are not excluded from ongoing interactions. Another of Eldridge's (1996) functions of CS that is identified and in line with this theme is group membership, where CS helps to establish a sense of belonging and solidarity within a social group. The finding reveals that the pupils use CS to ensure that their friends feel comfortable and included in the conversation. Many participants explicitly stated that they mix languages to create a relaxed and familiar environment.

SBOP1 : "Hmmm…the reason I mix is to mix my friends feel, feel comfortable when err…when they are talking to me".
SCIP1 : "Hmmm… because it is comfortable to say it in the language that everyone knows."
SCIP3 :"The reason I mix… is to make my friends feel comfortable during conversation."

These responses show that the participants code-switch not only for linguistic ease but also to foster positive social dynamics in the classroom. By using a language that everyone in the group is familiar with, they ensure that all the classmates feel included and at ease, promoting a collaborative and engaging environment. This finding resonates with Myers-Scotton (1997), where the speakers engage in CS as a way to negotiate shifts in social distance between themselves and other participants in a conversation, indicating that social conditions play a key role in determining language use within communities. Eldridge's (1996) equivalence function of CS is also parallel with this theme. Although the results are less prominent, some instances reveal the equivalence function of CS during English lessons among year 5 pupils. For instance:

SACP3: "Hmmm… helps me to interact with, with all my friends in the language that they know.

In this situation, SACP3 highlights the importance of choosing a language that is known by the group, which might suggest that CS facilitates communication by providing lexical equivalence when English vocabulary is insufficient or challenging to recall. Eldridge's (1996) equivalence function explains how CS helps speakers substitute terms when they face lexical gaps, ensuring communication flows more smoothly. Similarly, Valdés-Fallis (1978) explains that CS often occurs in classrooms because a bilingual speaker may be less proficient in one language, prompting a switch to their stronger language to emphasize or clarify their points. In this case, CS allows participants to overcome limitations in their English vocabulary by using the language most familiar to their peers,

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which ensures the message is communicated clearly. The results reveal that pupils use CS not just for linguistic purposes but to cultivate a positive classroom atmosphere where their friends feel comfortable expressing themselves.

Anxious about Mistakes

The findings suggest that a small group of participants use code-switching (CS) during English lessons due to a fear of making mistakes. This aligns with Eldridge's (1996) floor-holding function of CS, where pupils code-switch to their native language when they are uncertain about expressing themselves in the target language, thus avoiding communication breakdown. Eldridge (1996) argues that bilingual speakers often resort to CS when they fear losing control of the conversational "floor" due to linguistic uncertainties in their second language (L2). This is evident in the following examples:

SACP4 :"Hmmm…, I'm afraid of making mistakes during conversation."

SBMP3:"Shy... to use English. Takut... ah... salah sebut." (Afraid of mispronouncing).

SEOP :"Err… I mix between… languages because, uh, I'm scared to make mistakes."

In these examples, pupils switch to their L1 when they feel uncomfortable continuing in English, reflecting their need to retain control over the conversation without risking grammatical or lexical errors. This supports Eldridge's (1996) argument that CS is used as a strategy to maintain communication flow when students feel insecure about their L2 proficiency. Furthermore, Ammar (2016) highlights that CS is frequently employed by students to reduce anxiety or avoid linguistic failures in a second language environment. Similarly, Canagarajah (1995) explains that CS serves an affective function, allowing students to manage their emotional responses in challenging linguistic situations. For instance, SBMP3's use of the Malay phrase "Takut... ah... salah sebut" can be seen as a strategy to alleviate the pressure of speaking English while maintaining engagement in the conversation. Canagarajah (1995) also notes that CS can be a protective mechanism, allowing students to avoid embarrassment or negative judgments when they feel uncertain about their language abilities. In conclusion, the fear of making mistakes is a key factor influencing the CS behavior of some Year 5 pupils during English lessons. This fear leads them to employ CS as a strategy to manage their anxiety and maintain control of the conversation. To address this, educators and policymakers may consider implementing strategies to alleviate this fear and encourage more confident use of English, potentially reducing the frequency of CS in the classroom.

Aid Friends in Grasping the Lessons

The findings indicate that some Year 5 pupils use CS to assist their friends during English lessons. The findings match closely with Eldridge's (1996) metalanguage function of CS, where the participants switch languages to explain or clarify concepts, especially in educational settings. This function is usually employed by the speakers during a conversation when they encounter difficulties in the target language and to ensure comprehension and reduce confusion among the speakers. For instance, the data highlights that the pupils switch to Malay, which is the language understood and commonly used in school, to help their friends comprehend the English language instructions:

SCCP2 : The reason I mix between languages….uh…to help my friends understand the lesson. I explain in Malay because all my classmates can speak and understand Malay.

SDOP1 : The reason I mix….to help my friends in the lesson.

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In these examples, the pupils deliberately code-switch to provide explanations in Malay because it is the language their friends are comfortable with and to make sure that their friends grasp the lesson content. This use of CS reflects Eldridge's metalanguage function of CS, where the primary objective is to facilitate understanding and prevent communication breakdown when it comes to discussing complex material in the second language, which is English. The findings also resonate with Canagarajah's (1995) functions of CS, particularly his content transmission function. Canagarajah (1995) notes that CS is often employed to aid in the communication of complex lesson content, especially when students feel that the L2 may not adequately convey the necessary information. Through CS, students are able to provide explanations, translations, and clarifications that make the lesson content more accessible to their peers. In this situation, the year pupils switch to Malay is not arbitrary but rather a conscious effort to ensure that the instructional material is understood by all, minimizing the risk of their peers falling behind due to language barriers. This function of CS as a peer-assistance tool echoes findings in similar studies. In this study, the participants' use of Malay serves precisely this purpose, allowing them to bridge gaps in understanding and provide immediate linguistic support to their peers. In conclusion, the pupils employ CS not only to maintain the flow of communication but also to support their peers by offering explanations and clarifications in their shared first language.

Complexity of the Language

The findings emphasize that some participants code-switch during English lessons due to the inherent complexities of the English language. These reflect difficulties in understanding the lessons, pronunciation challenges, and the overall difficulty of the language. These reasons are parallel with Eldridge's (1996) reiteration function of code-switching (CS), where the year 5 pupils code-switch from the target language, which is English, by repeating the message to another language to clarify or emphasise the content. According to Eldridge (1996), reiteration occurs when a speaker repeats a message in a different language to ensure comprehension or reinforce meaning. In this case, the year 5 pupils code-switch to another language when the initial message in English is not fully understood by the classmates. Participants gave examples to illustrate these reasons:

SBCP2 : I...., I.... mix between languages when I don't understand the lesson.
SDMP2 : ....I mix because.... English is difficult.
SDCP1 : The reason I mix between languages....uh when I'm not sure of the pronunciation.
SEMP2 : .....I mix because English words are difficult to, to ....sebut (pronounce).
SECP1 : The reason I mix ....because not sure of the pronunciation.

The findings highlight that the participants frequently cited the complexity of the English language as a primary reason for switching to other languages during English lessons. For instance, SBCP2 mentioned, "I mix between languages when I don't understand the lesson," which reflects the use of CS to ensure comprehension by reinforcing the message in a more familiar language. This is evident with Appel and Muysken's (2006) referential function, where the students switch languages to fill lexical gaps or when they lack specific English vocabulary. SDMP2, for example, noted, "I mix because English is difficult," illustrating the use of CS to address gaps in language proficiency. Some of the participants identified pronunciation difficulties as another reason for CS. This finding aligns with Gumperz's (1982) message qualification function, where students switch languages to elaborate or clarify meanings, especially when they are uncertain about the correct pronunciation of English words. SEMP2 explained, "I mix because English words are difficult to sebut (pronounce)," which reflects the practical use of CS to mitigate communication breakdowns caused by pronunciation challenges.

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Participant SDCP1 also noted that "The reason I mix between languages… when I'm not sure of the pronunciation." Similarly, SECP1, states, "The reason I mix ….because not sure of the pronunciation. This strategic use of CS helps sustain the interaction when language proficiency falters. These examples collectively underscore the complexities of the English language and their impact on the participants' learning experiences. The findings highlight the need for additional support and strategies to help students overcome language barriers and improve their English proficiency.

Accessibility and Comprehensibility of the Malay Language

The results showed that some participants code-switched during English lessons because they found Malay is easier to speak and understand. Participants provided examples to support these reasons:

SAMP2 : .....Um….. because senang nak cakap…. dalam bahasa Melayu.(easier to speak in Malay).
SAMP3 : Because Malay is easier to understand.
SACP2 : Because….Malay is easier to understand
SBMP2 :.It's because Malay is, is easier to speak and understand.
SCMP2 :I mix because easier to , to …say it Malay.

The participants highlight that the preference for Malay was linked to its perceived simplicity and ease of use. For instance, participant SAMP2 noted, "Um… because *senang nak cakap… dalam bahasa* Melayu**,**" indicating that speaking in Malay felt easier. Similarly, SAMP3 said, "Because Malay is easier to understand," emphasizing its greater comprehension compared to English. Other participants shared similar views, such as SACP2, who remarked, "Because Malay is easier to understand," and SBMP2, who explained, "It's because Malay is easier to speak and understand." SCMP2 also supported this, stating, "I mix because it's easier to say it in Malay." This is in accordance with Eldridge's (1996) function of group membership, where students use their native language as a marker of in-group identity, signaling their belonging to a particular social or cultural group. This is evident in this case where the participants reveal that it is easier to say it in Malay, suggesting a sense of comfort and shared identity when using Malay within the group. Similarly, Bullock and Toribio (2009) emphasize that CS can signal group membership and solidarity. This view supports Sert's (2005) argument that CS helps maintain group cohesion and manage interpersonal relations. For instance, the year 5 pupils may switch to Malay during English lessons to express solidarity with classmates, creating a sense of belonging, particularly in a diverse setting. By using Malay during English lessons, the participants are not merely switching for linguistic ease but also aligning themselves with classmates shared language.

Restricted Sharing

The findings indicate that some participants restrict sharing by using code-switching (CS) during English lessons for three primary reasons, which are to share answers discreetly, to communicate secrets, or to convey information they wish to keep private from other classmates. This reflects Eldridge's (1996) conflict control function of CS. Eldridge explains that speakers use CS to avoid conflicts or misunderstandings and ensure that information is only shared with the intended audience. This is evident in the following examples:

SBCP3 : Hmmm, I mix…when I only share some information with my Chinese friends.
SCCP3 : The reason ah….okay, When I only want to share answers or secret I use Hokkein with my Chinese friends.

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SCCP4 : I use Mandarin when I don't want my other classmates to know what I'm sharing.
SDCP2 : I mix between languages when ....I want to share secrets my friends.

These examples illustrate that the year 5 pupils use CS during English lessons as a tool to control access to sensitive information and avoid public disclosure. This is consistent with Eldridge's conflict control function of CS, where CS helps to manage social dynamics and potential conflicts in classroom interactions. Additionally, this corresponds with Verschueren's (1999) view of the functions of CS as enabling individuals to make flexible linguistic choices from a range of available options, allowing them to meet their communicative needs (p. 61). For instance, SCCP4 states that, I use Mandarin when I don't want my other classmates to know what I'm sharing. This illustrates that the participant deliberately switched to Mandarin, a language that other classmates do not understand, and ensured that the communication remained private within a particular group. Similarly, SBCP3 mentions, Hmmm, I mix…when I only share some information with my Chinese friends, and SCCP3 states that, The reason ah….okay, ah, okay, when I only want to share answers or secret I use Hokkein with my Chinese friends. These instances confirm that the participants use CS to strengthen ties with peers who share the same linguistic background. Garcia (2010) also revealed that students engage in instructional conversations with peers and teachers, sometimes involving languages other than the primary language of instruction. This is evident in participant SBCP3 and SCCP3's use of CS to share answers or secrets within specific groups, demonstrating how they strategically draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to meet the demands of their social environment. Overall, the findings underscore that CS is not simply a matter of linguistic preference but a socially strategic tool used by participants to navigate classroom interactions and maintain group boundaries.

Exhibiting Feelings

The findings show that a small group of participants engage in code-switching (CS) during English lessons to express their emotions. Notably, SBIP1 stands outs as the only participant in this study who specifically uses CS to scold friends from different ethnic groups, with the intention of preventing them from understanding the content. This behiviour aligns closely with Eldridge's (1996) conflict control function of CS, which refers to how CS is used to manage misunderstandings or conflict by controlling who can access the meaning of the conversation. In this situation, SBIP1 uses CS to express negative emotions, such as scolding, while ensuring that non-Indian friends do not comprehend the content. This is illustrated in the example below:

SBIP1: "I mix... when I scold my non-Indian friends in Tamil. I don't want them to know what I am saying."

This finding also aligns with Appel and Muysken's (2006) expressive function of CS, as SBIP1 uses Tamil to convey emotions. These findings highlight how CS can play a strategic interpersonal role, allowing individuals to manage social dynamics, express emotions, and prevent conflict by controlling access to the message.

Peer Influence

The findings reveal that a small number of Year 5 pupils engage in CS during English lessons due to peer influence. Two participants, SEIP1 and SEIP3, noted that they code-switch as a result of peer pressure. For example:

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SEIP1 : "I mix between languages because most of my classmates talk like that."
SEIP3 : "I mix between languages because most of my classmates talk like that."

This is in line with Eldridge's (1996) alignment and disalignment function of CS. This happens when students choose to align with certain friends or groups by using a language they understand, thereby signaling their connection to each other while disaligning from the rest of the class who does not understand the language. By switching to a language understood only by their in-group, they reinforce solidarity with the group and distance themselves from the others. The peer influence observed in this study also resonates with Bullock and Toribio's (2009) argument that CS serves as a marker of group membership.In conclusion, peer influence is identified as a factor affecting the CS behaviour of some Year 5 pupils during English lessons. Educators may consider addressing this influence as part of their strategies to manage CS in the classroom.

Conclusion

This study is among the few that have explored Year 5 pupils' use of code-switching (CS) during English lessons as a means to enhance communication, navigate linguistic obstacles, and strengthen social connections The results support Eldridge's (1996) functions of CS, which demonstrate that the year 5 pupils switch between English and other languages to bridge lexical gaps, clarify meanings, maintain conversational flow, and reinforce group solidarity. This indicates that CS serves both linguistic and social purposes in the classroom, providing a nuanced understanding of how bilingual pupils manage their communication in a learning environment. These insights have important implications for educators to understand why CS is used by bilingual learners during English lessons. By addressing the linguistic needs of these learners, teachers can foster a more inclusive and engaging classroom atmosphere.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researcher went through the procedure of obtaining research ethics approval from the Research Ethics Committee at Universiti Sains Malaysia. Every procedure involving human subjects in this study adhered to the ethical guidelines set forth by the institutional research committee. Authorization was secured from the Malaysian Ministry of Education, the Penang Education Department, the District Education Office, and the school principals participating in the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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