INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool to facilitate social interaction between people. In every interaction, language is used as a medium to convey thoughts, feelings and other messages. The language used can be verbal or non-verbal. However, understanding of the message is not dependent on language itself, but also on the context and non-verbal behaviour of the people, who are involved in interactions. The success of communication is dependent on how interlocutors work together to co-construct interactions.

From a social psychology perspective, the way speakers behave in interactions, is influenced by their social contexts. These social contexts are the various spheres of influence in different domains of communication, such as the family, school, community and culture. When people communicate, their language choice, discourse patterns, and communication style can be a product of these spheres of influence. In communication, it is always important to consider the language and the speaker’s intention. For example, if speakers want to persuade their interlocutor, they might use specific lexical items, discourse patterns, or communication styles that they learnt at home, school, in the community, or through other sociocultural contexts. Therefore, the way individuals behave in communication, can be a product of their exposure to different social contexts and objectives. It is evident that communication is an integral aspect of social psychology, and that language choices are integral to the study of communication. The choice is not necessarily between language X and language Y: it could be that mixing the languages is the preferred choice in certain multilingual contexts, such as in Malaysia. Myers Scotton (1993, 151-154) shows how code switching and mixing can be the default or unmarked choice, in her social psychological theory of markedness and rational actors.
In this article, interactions among and between the Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia are examined and analyzed. More specifically, the article aims to examine to apply some social psychological perspectives to the code switching phenomena, that can be observed in multilingual Malaysia.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, SPEECH AND COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION THEORY (CAT)

Social psychology is the scientific study of how people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others (Allport, 1985). People’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are demonstrated through language (verbal), and body language (non-verbal). In communication, the speaker’s language, reflects his or her inner thoughts and feelings. A speaker’s response to another interlocutor can sometimes be seen through outward behavior. The manner of an individual’s response to the speaker, can be explored through the application of Communication Accommodation Theory, as an analytic framework.

The concept of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) originated from Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) developed by Howard Giles and his colleagues in the 1960s and 1970s. SAT focuses on the ways in which individuals adjust their speech to one another, either to become more similar, or to accentuate their differences. This theory includes the language strategies of interaction processes of convergence and divergence. SAT describes the occurrence of linguistic and psychological convergence and divergence. A person’s integrative orientation to others, has been termed as psychological convergence, whereas psychological divergence denotes the desire of commitment to achieve greater distance and distinctiveness (Thakerar et al. 1982).

Giles (1973) initially developed this theory to explain variations in speech style during interactions. He originally used a socio-psychological model, but has since expanded the model extensively into an ‘interdisciplinary model of relational and identity processes in communicative interaction’ (Coupland & Jaworski, 1977, 241-242). The scope of CAT has expanded to include many other contexts relating to communication behaviours, such as verbal and nonverbal, and attitudes and perceptions (Shepard, Giles & Poire, 2001:33). The premises upon which CAT is based, are approximation strategies (convergence, divergence, maintenance and complementary), discourse management, interpretability and interpersonal control (Shepard, Giles & Poire, 2001:34).

Accommodation theory sees maintenance of mutual intelligibility between the interlocutors which results in the speaker’s adjustment of his or her speech to that of the addressee. There are two facets of accommodation, one convergent and the other divergent. The speakers will converge towards their interlocutor, when they wish to reduce social distance, or to advance the relationship with the other. Giles and Smith (1979: 46) say that ‘convergence refers to the processes whereby individuals shift their
speech styles to become more like that of those with whom they are interacting’. The assumption made in the development of CAT then is that ‘speech style shift is with the purpose of encouraging further communication and decreasing the perceived differences between the interactors’ (Giles & Smith, 1979: 46).

When they wish to increase social distance, or emphasise their distinctiveness, they will diverge (i.e. become linguistically less similar). Convergence can be displayed in communicative behaviour such as accents, idioms, dialects and code switching between languages. Other characteristics found within language groups are speech rate, pauses, utterance length, phonological variants, information density and self disclosure (Shepard, Giles & Poire, 2001: 35).

To converge in communication, speakers tend to use different accommodation strategies. Coupland et al. (1988) point out three other strategies of accommodation, namely interpretability, discourse management and interpersonal control. Interpretability strategies are manifested by one speaking louder, or slower, so that the listener understands what is being said more clearly. It focuses on the listener’s ability to interpret language performance, that occurs during the interaction. Discourse management strategies, on the other hand, are concerned with the other party’s conversational needs, and attempts to accommodate them. These can be manifested in interactions like sharing, topic selection, back channeling, face maintenance, or turn management. Finally, interpersonal control strategies are efforts to direct the way of interaction implicitly, or explicitly, by means of forms of address, or interruptions (Shepard, Giles & Poire, 2001: 36). Holmes (2008) uses speech accommodation to describe the process, whereby each person’s speech converges towards the speech of the other person with whom they are interacting. She further adds, that when a technical message is “translated” for the benefit of someone who does not know the jargon, speech accommodation is involved (Holmes, 2001: 231). Code switching is an important strategy used when one speaker accommodates the other. Such accommodation may occur consciously or unconsciously, partially or completely.

MALAYSIA: LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country with a population of 23.27 million who use at least 139 languages. Of the total population, Bumiputras (i.e., Malays and other indigenous groups) comprise 65.1 percent, Chinese 26.0 percent and Indians 7.7 percent. While the Malay majority consider themselves “indigenous,” ethnic non-Malays (such as the Chinese and the Indians) are described variously as “non-Bumiputras”, or more controversially as ‘immigrants’, since they arrived and settled in Malaysia during the colonial period.

In each group, a variety of languages and dialects are used and maintained. The Chinese community speaks several mutually unintelligible dialects, that linguists consider different languages including Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, Kwongsai, Hokchiu, Henghua, and others. Similarly, the Indians, speak at least nine
different languages, i.e. Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, and Sinhalese (Sri Lanka) (Abdullah Hassan, 2004).

Malays, Chinese and Indians found the need to learn and speak their languages for cultural reasons, and to preserve their identity. However, English and Malay have acquired a different status, or value in Malaysia. Malay is a dominant language, because it is the national language – the language of instruction and administration and employment in government service or the security forces. Malay is the language that is used most frequently for communication between people, who are not proficient in English. English is the language of the private sector. It is the language of trade and commerce, and of international diplomacy. It is the language of dominant groups in Malaysia – the language of the middle class elite, many of whom use the language as a first language at home, and with each other.

In earlier research, it has been shown that Malays, Chinese and Indians tend to use a mixed language with the ethnic language being dominant (see David, McLellen, Rafik-Galea & Abdullah, 2009). The various languages spoken by people from different ethnic backgrounds, have influenced the people’s patterns of interaction, and language use. The mixing of different languages has become common, to accommodate other speakers from other ethnic groups, who speak different languages. At present, most Malaysians speak two, or more languages, and people often mix different languages in a single interaction. The occurrence of code switching in Malaysia has led to some questions. When does code switching take place? Why do people code switch? Why do people mix languages? Why does a variation of a speech develop in societies? Does mixed language constitute a separate distinct variety? If so, is the expected or unmarked found in some interactional domains?

ACCOMMODATION AND CODE SWITCHING

In a multi-racial society such as Malaysia, Communication Accommodation Theory is widely applicable, as it serves as a tool that helps promote racial harmony during interaction between various ethnic groups. One of the most common accommodative strategies used in interactions, is code switching.

Haugen (1956) defines code switches as the alternative use of two languages. Code switching seems to be natural for most multilingual speakers, because they can switch from different languages freely, depending on what is available in their linguistic repertoire. Code switching has become an entrenched code in multilingual Malaysia (see David, 2003). It is no longer a rare feature, but it has become a normal feature in many conversations among, and between Malays, Chinese, Indians and other ethnic groups in Malaysia. Where previous research suggests, that code switching is used in informal settings, the studies in this article prove quite conclusively, that code switching is extensively used in both formal and informal settings. It occurs in the home domain, but is also noted in classroom settings and in professional work-place settings (see David, McLellen, Rafik-Galea & Abdullah, 2009).
Whereas previously, code switching was regarded negatively, and seen to be triggered by limited language proficiency, the data in this article, drawn from a range of settings in Malaysia, show the deliberate and strategic use of the mixed code, to achieve specific functional objectives. Moreover, the choice of language use in speech, or spoken discourse, is largely dependent on the social context. In Malaysia, the choice of language is affected by many factors such as the place of communication, and the social context, interlocutors, context/purpose of communication, social status, education, and ethnicity and culture.

In a multi-racial society, interracial interaction is unavoidable. People from different races meet and interact. Due to racial and linguistic differences, code switching and code mixing tend to take place, where the speakers switch from their dominant to another code, or language for various reasons, such as solidarity, distancing, or mitigating a face-threatening situation, or merely for more effective communication. It is not uncommon for an individual of one ethnic group, to be able to speak the heritage language of another ethnic group, due to inter-marriages between the different races, as well as neighbourhood influences, and education such as non-Chinese pupils studying in Chinese schools.

It cannot be denied that one major reason for code switching is limited proficiency in a language. In order to communicate, such speakers will use some communication strategies drawing on their multilingual capabilities. In such circumstances, code switching takes place as a language choice, to ensure that the meaning and message of communication is understood well by the receptor. However, there are many other reasons why code switching has become a *lingua franca* in a country where 139 languages are used (Lewis, 2009).

Studies by David, McLellen, Rafik-Galea & Abdullah (2009) on functions of code switching in the family domain in Malaysia, reveal that code switching frequently occurs in the family domain (an informal domain). The family is an important domain in which practices of code switching are found to occur. Families need to make decisions: should one use Malay, the national language, or English, an international language, or one’s ethnic language, or a mixed discourse consisting of more than one language. Decisions about language choice in the home are complex. Hafriza Burhanuddeen (2006), discussing the language choice of urban bilingual Malays in Kuala Lumpur, states that the use of the ethnic language is most dominant with grandparents, whilst English by itself, or mixed with Malay, is preferred for interaction with siblings. Such a choice with grandparents indicates politeness and respect, she posits. Kuang (2006) examines the conversation of a Malaysian Chinese child who has been exposed to two languages (English and Chinese), since birth. His utterances are found to alternate between Mandarin and English, and a mixed code emerges.

Talk across generations is often found to be fraught with misunderstandings: Jawakhir (2006) examines the strategies used in intergenerational talk in a Malay family, spanning three generations. Using conversation analysis based on about four hours of
tape-recorded conversations, Jawakhir describes how grandchildren of different ages, through code switches, interact with a grandfather who has a hearing impairment. Jawakhir’s study provides insights into how the younger generation perceive, convey, adjust, and maintain communication with their grandfather.

When disagreements arise over who has the legitimate power to determine language choice in families, conflicts may develop, relationships may become constrained, and each party may view the other as trying to control and dominate them. In another intergenerational study on talk between mothers and adolescent daughters, where disagreements and conflict occur due to differing opinions, values and goals, Jariah Mohd Jan (2006) explains how by using code switches, Malay mothers and daughters resolve potential disputes and conflicts and negotiate issues, in order to achieve mutual understanding with their parents.

Moving on from family to community studies, Kang Choo Bee (2001) examines the use of code switching and code mixing among the minority Peranakan Chinese community (PCC) in the Malay heartland state of Kelantan. The native language of the PCC is the Hokkien dialect. However, Kang points out that the Hokkien dialect has been assimilated and acculturated to include the following languages: Bahasa Melayu (with Kelantanese dialect), Thai (with Kelantanese dialect), English and Mandarin. It was found that the feature of code mixing i.e. the use of single lexical items was more prominent than code switching, in the daily discourse of this community. The characteristics of the Hokkien language in Kelantan has resulted in it becoming an unique mixed language.

Kang (2001) also found that the phenomena of code switching and code mixing occurs across different generations. She found that women with higher educational levels prefer to use Mandarin, or English, when they code switch as both languages are perceived as the “standard” language. The women believed that using the “standard language” reflects their prestige and social status in the community. Kang found that English code mixing occurs, because the speaker intends to stress items discussed, or explain something with better clarity. She also found that the younger generation with formal education, tends to use more English and Mandarin (rather than Bahasa Melayu/Malay) in their discourse. This is because English is viewed as a prestigious language, and reflects the social status and educational level of the speaker. Kang believes that the phenomena of code switching and code mixing, will continue in this community as long as the community is open and exposed to other languages.

Code switching does not only occur among this community, but is also found in the discourse of the Sindhi (David 1996), Bengali (Mukerjee, 2003), and Punjabi (David and Baljit, 2004) communities. Discussing the Malay Kelantanese community resident in Kuala Lumpur, Zuraidah (2003) reveals that they tend to switch to the Kelantanese dialect, to signal regional identity, and rapport with fellow Kelantanese.

Code switching in Malaysia appears in both spoken and written discourse, and does not only occur in informal domains, but also in formal domains. A number of
studies have been conducted in Malaysia on the significance of code switching in daily interactions in formal settings. Some examples of local studies are found in David’s (1999) observations on how Malaysians (Indians, Malays and Chinese) interact with each other, by shifting from one language to another in service encounters. In other settings, such as a government setting, Jariah Mohd Jan (2003) argues that Malay government officials shift between Malay and English, but shift to Malay, the national language as a power tool over non-Malay junior staff, to demonstrate status and power.

Chu (2005) studying doctor-patient interactions, examines the frequent use of code switching by the doctor and her patients in a clinical setting, to accommodate each other’s language choices. It was found that the reasons for accommodation by the doctor via code switching included politeness, for ease of understanding, as a private language to reduce fear and anxiety, as well as to result in closer doctor-patient relationships.

David (2003) uses the courtroom environment to show how a defending lawyer used dominant Bahasa Malaysia to start with, and shifts to English to emphasize an important point to the judge, that the accused had not committed any crime for 10 years. Her study describes a range of speech acts like reprimands, directives, requests, and warnings that are conveyed by using different intricate strategies, to show the semantic significance in certain specific situations. It is not only the lawyer who code switches, but also the judge.

Code switching is also prevalent in schools. Ong (1990) in her study of code-switching among bilingual Malay students in certain urban secondary schools shows that Malays students use code switching, because they are less proficient in one of the languages used (English). Code switching is used in this context as a communication repair strategy for the speakers, with a low degree of bilingualism, to ensure continuity of conversation with the speakers, with a high degree of bilingualism. They shift to another code, in order to express a personal view, or to emphasize a part of the message.

Code switching is also used when a speaker wants to achieve certain speech acts. For instance, it is sometimes easier to display one’s annoyance by switching from one dominant language to another language (see Example 1).

**Example 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context: An elder brother requests his younger brother to help him find an electrical plug</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

David, Kuang, McLellan, and Fatimah Hashim, 2009. (p.g. 20)
Code switching is sometimes used for the speech act of teasing. Teasing is a way interlocutors establish rapport (see David, Jariah Mohd. Jan, Kow & Yoong, 2006), but at the same time, to take the “sting” out of the tease, the speakers shift to another code. In Malaysia, where the concept of “face” for both parties is important, a speaker can distance himself from his comment, by shifting away from the code he is often associated with, to another code. This can save the face of both parties concerned. In Example 2, the matrix (dominant) language is English, and the Malay lexical item ‘loyar buruk’ represents the code switch.

**Example 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Husband and wife talking about an electronic gadget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Is that thing working or not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Working…I tested it yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>You should use it more often. It’s always lying in the drawer only. A waste of money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td><em>Aiya</em> you <em>loyar buruk</em>. (Malay - talk rubbish)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(StUDENT #1: Susila Devi Marimuthu)

Code switching is also used for emphasis. The code switch in Example 3 is used to emphasise, to indicate the severity of the injury, and to justify the punishment for the infringement of school rules – that of not wearing shoes.

**Example 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>What kind of question, it’s because I’m injured <em>la</em>.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why I’m wearing slippers?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Where injured?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>You see here <em>bengkak</em>. (swollen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(David & Lim, 2009 (p.g. 102)

Sometimes, Malaysians revert to code switching, to ensure that the message is not understood by a third party as shown in Example 4. The shift to English is to exclude the maid from the discourse. Because her maid does not know English, the use of English automatically excludes the maid from the conversation.

**Example 4: Indian family**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Wife and husband giving maid directives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td><em>Oh, Kamar Mandi.</em> (Malay - Bathroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>This girl doesn’t understand what I say.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Govindarajoo A/L Sinniah cited in David, Kuang, McLellan, and Fatimah Hashim, 2009(p.g. 14)
Code switches are also a common ways of expressing group solidarity, and this is seen through the switching of codes to accommodate different people with different language preferences, as shown in Example 5. Example 5 illustrates, how convergence is realised through an important speech act i.e. greetings. Example 5 takes place at the initial stages of a ‘chapel’ fellowship session, in an old folks home, where the elders, or senior citizens, are of different races. Here, the care-giver (B) expresses solidarity when opening the session by greeting the older persons. The care-giver first uses Cantonese “Ho mo ah?” (feeling good?) to a Chinese patient, then moves on to English “Okay a very good morning ah?” to an English speaking Chinese elder, and again to Mandarin “Chou an” (Good morning) with another senior citizen, and signifies intimacy by singling out individuals “Good morning Madam Lee” and inquiring about their well-being. The use of the Chinese dialect signifies convergence for the sake of solidarity.

Example 5

| Context: A care-giver facilitating a ‘chapel’ session. | Interlocutor in focus: Care-giver (B) |
| CG | ([xxxxx]) Ho Mo Ah (feeling good)? = |
| CM1 | = Ho. |
| CG | Ha? Good ah? Good to see each one of you. Okay a very good morning ah? = |
| CM2 | = good *morning* |
| CM3 | *good morning* |
| CG | Chou An (good morning). Mmmm. GOOD MORNING MADAM LEE. |
| CM4 | Good morning. |

These examples demonstrate the use of code-switching in spoken discourse. In fact, code switching does not only occur in spoken discourse, but also occurs in written discourse, including the print media. Lowenberg (1991) notes that in Malaysia, English newspapers use Malay words, even in headlines. He gives the example of ‘bumiputera(s)’ and its abbreviated form ‘bumi(s)’ (p. 368). In a much earlier study, Kachru (1983) and Kachru and Nelson (2006), draw on newspaper headline texts, for examples of nativisation and indigenisation in Indian English. David and McLellan (2007) compare code switching practices in newspaper texts in Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam. They analyse parallel Malaysian and Bruneian corpora from the same week in October 2006, discussing examples from the whole text, rather than just the headlines. Their analysis is mainly according to lexical categories, and includes both flagged and unflagged examples. The finding is that there is frequent use of code
switching, in the printed media. As Holmes (2001: 230) said, when a technical message is “translated” for the benefit of someone, who does not know the jargon, speech accommodation is involved. Such code mixing in English newspapers in Malaysia, occurs due to a number of reasons.

In Malaysian society, titles conferred by state governments, and by the king, are used before the name of the person. Titles like Mentri Besar Datuk, Tan Seri, Puan Seri, etc. are often seen in English dailies (Example 6).

**Example 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People (titles and honoraries) in Malaysian dailies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The 39-year-old son of Mentri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, who was detained in 2001 for alleged terrorist activities, said he certainly looked forward to the future. (McIntyre, October 19, 2006) in David &amp; McLellan (2007) (p.g.110)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the various examples from the English dailies of Malaysia, it seems clear that in hierarchical societies like Malaysia, titles of respect for heads of organizations, tribal chiefs and religious scholars are noted in English dailies.

Code switches are also used to emphasize emotions, as shown in Example 7. Although “lepas geram” (release anger) is flagged with italics, it is not given an English equivalent, as Malaysian readers are expected to understand the literal meaning of the word.

**Example 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The men beat her because she refused to put on clothes. And they hit her too because they wanted to lepas geram because this gang has been making off with our hard-earned cash.”(Theft suspect ends up naked, October 22, 2006) in David &amp; McLellan (2007) (p.g 103)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At times, code switches are required to flag cultural items, which are not found in English. Some instances include clothes (see Example 8).

**Example 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Others said the tudung-clad foreign woman who was in a baju kurung had stripped, so that people would think she was mad and let her go. (Theft suspect ends up naked, October 22, 2006) in David &amp; McLellan (2007) (p.g. 105)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Malaysian newspapers, words like “tudung” and “baju kurung”, which describe specific Malay clothes, although flagged with italics, are not provided with translations, because the assumption is that readers will understand these words.
Likewise, equivalent specific cultural items associated with festivals are italicized (see Example 9). Although, they are both oil lamps, the Indian “*kutuvilaku*” and Malay “*pelita*” refer to objects that differ physically.

**Example 9**

**Malaysia**

The 14.6m-high Indian *kutuvilaku* has a Malay *pelita* oil lamp at its top to signify the back-to-back Deepavali and Hari Raya festivities. *(Giant lamp makes its mark, October 17, 2006)* in David & McLellan (2007) (p.g. 105)

All the reasons for such code switching described earlier are analysed from the “etic” perspective of the researcher. However, examples of the “emic” views of the participants can help to validate the analysis of the researcher. Ong (2007) studied code switching in a formal setting - interviews. In her study, she examined the functions of code switching in the bilingual (Malay and English) speech of multiethnic Malaysian journalists, interviewing three interviewees. She verified the reasons for code switching through interviews with the journalists, and interviewees, in order to get their reasons for code switching. Such a validation has not been previously conducted. Her analysis shows 15 functions including three new ones, not earlier mentioned, in previous code switching studies. Untranslatability – this function has not been previously mentioned in other code switching studies. This function suggests that when a word is not available in another language, it will be used as a general term. Example 10 shows, that N switches from speaking English to Malay, when he inserts the word *ghazal asli* (a local genre of music). This word has no equivalent in English, so N has no choice but to use the Malay term.

**Example 10**

| N : The most important thing is she can sing **ghazal asli** or not?  
Ong, 2007 (p.g.91) |
|---|

Another new code switching function – to show differences, is found to be performed by interviewees, in her study. The differences mentioned in her study, can be broken down into three categories, which are time, people and space. M’s language choice which marks the difference of time, is seen in example 11. When he speaks about the present, M uses English, but quickly switches to Malay when he is referring to the past. Here, the first sentence sees him speaking in English, but he switches to Malay soon after, to speak about the past, and then reverts back to English for present reference.

**Example 11**

| M : It’s just like because the group I am more to is like a business kind of group you see. *Masa itu* (At that time), Internet *masih baru* (still new). *Kalau* (If) *I mula dari umur* (start from the age) 14, I’d be rich by now.  
Ong, 2007 (p.g.100) |
|---|
Another example shows, people might code switch to indicate contrast between speaking about oneself, and others. Example 12 shows that when M speaks about other people, M uses Malay, but when he speaks on how the software he had developed could help other people, especially those in business, he does so in English, carefully differentiating himself from other people.

**Example 12**

| M: Ah all, semua orang ni, terutamanya (all these people especially) the manager, dia sebenarnya, tugasku ialah dia sebenarnya nak nampak baik la dalam (actually his job is he wants to look good in) company dia (he), jadi bila (so when) you panggil dia untuk bagi jalan selesai untuk (call him to provide a solution) problem dia (him), terpulanglah pada mereka nak ambil atau tidak daripada kita (it’s up to them to take it from us). Bukannya kita paksa. Tapi biasanya dia akan ambil daripada kita (It’s not like we forced them. But usually they will take it from us). We wanted to basically analyse your system and do a proper deal for you and when this people go to their bosses with a proper proposal everything, it makes them look really good and so they will be happy to let me in and do this kind of thing for them. |

Ong, 2007 (p.g.101)

Example 13 shows the speaker code switches, to show differences in the concept of space. Example 13 shows how H responds to K’s question on the whereabouts of his parents. He responds, that he was from Perlis, and this led the journalist to ask him if his parents were still in Perlis. He used a language different from the journalist, in order to show the difference between here and there. His parents, according to him, were far away, and his way of showing the space that separates them, is through a change in his choice of language.

**Example 13**

| K : Your parents are still there?  
| H : Yah, parents masih kat situ (still there). |

Ong, 2007 (p.g. 102)

**DISCUSSION**

Code switching is common in Malaysia, particularly in interactions among Malays, Chinese, and Indians. The exposure of Malaysians to different languages, has led them to code switch. Switching from one language to the other, helps them to convey their message more effectively, then when only one language is used.

A Malay will code switch between English and Malay for a variety of reasons. A Malay proficient in English, will nevertheless use Malay, to establish his or her
'Malay-ness’, but will switch to English, to demonstrate his or her ability to function in English, and also to help his Indian or Chinese interlocutor, if they are not as proficient in Malay. It is also possible, that he or she may consciously, or unconsciously, select words in either language, that he or she thinks better expresses his or her thoughts, or feelings.

An Indian will not code switch between Tamil, or other Indian languages, with English/Malay, with a non-Indian interlocutor, but may do so with another Indian. Likewise, a Chinese will not code switch between a Chinese dialect and English/Malay with a non-Chinese interlocutor, but may do so with another Chinese.

There are, of course, some Chinese and Indian words, that have percolated into the vocabulary of all Malaysians, and it is not unusual to find many Chinese and Indians using Malay, and their own dialects interchangeably, with one another.

Speaking in one’s own language may create more intimacy between the interlocutors – and that works when Indians speak Malay to Malays, or when an Indian speaks Chinese to Chinese, and in a rare case, when a Chinese speaks Tamil to an Indian. Code switching among the Malays, Chinese and Indians has a more positive impact for both interlocutors. In the Malaysian context, the code switching function in many ways, such as to establish rapport, build intimacy, to show emphasis, to show respect, to tease, to show emotions, to show differences and to show contrast.

In a multicultural and multiethnic country like Malaysia, the accommodation theory plays an important role in reducing social distance, or in developing relationships with others. Sometimes, people like to change their codes, including their speech patterns, in various interactions, so that they closely resemble the speech patterns of their interlocutor(s) (Giles & St. Clair, 1979). Code switching is one of the accommodation strategies.

The functions of code switching are wide ranging, and code switching is used as a device to convey important social information, ranging from role relationships between speakers to feelings of solidarity, intimacy and so forth. Code switching is also used as an effective rhetorical device, to achieve a certain effect that the speaker desires. It is also used by the more competent bilingual, in order accommodate other speakers, who use another code.

In Malaysia, the attempt by some government ministers, and the national language planning authority (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka) to ban code switching, is part of a concerted effort to bolster Malay nationalistic aspirations, through “purification” of the national language. However, from both previous and current research, the reality is that code switching has become the de facto lingua franca in interactions within, and across communities, in informal, and also in formal settings. Code switching is seen as a tool of communication in multilingual Malaysia, which in many contexts, including the higher echelons of government, and business, serves as the unmarked, or default code choice, enabling interlocutors to demonstrate both local solidarity and a high level of education.
CONCLUSION

The occurrence of code switching in Malaysia, reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. Such diversity in language and culture, has led to the emergence of code switching as a new language variety, in interactions among Malays, Chinese and Indians. The switches between different codes, made by individual speakers, reveal the multifaceted role and functions of code switching.

REFERENCES


