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In-Text Citation: (Abdullah & Hussin, 2021)
To Cite this Article: Abdullah, M. A. R., & Hussin, S. (2021). Code-Switching as a Communicative Strategy among Malay Students Learning Japanese in Malaysia Higher Education Institution. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *11*(6), 497–509.

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Code-Switching as a Communicative Strategy among Malay Students Learning Japanese in Malaysia Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

Code-switching is an effective communicative strategy in learning Japanese as a foreign language in Malaysia Higher Education Institution. The tendency in code-switching is a common practice while communicating among the bilingual and multilingual Malaysian society. Furthermore, the setting of Malaysia is a perfect example where code-switching is a common phenomenon among its people, due to its multilingual and diversified cultural communities. This study aims to identify and analyse code-switching as a communicative strategy among ten Malay students who learn the Japanese language as a foreign language at MARA-OISCA Japanese Language Centre in Beranang, Malaysia. The theoretical frameworks adopted in the study used Hymes's internal code-switching and external code-switching framework model to discuss the types of code-switching patterns in analysing the data. The data were collected through pair discussion activities, recorded observation, and interviews. The findings revealed that participants used more internal code-switching compared to external code-switching. The findings also show that among the reasons that prompt Malaysian Japanese language learners in code-switching were four factors that can be resolved as the origin of the occurrence of code-switching, namely the social hierarchy, the relationship between speakers, lack of vocabulary knowledge and clear clarification of intended information. In addition, it was found that most Malaysian Japanese language learners use code-switching frequently and subconsciously.

Keywords: Code Switching, Communicative Strategy, Malay Students, Japanese Language, Malaysia.

Introduction

Code-switching is a widespread practice in bilingual and multilingual communities while communicating in formal or informal settings. A multiracial country like Malaysia is a good example of multilingual and diversified cultural communities had contributed to code-switching among Malaysians in their daily life. The concept of code-switching is different from the concept of bilingualism or multilingualism which means mastering two or more languages. In a bilingual or multilingual community, people often switch from one language to another in their daily conversations. The multilingualism Malaysian are born with their languages and

dialects such as Malay language, Mandarin, Tamil, and indigenous language (Ng & Lee, 2019). Malaysians converse at least 139 different languages and dialects due to the various numbers of ethnicities that exist in the country. The three major ethnicities are Malay, Chinese, and Indians. The Malays speak standard Malay language and dialects of the Bugis or Javanese, or variations of dialects like Kelantan Malay, Terengganu Malay, or Negeri Sembilan Malay (David *et al*, 2018). The Chinese speak Mandarin and various dialects such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, Teochew, Foochow, Kwongsai, Hockchia, and others (Puah & Ting, 2015). The Indians speak at least nine different languages namely Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, and Sinhalese (Muthusamy, 2010). Malay language, as the national language, is no doubt the dominant language used as the language of instruction and administration in government services. On the other hand, the English language is a compulsory second language learned by students from primary to tertiary level.

This is in line with the aspiration of the government to recognize the English language competence as mastery in the language is an asset in seeking employment which one can have easy access to the technological knowledge in the globalized economic world. In addition, the linguistic behaviour of the English language users internationally as the language of business and international trade and diplomacy had made English a prestigious language in Malaysia.

Globalization and a borderless world had driven Malaysians to master the major languages of the world such as Japanese, German, Arabic apart from English to increase understanding in science and technology to enhance their career path in the international job market (Kärchner-Ober, 2012). The policy of the Malaysian government encouraging students in Higher Education Institutions to study at least one foreign language course in line with the needs of the latest national Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025). The Higher Education Blueprint has outlined 'Language Proficiency' as one of the six student aspirations, where learning at least one additional foreign language is highly encouraged for university students These paradigm shifts among Malaysian had created a new scenario in multilingual and diversified cultural communities to speak the world's major languages in their daily lives. Nevertheless, it is not an easy task for anyone to achieve fluency and mastery of various languages as a tool for universal communication. Only a small number of them had succeeded in difficult tasks compared to the majority numbers of people who had put their best effort in their journey mastering the major languages of the world (Kärchner-Ober, 2012). This does not mean that they had given up on communicating the foreign languages, but they start borrowing one or more foreign words to be combined with their dominant languages while conversing in the communities informally or formally. This process can be regarded as the starting point to utilize and practice code-switching in their social domain by embedding foreign languages into their dominant languages. Consequently, this process will facilitate multilingualism people to code-switching with ease and confidence in their communication.

Omar (2007), a distinguished Malaysian linguist had stated code-switching often exists among language users who come from bilingual or multilingual communities such as in Malaysia. Furthermore, she emphasizes that context or situation where the languages were used is one of the factors that determine the occurrence of code-switching. This practice is more common in informal situations such as conversations between family members at home, conversations between peers, and conversations in public places. The Malay community in general are

frequently used code-switching with the Malay language, English, and other languages such as Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay dialects. Additionally, the choice of the language varies according to the sociolinguistic setting where the communication takes place. In recent years, the Malays also learned Arabic from religious academies where the language of instruction is Malay and Arabic, and their majors are in Islamic subjects. Most of these students are proficient not only in Malay but also in Arabic in the language they are majoring in in the tertiary institutions.

Previous research has shown that code-switching is extensively used in formal settings like in classroom settings and professional workplace settings (David, 2009). The phenomena of code-switching in the classroom context have attracted even more language researchers in their empirical investigation into various types of code-switching, its function, the reasons for code-switching, and the effect on the learners who use the code-switching in the classroom setting. The use of code-switching occurs commonly in foreign language classrooms around the world to accommodate the foreign language learners' inadequate vocabulary to communicate with their peers and teachers in the classroom. It was further emphasized by Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) that code-switching serves to provide learners with opportunities to communicate and a better understanding of learning among learners as it provides learners with sufficient input to understand the foreign language in the classroom.

Literature Review

The phenomenon of code-switching has become a field that is often studied by many researchers from abroad as well as within the country in terms of linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives. Overseas researchers such as Ferguson (1959); Bloom & Gumpertz (1972); Gumpertz (1982); Poplack (1988); Grosjean (1982 & 1995); Scotton (1993); and Holmes (2001) have played important roles in researching the field of code-switching. Poplack (1988) had defined code-switching as mixing done by bilinguals or multilingual in discourse commonly with no changing of interlocutor or topic at any level of linguistic structure. This view is also shared by Omar (1985: 128) a distinguished Malaysian linguist who defines code-switching as a common phenomenon in a bilingual or multilingual society. This code-switching will cause the change from one language to another language in a speaker's conversation. If further elaborated, code-switching is the use of two or more languages alternately at the phonological, lexical, semantic, and grammatical levels. In a multilingual country like Malaysia, code-switching has become a prominent topic of study because it is no longer a rare feature, but it has become a normal feature in many conversations' different ethnic groups in Malaysia (David, 2009). Another prominent Malaysian linguist, Karim (1992) had proposed a different definition of code-switching which is more likely language in transition, where the society uses more than one language in their communication activity. Nevertheless, society is not proficient in any of the languages used in communication activity. According to Karim (1992), code-switching can occur in the form of the part of the conversation, for example at the level of words or phrases of another language for some specific reasons. This is supported by Salima (2010) that speakers tend to be code-switching due to various reasons that may include a change in conversation topics, participants, environment, and inadequate vocabulary in one language.

Myer-Scotton (1993:75), defined code-switching as the selection by bilinguals or multilingual of forms from an embedded variety in utterances of a matrix variety during the same conversations. She elaborated that code-switching could take place in two forms either in

sentences (intrasentencial) or between sentences (intersentencial). She proposed the theory of the Markedness Model which indicates that language users are rational in choosing a language that is simple and accurate in expressing rights and obligations to the listener. When they do not have the appropriate vocabulary options in conveying the message, then they choose code-switching to ease and confidence in their communication. This view is opposed by many sociolinguists such as Holmes (2001) who argues that the construction of code-switching theory is the main goal of studies on code-switching using sociolinguistic approaches. He claims that the circumstances of the communication will allow researchers to predict the outcomes of the code-switching option by the speaker in a statement. This is based on his claims that code-switching does not happen randomly but based on the set rules in the communication goals.

Wardhaugh (2010) defined code-switching as a strategy of using two or more languages in the same utterance when they had a certain purpose in the communication process. The classification types of codeswitching can be based on the reason why people switch their language. Wardhaugh (2010) distinguishes two main types of code-switching: Situational and Metaphorical. Situational refers to a language change depending on contextual factors which have nothing to do with the topic but with the given situation. Meanwhile, Metaphorical points to the topic and the contents of the communicative process as the main reason for language choice. Many types of research have been done to study code-switching on its form, meaning and grammatical patterns (David *et al*, 2009; Omar, 2007; Jacobson, 2004; Koziol, 2000; MacSwan, 1999; Li, 1998; Myer-Scotton, 1993; Appel & Muysken, 1987; Gumperz, 1982; Poplack, 1980), however, a more recent study has stated the limited of research on code-switching by Japanese language learners in the classroom (Novianty & Haristiani, 2019).

Novianty & Haristiani (2019) had conducted a study to analyse the types of code-switching and the causing factors behind the code-switching among nine Japanese learners in an employment training centre in Indonesia. Their study showed that two types of forms of code-switching emerged from the data analysis consisting of internal code-switching (formal and informal variety of Japanese language) and external code-switching which Indonesian- Japanese, Japanese- Indonesian, and Japanese- English. The difference is internal code-switching occurs among regional languages in one language or dialects in one regional language, and external code-switching occurs among one's dominant language and foreign language. Furthermore, two factors that trigger code-switching are the presence of a third person and limitations of vocabulary knowledge. The Japanese learners used their dominant language when they encounter difficulty in learning Japanese as a tool in communication in the classroom.

Kania *et al* (2020) had conducted a study to analyse the types of code-switching and the causes of code-switching and code-mixing of seven Japanese language learners who participated in Hiroshima University winter courses. The findings of this study showed that two types of code-mixing and code-switching emerged from the data analysis of the study. The two types of code-switching identified are internal and external code-switching, and the two types of code-mixing are inner and outer code-mixing. Moreover, the findings also revealed that code-mixing among Japanese language learners occurred because of limited vocabulary, the speaker's language habits, and the purpose of using language varieties. On the other hand, the findings also showed speaker him/herself, speech partner, situation, and

the topic of conversation were the main cause of code-switching. They also found that differences in the backgrounds of the participants or speakers also affect the occurrence of code-mixing and code-switching.

There are several previous studies related to code-switching in the higher education institutions such as Ariffin & Hussin (2011) on code-switching and code-mixing of English and Bahasa Malaysia in content-based classrooms; Azlan and Narasuman (2013) on code-switching functions as a communicative tool among Malay undergraduates; Abdul Rashid (2019) on the types and functions of code-switching among Malay bilinguals; Muthusamy *et al* (2020) on factors of code-switching among bilingual international students in Malaysia; Razak & Shah (2020) on pre-university students' beliefs towards the use of code-switching in English language classrooms and others. However, the study on code-switching among Malay learners of the Japanese language in the Malaysian context is still limited. It is nevertheless to say that this kind of study is less given attention either from the role of its communication function or the social implications behind it.

Thus, this study aims to identify and analyse code-switching as a communicative strategy among ten Malay students who learn the Japanese language as a foreign language at MARA-OISCA Japanese Language Centre in Beranang, Malaysia. From a preliminary survey conducted on language behaviour among students of the MARA-OISCA Japanese Language Centre, it was found that there is a code-switching process in their communication when they are in the same group. They frequently change their spoken language from Malay or English into Japanese and vice versa alternately when interacting in group communication or Japanese language classroom. There is an assimilation of Malay culture body language and speech pattern when interacting with each other in their oral communication activities.

Aim of the Study
The present study was construed to find the intricacies of code-switching as a communicative strategy among Malay students learning Japanese language at MARA-OISCA Japanese Language Centre in Beranang with the following aims:
1. To identify the patterns of codeswitching among Malay students learning the Japanese language.
2. To analyse the factor that causes codeswitching among Malay students learning Japanese language

Methodology
The design of the research is non-experimental qualitative methods. Qualitative research is descriptive in the process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures. Ten samples were selected from students learning Japanese at MARA-OISCA Japanese Language Centre in Beranang. The samples had learned the Japanese language for a year before experiencing industrial training at a selected Japanese company for three years. They are Malay, male, and aged between 22 to 26 years old. This study was conducted at MARA-OISCA Japanese Language Centre in Beranang, Selangor, Malaysia.

The instrument for this study is a group discussion activity. The sample was required to carry out three discussion tasks with different topics assigned to them. Each discussion task involves two people in a group and an interaction time of 20 minutes. The discussions were

recorded using a video camera and IC recorder for data collection. In addition, direct observation was also conducted to note down the non-linguistic features of the samples during each discussion task. The data collected were transcribed based on the recordings of the video camera and double-checked with an audio taping of the IC recorder for clarity of the data collected. The sample was interviewed after each oral task to gain more information on the factors that caused the code-switching among the samples during their oral task were carried out.

This study used Hymes's (2012) internal code-switching and external code-switching framework model to discuss the types of code-switching patterns in analysing the data. Hymes (2012) had explained that internal code-switching is code-switching occurs among regional languages in one language or dialects in one regional language. The case of internal code-switching, for example, informal Japanese language that switches into the formal Japanese language. Meanwhile, external code-switching occurs among one's dominant language and foreign language. The case of external code-switching, for example, Japanese language that switches into Malay language or English. The framework of code-switching presented by Hymes will be the basis to answer the research questions related to the types of code-switching and the factors of using code-switching among Malay students learning the Japanese language at MARA-OISCA Japanese Language Centre in Beranang.

Findings and Discussions

The type of code-switching in this study refers to the type of code-switching proposed by Hymes (2012), which are internal codeswitching and external code-switching. The results show that code-switching appeared Eighty-nine (89) times in the Japanese learners' conversations. The internal code-switching appears thirty (30) times with the form of switching the variety of polite Japanese into the more intimate language variety. Meanwhile, the external code-switching appeared sixty-nine (69) times with the form of language switching from Japanese into Malay language and from Japanese into the Malay language. The results are as shown below.

Internal Code-Switching

There is first example of data from internal code-switching.

1389 　Ｓ８　：どこであなたはナルトを見ていますか。

(*Doko de anata wa Naruto wo mite imasu ka*.)

(Where are you watching Naruto?)

1390 　Ｓ７　：私…寮…寮で見ている。いつも見ています。それから…argh…
家へ帰ったら…見ない…..

(*Watashi…ryoo…ryoo de mite iru. Itsumo mite imasu. Sore kara…argh..
Iie e kaettara…minai….*)

(I…hostel..watching it at the hostel, Often watching it. After that…argh…
When I went home… did not watch…)

The data was excerpted from group discussion on the topic of "Favourite animation series". The data analysis showed that the code-switching occurred from formal Japanese to informal Japanese. The discussion was between S 7 and S 8 talking about their favourite animation series on the television program. It seems that S 8 asked S 7 about the location he used to watch his favourite animation series – Naruto using formal Japanese at the end of his sentence. This does not influence S 7 to answer S 8's questions with a formal form. It is obvious in the first sentence of S 7 reply was *ryoo de mite iru* which is the informal form of

mite imasu. In the third sentence, S 7 used again the word *minai* which is the informal form of *mimasen* to inform S 8 that he won't be watching his favourite animation series once he went home. It can assume that the cause of the code-switching from formal Japanese to informal Japanese in this data was influenced by the social hierarchy of the sample who are friends that usually used informal Japanese in their communication.

There is second example of data from internal code-switching.

1541　Ｓ１：オッス…私は…日本…日本へ行きたいです。あなたはどうですか。
　　　　　　　(*Ossu…Watashi wa…Nihon..Nihon e ikitai desu. Anata wa doo desuka*.)
　　　　　　　(Hey…I am..Japan…want to go to Japan. How about you?)

1542　Ｓ２：オッス…私たち…日本へ…argh…５月に…日本…行きたいから…
　　　　　　 mmm…でも今分からない…いついきくか
　　　　　　　(*Ossu…Watashitachi…Nihon   e..argh…Go   gatsu   ni…Nihon…ikitai   kara…*
　　　　　　　mmm… demo ima wakaranai…itsu iku ka)
　　　　　　(Hey…We…. go to Japan..argh..on May..Japan… because I want to go…
　　　　　　　mmm... but now not sure…when will go?)

The data was excerpted from group discussion on the topic of "Internship in Japan". The data analysis showed that the code-switching occurred from formal Japanese to informal Japanese. The discussion was between S 1 and S 2 talking about their schedule departing to Japan for an internship program. At the beginning of the discussion, S 1 used slang words to greet S 2. The slang word *Ossu* is the informal short form of *Ohayoo*. In the next sentence, it appears that S 1 still used formal Japanese to ask S 2 about going to Japan for an internship program. S1 directly used the informal form because he realizes that the relationship of S 2 is a close relationship (friend) that usually uses informal forms in daily life. It is shown in his answers using the verb *wakaranai* which the informal form of *wakarimasen* and the verb *iku* which is the informal form of *ikimasu*.

External Code-Switching
There is first example of data from external code-switching.

813　Ｓ２：どらえもんのoriginal nama…どらえもんの… original nama …argh 名前
　　　　　　…あなたは…分かる…
　　　　　　　(Doraemon no original nama….Doraemon no….original nama…argh namae...
　　　　　　　Anata wa….wakaru…)
　　　　　　　(The original name of Doaremon…of Doraemon….original name..argh name..
　　　　　　　You…know..)

814　Ｓ１：たぶん…mmm…apa…ah…apa…。
　　　　　　　(Tabun…mmm..apa…ah….apa….)
　　　　　　　(Maybe…mmm.what…ah…what…)

815　S2：どらえもんのnama…どらえもんの名前は…あなたは知っていますか。
　　　　　　　(Doraemon no nama…Doraemon no namae wa…anata wa sitte imasu ka.)
　　　　　　　(The name of Doraemon..The name of Doraemono you know?)

816　Ｓ１：どらねこです。Ａｈ！ねこ…ねこは…ねこは…ねこ…ねこは…
　　　　　　 マレーごでkucingです。
　　　　　　　(Dora neko desu. Ah! Neko…neko…neko wa…neko…neko wa….
　　　　　　 Mare-go de Kucing desu.)
　　　　　　　(Lost cat. Ah! Cat…cat..cat is..cat…cat is…kucing in Malay language.)

817　Ｓ２：どらは？

    (Dora wa?)

    (Dora?)

818 Ｓ１：ドラの意味は何ですか。

    (Dora no imi wa nan desu ka.)

    (What is the meaning of Dora?)

819 Ｓ２：ドラの意味は…ドラねこの意味はマレーごででKucing gila…

    (Dora no imi wa…Dora neko no imi wa Mare- go de Kucing gila…)

    (The meaning of Dora… the meaning of Dora neko in Malay language is crazy cat….)

The data was excerpted from group discussion on the topic of "Favourite animation series". The data analysis showed that the code-switching occurred from the Japanese language to the Malay language. The discussions start with S 2 asking S 1 about the actual name of Doraemon by code-switching from Japanese to Malay language. This is because S 2 does not know the Japanese word that he wanted to ask. Therefore S 2 code switch to Malay language with the consideration that S 1 understand Malay language. In sentence 2, S 1 still could not understand the questions asked by S 2 and he also code-switch from Japanese to Malay language hoping that S 2 will understand him better. In sentence 3, the S 2 code switches from Japanese to Malay language in repeating the question before emphasizing in Japanese to get the answer from S 1. This strategy helped S 1 to understand the questions asked by S 2. S 1 quickly answered the questions asked by S 2. The factor of code-switching in this excerpt is the adaption process of the speaker and speech partner using their mother tongue when they faced problems in communicating in the Japanese language. Moore (2002) states that great efforts are made to ensure the flow of conversation is maintained despite sometimes limited linguistic skills is on the learners' part. Learners need to overcome communication problems as they emerge and simultaneously producing language appropriate to the situation.

There is second example of data from external code-switching.

24 Ｓ５：Wah!...私はIKM Seri Gadingで勉強…勉強…勉強しました。

   (Wah! Watashi wa IKM Seri Gading de benkyou…benkyou…benkyoushimashita.)

   (Wah! I had study at IKM Seri Gading…study…studied.)

25 Ｓ６：Hey…あれ…私もIKM Seri Gadingで勉強しました。

   (Hey! Are….Watshi mo IKM Seri Gading de benkyoshimashita.)

   (Hey! what….I also had studied at IKM Seri Gading)

26 Ｓ５：そうですか。

   (Sou desu ka.)

   (Oh! I see.)

27 Ｓ６：あなたはSeri Gadingで専門は何ですか。

   (Anata wa Seri Gading de sen mon wa nan desu ka.)

   (What is your major in Seri Gading ?)

28 Ｓ５：私の専門はConstruction….constructionです。

   (Watashi wa sen mon wa Construction….construction desu.)

   (My major was Construction….construction.)

29 Ｓ６：Eee…同じです。

   (Eee…onaji desu.)

   (Eh! Me too.)

30　 S 5：私もIKM でConstructionを….constructionを難しい…
　　　　専門はconstructionです。
　　　　(Watashi mo IKM de construction wo…construction wo muzukashii…
　　　　 Sen mon wa construction desu.)
　　　　(My major at IKM was construction…construction is difficult…
　　　　 Major was construction.)

The data was excerpted from group discussion on the topic of "Why I learn the Japanese language". The data analysis showed that the code-switching occurred from the Japanese language to English. The discussion started with S 5 stating the institutions he had studied before joining the Japanese course in MARA OISCA Japanese Language Centre in Beranang. S 6 quickly responded by saying he had also studied at the same institutions as S 5. In sentence 4, S 6 asked S 5 about his majoring course in IKM Seri Gading. S 5 respond by code-switching from the Japanese language to English by mentioning his majoring course was construction. The reason why English was chosen because in specifying one's major course in higher institutions are usually the word construction is more used and applied than if the word is translated to the Malay language. The factor of code-switching in this excerpt is to provide a clear explanation to speaking partners when they find it is hard to describe words in the Japanese language. Moreover, when students cannot find appropriate words in their mother tongue which is the Malay language, so they will turn to a second language which is English because it sounds better in English rather than in the Malay language (Anderson, 2006).

The findings of this study showed that there were two forms of code-switching used by the sample of the study. There are internal code-switching and external code-switching. The findings also indicated that four factors can be resolved as the origin of the occurrence of code-switching, namely the social hierarchy, the relationship between speakers, lack of vocabulary knowledge, and clear clarification of intended information. Code-switching among students learning Japanese at MARA-OISCA Japanese Language Centre in Beranang plays a role in developing communicative competence. Communicative competence not only involves the knowledge of the grammatical and phonological system of a language but rather the skill in making transitions and language changes based on the situation, conditions, and background of the speech event. The learner of the Japanese language should adopt roles in the use of the Japanese language in any actual context such as the social hierarchy and the relationship between speakers to initiate, close topics, and to direct the conversation. It is also noted that the limited use of code-switching at the advanced level compared to the basic level where code-switching played a bigger role such as motivation and encouragement among Japanese language learners in formulating vocabulary and sentences in the Malay language into vocabulary and sentences in Japanese. This is because to have clear clarification of intended message to be conveyed and avoid misunderstanding in the communication process.

Conclusion
Code-switching by students in the Japanese language classroom functions as a communicative strategy for students who have limited competence in the target language to overcome communicative barriers, institutions when they have difficulties expressing themselves in the target language. Students engage in code-switching when interacting with their peers, particularly during group discussion activities. Code-switching in this context functions as a communicative strategy, in which the first language is used by the students to provide mutual

guidance and assistance for task completion. Students also use code-switching as a self-revision strategy to monitor their learning. Moreover, code-switching played a bigger role such as motivation and encouragement among Japanese language learners to use their mother tongue when encountered a deficiency in their Japanese language as an alteration to enhance the interaction and avoid misunderstanding toward each other (Kania et al, 2020). Suggestions will be on advising and guiding the students to have strategies for effectively managing code-switching in the Japanese language classroom to avoid its negative implications on the language learning process.

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