

A Case Study: Exploring the Patterns and Functions of Mandarin-English-code-switching in Malaysian ACCA Classroom

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Abstract. In Malaysia, due to the complexity of the population composition, students may possess diverse linguistic and cultural capitals, potentially resulting in a lack of a shared first language among both the teacher and their classmates. Although there are a considerable number of studies exploring Mandarin-English-code-switching practices in education, few studies have investigated its patterns and functions in Malaysia ACCA classroom contexts. This study conducts qualitative research on ACCA lessons at a public online Malaysian training center in the higher education phase, including observation and a case study by discourse analysis and multimodal conversation analysis, to explore what are the typical code-switching patterns in this education setting and how the Mandarin-medium instruction teacher mobilizes multiple resources to ensure knowledge accessibility and cater for more students in the classroom. Findings indicate that intra-sentential code-switching and situational code-switching are prominent from the perspective of speaking styles and sociolinguistics, and code-switching practices, occurring as an intentional teaching strategy, contribute to inclusive education, by facilitating more students to comprehend unfamiliar concepts more effectively and fostering better communication and engagement in learning.

Keywords: Mandarin-English-code-switching; Code-switching patterns and functions; Inclusive education; Mandarin-medium instruction; Malaysian ACCA Classroom.

1. Introduction

1.1. Language Background in Malaysia

Due to globalization, various cultural, social, and linguistic exchanges have become more widespread, making it increasingly prevalent for bilingual or multilingual speakers to do code-switching (CS) in conversations [1]. Malaysia is a multiracial country with 70.1% Bumiputera (native Malaysia), 22.6% Chinese, 6.6% Indians, and other races in 2023, and English is considered as a second language in Malaysia and it should be acquired by all Malaysians at school for a minimum of eleven years [2, 3]. Therefore, in Malaysia, bilinguals fluent in both Mandarin and English are widely common, making it a suitable sample population to explore the patterns and functions of Mandarin-English-code-switching in education.

1.2. Medium-of-instruction in Malaysia

Education discourses in Malaysia on the medium of instruction (MOI) have been a controversial issue for decades, for discussions surrounding education are strongly influenced by considerations of ethnic background. Policies related to MOI can influence access to education, potentially resulting in disparities within society and subsequent political tensions [4]. In the fields of mathematics and science in compulsory education, the teaching language has switched between Malaysian and English, and now it has returned to Malaysia since 2011 [4]. However, the government has not been completely consistent in promoting the use of Malaysia in schools and agreed on using students' native language to learn mathematics and science, including Mandarin, to avoid ethnic conflicts and inequalities since 2012 [5]. Today, the tendency for internationalization for higher education includes Malaysia. The Malaysian government has implemented proactive measures to internationalize its higher education system. In terms of language, public universities now predominantly conduct their teaching in English [6].

1.3. Research Overview and Significance

Utilizing data collected from an Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) classroom within a culturally diverse learning environment in Malaysian higher education, including students of various racial backgrounds both domestically and internationally, the paper focuses on how CS is used and adopted by the teacher as an inclusive pedagogy. The study will begin by transcribing the language codes utilized by both teachers and learners, aiming to identify typical patterns of CS in the classroom from sociolinguistic and stylistic perspectives. Subsequently, the study will conduct a sectional and repetitive analysis of class videos, focusing on student reflections such as interactions, body language, and expressions during instances of code-switching with varying linguistic features. Finally, the research will endeavor to explore the functions of CS in promoting inclusive education across different scenarios through discourse analysis methods and multimodal conversation analysis.

This study by doing a case study and using qualitative observation methods, aims to explore the patterns of Mandarin-English-code-switching in ACCA classrooms and provide insights into how code-switching practices can contribute to fostering inclusivity within ACCA classrooms. In this case, this paper will present empirical evidence to demonstrate the potential deployment of code-switching as an inclusive pedagogical strategy in ACCA educational settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of CS

Linguists employ the term “code” to refer to any recognizable form of speech variety, encompassing both a specific language and a specific variety of a language [7]. Code-switching refers to generating discussions that incorporate morphemes from two or more linguistic varieties within their repertoire in the same or successive conversation turn [8]. However, linguists from different fields like psycholinguists and sociolinguists have not yet formed a consensus on the boundary of CS and code-mixing (CM) due to their different areas of focus. The majority of them agree that there is a difference between CS and CM as CS emphasizes switching from one language to another, while CM focuses more on a third, novel code facilitated by the mixing of two other languages [9]. In actual language communication, these two phenomena may coexist or occur separately. Therefore, this study does not make a specific distinction between CS and CM.

2.2. Categorizations and Functions of Code-switching

Since the 1950s, increasing scholars have delved into the study of CS, and during the mid-1990s, a comprehensive description of CS emerged. In the initial stages of CS research, lack of sufficient proficiency in the specific language was mainly considered as the motivation and some researchers still assume it [8]. Later, most scholars focused on examining the social functions of switching from a micro-level. Blom and Gumperz first introduced to categorization of CS into situational code-switching and metaphorical code-switching from the perspective of sociolinguistics, respectively referring to switching code because of the adaption to a specific dialogue setting or the purpose of expression [10]. While, from the perspective of speaking style, the CS patterns can be divided into inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching [11]. Since the 1980s, the major interest in CS from researchers shifted to intra-sentential switching based on morphological and syntactic considerations. Concluded from the quantitative corpus, Grosjean and Miller found that CS usually involves not only lexical changes but also phonetic changes [12].

Concerning the Functions of CS, Scotton and Ury found that CS was primarily used as a tactic to reshape interactions, supported by quantitative corpus analysis [13]. From the 1980s to the 1990s, researchers have elaborated on the answer to CS. For instance, Gumperz asserts that CS could be regarded as a cue for contextualization, involving its utilization in signaling and interpreting the intentions of speakers [14].

2.3. Code-switching as an Inclusive Pedagogical Practice

The concept of inclusive education has been developed and interrupted diversely in different contexts. Inclusive education refers to the demand for teachers to create educational spaces that foster stimulating teaching and learning processes to enable students to progress [15]. In today's context, inclusive education emphasizes diversity and equality within the whole class. According to Basturkmen, teachers' perspectives regarding linguistic diversity influence the decisions they make and the practices they employ in their instruction [16]. Therefore, language strategy is one of the vital factors related to the effectiveness of inclusive education.

The monolingual approach has dominated for decades; however, many researchers have recognized the benefits of CS in classrooms. Language-diverse students, whose home languages (HLs) are different from the majority of languages in the school, usually have a higher risk of academic failure than majority-language students [17]. However, if students' home languages are embraced and switched into daily school practices, this risk can be mitigated. Also, according to Creese and Blackledge, CS including learners' HLs is conducive to building self-confidence and increasing motivation for studying [18]. Therefore, exploring whether CS as a pedagogical approach is beneficial and appropriate for advancing inclusive education in Malaysian contexts is significant, and how it functions matters.

3. Research Gap

In the global English context, many discourses show CS involving English in Mandarin contexts. Research on Mandarin-English code-switching has demonstrated its significance in both the linguistic and educational domains, for it has illuminated the interactions between Mandarin and English and uncovered the benefits of code-switching for inclusive education. However, at present, there is a lack of research on CS between Mandarin and English, and most researchers such as Long et al. and Lovenia et al. tend to explore instances of corpus analyses, automatic speech recognition, and English classroom observation, lacking investigation among bilingual students in economic classroom contexts and also lacking analysis on the connection between CS teaching strategies and inclusive education [19, 20]. Therefore, the patterns and functions of CS between Mandarin and English still need to be further explored.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Questions

Given the current lack of research on Mandarin-English-code-switching in economic classroom contexts, this paper is expected to figure out the following questions:

- (1) What are the typical patterns of Mandarin-English-code-switching in the selected Malaysian ACCA online course?
- (2) How does Mandarin-English-code-switching benefit teaching and learning in the selected ACCA classroom?

4.2. Research Methods

The paper utilizes the descriptive qualitative approach as its research method. Nassaji explains that the goal of qualitative description is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics [21]. Thus, this research approach is deemed appropriate for the study, enabling researchers to examine language in its natural context, utilizing qualitative observations to gather data.

4.3. Participants

The participants in this research are eleven students and one teacher from an online public ACCA training center registered in Malaysia, which focuses on providing a fun and relaxing classroom for

students to learn ACCA and to be qualified accountants by using Mandarin and English in the online classrooms. The backgrounds of the students and the teacher are unknown, only being able to say that it is a mixed-ethnicity class in higher education, potentially encompassing various language proficiencies.

4.4. Instruments

ELAN is one of the most widely used annotation tools, serving the purpose of annotating, analyzing, and recording multimodal data. To observe and record the Mandarin-English-code-switching in the ACCA classroom, there are two main steps in using Elan. The first step is to import the media files into Elan and then process the file in line with transcription mode to transcribe the discourses into text, with codeswitched segments marked. The second step is to set up the tiers of annotations in Elan, including a facial expressions tier, and a gesture tier, an interaction tier, for later describing the functions of CS in teaching and learning.

4.5. The Framework of Data Analysis

The study employs discourse analysis (DA) and incorporates multimodal conversation analysis (MCA) in order to examine the teachers' code-switching in the Malaysian ACCA classroom. DA examines real passages of text or recorded conversations to offer insights into the organization and patterns found within paragraphs, narratives, and dialogues in linguistic research [22]. For the research, the descriptive presentation of data outlines the patterns of Mandarin-English code-switching of the recorded online class, allowing for the inference and conceptualization of its contexts and effects in an interpretive manner grounded in the context of language usage. Also, MCA, by using Jefferson's system and Mondada's transcription conventions in the study, enables researchers to examine authentic interactions, where even the smallest details are deemed significant for understanding participants' attitudes and intentions towards the interaction [23-25]. Factors like facial expressions and gestures are considered in interactions in the classroom to evaluate the functions of code-switching. The framework of combining DA and MCA is utilized to effectively transcribe and analyze the gathered data, ensuring the reliability and validity of measures.

4.6. Procedures

In the process of conducting this research, a series of steps were followed. Initially, 3-hour videos were selected from a Malaysia ACCA online public training center classroom, without knowing any personal information of the teacher or the students. These videos were then transcribed into text using Elan software, with CS instances marked. Additionally, special expressions, gestures, and interactions of the teacher and the learners were annotated in separate tiers. Following transcription and annotation, the patterns of Mandarin-English-code-switching were analyzed using categorization theories proposed by Blom and Gumperz, as well as Myers-Scotton. This involved categorizing and examining the various instances of CS observed in the videos. Subsequently, functional analysis and evaluation of CS were conducted by revisiting the classroom environment to observe gestures, expressions, and interactions during code-switching instances. This allowed for a deeper understanding of the functions of CS within specific contexts, providing valuable insights into its usage and effectiveness.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Extract 1

Before the extract, the teacher (T) introduced a new concept—OCR to the students. While T explained how to deal with calculation questions related to OCR, he asked the students to determine whether "per unit" or "per hour" needed consideration in OCR, which involves providing a Mandarin translation for the English term 'per unit'. In this extract, T's use of code-switching involves the alternation of languages of input and output. It is noticeable that Mandarin is predominantly used as

the language of instruction in this instance. Additionally, T is incorporating Mandarin verbal expressions and bilingual translations to ensure that the content is comprehensible to all students in the class. In lines 1-3, T initially poses his question in English, and then in lines 7-9, T answers the question in English. However, he switches the code in line 11 and line 15 to answer the question in Mandarin in order to elicit more responses from students. T's code-switching eventually enables more students with varying levels of familiarity in both languages to understand the knowledge and give positive responses (lines 4 and 11). During this segment, code-switching takes place 10 times.

01 T: 记得，跟你们讲过在AC, MC中OAR我要的是per hour还是**per unit**啊? (code-switching: 2 times)

+ T uses emphatic gestures.

02 (2.9)

03 T: 我要per hour? (0.9) 还是**per unit**? (code-switching: 2 times)

04 (3.7)

+SB moves her lips to give a soundless response.

+ Later, SA also moves her lips to give a soundless response.

05 T: Anyone? (code-switching)

+ SA smiles.

06 (1.4)

07 SA: **Per unit**. (code-switching)

08 (0.8)

09 T: **Per unit**. (.) [OK]. 我要的是**per unit**。 (code-switching: 2 times)

10 (0.2)

11 T: 每一个单位的overhead cost是多少钱。 (code-switching)

+ SC, SD, SE nod.

12: (0.8)

13: T: 我不要看小时。

+ T uses a negative indicative gesture.

14: (0.6)

15: T: 每一个单位, overhead cost是多少钱? (code-switching)

+ T uses summarizing gestures.

16 (0.6)

17 T: 明白吗?

(T-the teacher; SA, SB, SC, SD, and SE-student A, student B, student C, student D, and student E; words in bold-key words in the segment; words with an underline-pronounce with stress; (number)-the number of seconds in silence; []-overlapping talk; (.)-brief interval, usually between 0.08-0.2s)

In line 1, T first asks the question of whether the per hour or the per unit required to be calculated in OCR questions in English. The lack of response for 2.9-s motivates the teacher to ask it again in line 3. By doing so, two students, SA and SB who answer questions, positively engage with the teacher, moving their lips to form words to give soundless responses and smiling facial expressions. While, other students do not exhibit obvious interactions or reactions, even when the term was reiterated in

lines 12 and 14. This may prompt T to explain the term in Mandarin to help more students to comprehend. However, when the teacher emphasizes "per unit" in Mandarin in line 16, three other students nod in understanding. In this extract, T makes use of multiple linguistic resources including switching between Mandarin and English verbal utterances, offering Mandarin translations of English terms to give instructions to students with different linguistic capitals for a better understanding of concepts in ACCA, as it enables more students to participate and interact in ACCA discussions, reaching a more inclusive teaching and learning environment.

In this extract, code-switching occurs 10 times. In terms of pattern usage, intra-sentential code-switching (7 times) is more prevalent than inter-sentential code-switching (3 times), aligning with Azlan and Narasuman's research results in Malaysian ESL classrooms [26]. Meanwhile, situation code-switching is the main pattern in the perspective of sociolinguistics, for in the education setting, T's purpose is to ensure that the instructional content is understandable to all students.

5.2. Extract 2

Extract 2 is the subsequent part of the interaction in Extract 1, occurring approximately 30 minutes later. Before this extract, T was asking students to complete an exercise on calculating the difference in profits between marginal costing and absorption costing, which relates to the knowledge of OAR. In this extract, T's code-switching practices are evident in his alternating between Mandarin and English, as well as his utilization of verbal communication alongside multimodal resources. T first asks for the answer in Mandarin for the exercise that is shown in English in line 1 and no one answers for a long time. Then SA answers with an uncertain tone. This prompts the teacher to repeat her answer to confirm and ask the whole class again to get more responses in lines 3-11. However, it seems most students cannot get the answer apart from SA'. Therefore, from lines 16-26, it is worth noting that T switches between Mandarin and English to explain the essential words. By doing so, T's switching codes practices prompt responses from several students (e.g. lines 16 and 24), which reflects their appropriate comprehension of dealing with the questions related to OAR. In this segment, code-switching occurs a total of 7 times.

01 T: 好了吗, 各位, 九点半有答案了吗?

+All students keep silent for a while.

02 (8.0)

03 SA': 是A吗? (with an uncertain tone)

04 (0.9)

05 T: 九点八是A。

06 (1.6)

07 T: 好, xx讲是A。

08 (0.3)

09 T: 其他人有算到A吗?

+SA' smiles.

+Othe students still calculate the answer and keep their heads down.

+No other students respond to the teacher.

10 (1.5)

11 T: 有没有人不会做的?

+No other students respond again.

12 (4.1)

13 T: 有没有人心里在想xx能不能show一下我怎样做啊? (code-switching)

.....

14 T: [OK]. (.) 所以现在了解问题问的是什么? (.) 问题问的是if marginal costing had been used. (code-switching)

+ T uses the digital device to show the question in English.

+ Most students stare at the screen seriously.

15 (0.9)

16 T: **if**你懂啦, (.) **if**就是**如果**啦。 (code-switching: 2 times)

+SA', SB', and SC' nod.

17 (0.6)

18 T: [OK]. (.) **如果**什么东西, (.) **如果**我用的是MC。

19 (0.9)

20 T: **如果**我用的是MC。 (.) 好吗?

21 (0.4)

22 T: [OK]. (.) **instead of**, (0.2) absorption costing. (code-switching)

23 (0.3)

24 T: **Instead of**, (.) 我们华语翻译过来叫作而不是。 (code-switching)

+SD' and SE' take notes.

25 (0.4)

26 T: 如果我今天用的是MC, **而不是**AC。

+T uses emphatic gestures (in lines 18, 22, 24, and 26).

27 (1.7)

28 T: 可以吗? (.) [OK]. (.) 这整句话翻译过来是:**如果**我今天用的是MC, (0.5) 而不是AC, (0.5) 我的profit, 会有什么差距, (0.3) 会有多少差距? (code-switching)

29 (1.37)

30 T: 听得明白我讲的什么吗, 各位?

+Most students nod to give a response.

(T-the teacher; SA', SB', SC', SD' and SE' -student A', students B', student C' student D' and student E', not the same students in Extract 1; xx-the real name of one student; words in bond-key words in the segment; words with an underline-pronounce with stress; (number)-the number of seconds in silence; []-overlapping talk; (.)-brief interval, usually between 0.08-0.2s)

In line 1, T starts to ask for the answer to the exercise, while a period of silence lasts for 8.0-s. After the silence, SA' answers it with an uncertain tone (line 3). In this case, T confirms her answer by uttering 'is it A for the answer' four times (in lines 3, 4, 7, and 9) in Mandarin, attempting to elicit more responses from the whole class. Students' body language like keeping their heads down shows most of them do not have the confidence to get the right answer. From lines 14-28, T guides the students to deal with this calculation question. He points out the essential words including 'if' and 'instead of' both in English and Mandarin repetitively with emphatic gestures and digital device

support, possibly encouraging all students to rethink how to deal with the question and participate in the classroom interaction. This leads to more students' positive engagement in the class (lines 16 and 24).

In this extract, code-switching is observed 7 times. The predominant pattern of usage is intra-sentential code-switching, occurring 5 times, which is more common than inter-sentential code-switching, happening 2 times. Simultaneously, situational code-switching is the primary pattern when considering social communicative functions. In this social context, T aims to cater for all students through code-switching.

The analysis of Extracts 1 and 2 shows that T's code-switching methods encompass both Mandarin and English, alongside the utilization of multimodal resources including gestures and technology. It is vital to notice that the teacher in this case is attempting to support all students' understanding of new concepts in the ACCA course and their ability to address relevant calculation questions.

6. Conclusion

This study utilizes qualitative observation to investigate patterns and functions of Mandarin-English-code-switching in ACCA classrooms in Malaysia, which contributes to filling the current research gap in observing the scenarios of Mandarin-English-code-switching in economic classrooms and also analyzing and evaluating it from the perspective of inclusive education. The result shows that intra-sentential code-switching is used more frequently, and situational code-switching is predominantly employed compared to metaphorical code-switching in this educational setting. These code-switching practices foster inclusive education, as they enhance students' comprehension of knowledge and promote increased interactions within the class. The results of the research on patterns and functions in teaching and learning will offer linguists insights into patterns of Mandarin-English-code-switching in a specific context, provide teachers a deeper understanding of their teaching practices for inclusive education, and help students comprehend their learning process related to languages and make them more aware of how to modify their tactics to adapt to different language teaching approaches.

However, the research is subject to certain limitations. Its findings may lack generalizability, as they are derived from a specific context and may not be universally applicable across different situations or communities. Additionally, factors influencing code-switching behavior, such as social identity and language proficiency, remain unknown, making it challenging to interpret code-switching's functions thoroughly. Therefore, further studies are warranted. Research in diverse contexts and long-term tracking research in this specific context are required to broaden the understanding of Mandarin-English code-switching as a teaching strategy for inclusive education in classrooms.

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