CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING AMONG USERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Nur Rasyidah Mohd Nordin[1*]

[1]Universiti Utara Malaysia

[*]nurrasyidah@uum.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper aims to examine the use and application of code-switching and code-mixing among users of social media based on recent studies in Sociolinguistics. Communication in general has evolved tremendously in the 21st century, as it has made interactions with people all around the world much faster and easier. Social media is an important platform that allows these interactions to take place. Having multiple users from different countries influences the utilization of the first language (mother tongue), code-switching, code-mixing and borrowed words. Social media users have been shown to extensively use code-mixing and code-switching, particularly among speakers in the bilingual or multilingual society. Thus, this conceptual paper will attempt to deliberate on the use of code-switching as well as code-mixing among users of social media; namely people's preference of social media, types and use of code-switching and code-mixing on social media, and lastly factors which influence the use of code-switching and code-mixing on social media.

Keywords: Code switching; Code mixing; Sociolinguistics; Social media

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is an important aspect since it acts as the means for people to communicate with others; it plays a symbolic role in our lives (Heller, 1988). Nowadays, people can communicate regardless of geographical barriers with the help of technology. Nordin, Omar and Ridzuan (2022) argued that it is important for us to be ready for the changes in all aspects of online interactions and engagement. In line with the global advancement of technology, social media has garnered an influx of users from diverse background due to its plethora of functions. In fact, Heinrichs, Lim and Lim (2011) asserted that social networking sites have emerged as essential communication channels used by individual consumers to create content, distribute materials, share ideas, express opinions, and use information and knowledge. With that being said, social media is considered essential in everyday life for almost everyone nowadays regardless of one's intention of using the platform. Thus, social interaction is bound to happen, and online communication seamlessly become a routine nowadays.

According to Baruah (2012), social media takes on diverse forms including forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating, and social bookmarking whereby main platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have regularly been used extensively by people to socialize. Hashim, Soopar and Hamid (2017) specifically linked the utilization of online communication with the influences of first language, code-switching, code-mixing and borrowed words. In particular, code-mixing and code-switching are two elements of

sociolinguistics that are seen to be vastly incorporated by social media users especially among speakers in bilingual or multilingual community. Code-switching or code-mixing process happens when speakers decide to switch from one code to another or to mix codes when speaking and even within short utterances (Wardhaugh, 2006). A multilingual nation like Malaysia accepts the ability to switch between languages as something that is fairly normal. Over the past five years, scholars have been studying this phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing that occur on social media platforms as users are seen to actively communicate with each other and express themselves using codes that they know. Oral code-switching and code-mixing have shifted to online medium as the new communicative means. It is an interesting topic to read and review, particularly in what scholars have done to study this emerging world of technology-based communication. In general, this conceptual paper will discuss the use of code-switching as well as code-mixing among users of social media based on several topics; namely people's preference of social media, types and use of code-switching and code-mixing on social media, and lastly factors which influence the use of code-switching and code-mixing on social media.

B.   METHODS

This research is qualitative, the analysis uses coding techniques. According to (Charmaz, 2006) in (Yukhymenko et al., 2014), coding is a process carried out when conducting research where the data that has been collected is then categorized by grouping or by abbreviating names. Coding is the activity of writing a set of codes to communicate with a computer. With that code, we can ask the computer to do something according to the instructions. For example, creating websites, compiling applications, processing data, or other technology-related matters.

C.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

People's Preference of Social Media

Social media has become a platform for people to interact with others, share life updates as well as express themselves. Various types and labels of social media that are invented have led to people having their own personal choice to be involved in virtual engagement. From this phenomenon, many research have been done to observe the usage of language shown by most users on different online platforms particularly in switching or mixing codes they know. Thus, researchers such as Gad (2019) studied the usage of language specifically within the demographic of his homeland. He carried out a study to analyse bilingual Egyptians who resort to combine elements from Arabic and English when interacting on several platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. In addition, Samhan (2017) performed a study on participants who frequently use Twitter in which he gave significant attention on the social aspects of those participants who often include several codes when tweeting. This researcher analysed the combination of language exhibited among participants who are more active on Twitter compared to other platforms.

Even though Facebook has been long introduced and launched by Mark Zuckerberg, it is still a relevant choice of social media by most people around the world for online engagement. Their pattern of language use is also more diverse when posting or commenting on the platform and Facebook's feature of 'wallposts' are more public, therefore more studies are done in analysing the usage of language on this online platform. One of them is Ahmed Abousoud (2019) who studied the switching of Arabic and English languages among different generations of Egyptians. Other researchers including Simbolon, Sihotang and Hutabarat (2020) also utilized Facebook as the social

network whereby they analyzed the code-mixing among Indonesians who often mix English within their Facebook status. In a more specific sphere of Facebook, Jakob (2020) studied the phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing among members in Facebook Group of English Youth Community who are proficient in Indonesian language and English. In terms of local context, a study examining languages used in Facebook wallposts was done by Ting and Yeo (2019). They focused on the salience of code-mixing through posts made by multilingual users in Malaysia on their Facebook status.

Most of these recent studies are carried out due to the widespread use of social media which cater to people's need for interaction regardless of geographic barriers. As discussed above, there are many users who resort to switching and mixing codes on social media especially those who are bilingual or multilingual. This brings forth questions of what the classifications of the code-switching are or code-mixing that these users are inclined to practice.

Types of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

In general, there are two common types of changing codes in the languages that most bilingual or multilingual know, and these are obviously shown on social media platforms as discussed above. These two sociolinguistics aspects are called code-switching and code-mixing and they could have several further classifications depending one's perceptions and interpretations. Some experts have different arguments regarding classifications of code-switching and code-mixing. Thus, recent studies have different approach in analyzing the conversation and interactions involving the practice of switching or mixing codes on online platforms.

In relation to the aspect introduced above, Jakob (2020) focused more on analyzing the code-switching types based on Poplack theory which include inter-essential switching, intra-essential switching, and lastly extra-essential switching. In his study, the researcher found out that the intra-essential code switching is most broadly used by members of Facebook English Youth Community as proven through their comments and online conversations with each other. The members tend to switch from one language variety to another in the specific levels of words, phrase and even clauses. In this case, they alternate from their native language of Indonesian to English and vice-versa. Another research related to analysing the users' tendency of code-switching on Facebook is also done by Ting and Yeo (2019). They employed Gumperz's model of conversational code-switching to analyse the language pattern of multiracial Malaysian students on Facebook wallpost; metaphorical code-switching was the main focus in the analysis. These Malaysian students code-switch between languages that they are most comfortable since most of them are able to converse in two to three languages. Ting and Yeo later concluded that this conventional type of code-switching according to Gumperz is no longer applicable to be based on for conversational analysis on digital medium.

On the other hand, many researchers leaned more towards carrying out studies and analysis related to the use of code-mixing as the centre of their findings. As seen in a research done by Ahmed Abousoud (2019), different generations of Facebook users practice code-mixing more than code-switching. This researcher adopted Hoffman's (1991) model that addresses the types and its motivations of code-switching and code-mixing. Through the analysis achieved by distributing questionnaires, Ahmed Abousoud concluded that code mixing type which is prevalent among his target participants include the mixing in word form as well as phrase form. Similarly, Hahyesalaemae (2017) found that Thai youths are also more inclined towards mixing in the word form, and in the phrase form when using Facebook. Based on the findings, a more specific and

most dominant kind of code-mixing used by Thai youth users is words insertion, followed by phrase insertion. These usage style of code-mixing exhibited might be the influence of Arabic and Thailand's alphabetical convention in their language system.

In addition, Simbolon, et al. (2020) analysed types of code-mixing practiced by people on Facebook based on Muysken (2000) theory. It was suggested that there are three main types of code-mixing which are insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. The researchers discovered results claiming that most frequently used type of code-mixing on Facebook status is insertion, as it is considered the easiest way to incorporate code-mixing without structural change of sentence. Another study conducted by Gad (2019) also based its theoretical framework corresponding to Muysken (2000). In relation this, the researcher rejected using the term code-switching for the general process of mixing and opted to classify them under big umbrella of code-mixing. Gad collected and analyzed the data from Egyptian bilingual social media users who often combine elements of Arabic and English in sentences.

In short, the above discussions show that there are a few classifications of code-switching and code-mixing respectively, based on several past scholars' theories or school of thoughts. Generally, it could be sum up that within the past five years social media users tend to use code-mixing extensively compared to code-switching on their online engagement.

Factors and Reasons Influencing the use of Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

In sociolinguistics study, it is important to ascertain the catalyst or factors that propel certain actions made by people especially if the matter involves aspects of language and society. Thus, most research discussed in this conceptual paper have looked at the factors affecting people's choice to use code-switching and code-mixing even when interacting online. On one spectrum, researchers found that social factors are among the reasons that people resort to switching or mixing codes; another factor is related to personal reasons.

Generally, there are quite a number of instances that social aspects are viewed as the factors influencing social media users' tendency in code-switching or code-mixing. In particular, a study conducted by Samhan (2017) revealed that age and education could definitely affect the participant's choice of practising both code-switching and code-mixing on Twitter. In terms of age, it was disclosed that code-switching and code-mixing are rarely produced by participants above the age of 35 and they only do so whenever it is required for argent matters such as names, places, and scientific terms. Ahmed Abousoud (2019) also alludes a general idea from his analysis that code-mixing is used more due to the factor of educational background. The patterns and drives to practice code-switching and code-mixing include careers which specialization is necessary to be able to interact in foreign languages, and they tend to utilise this particular type of code-mixing called Franco-Arabic Code (FAC) as well as English and Arabic.

Hahye Salaemae (2017) discovered that Thai youngsters are motivated to mix codes between Thai language and English due to the needs of following the trends. According to this researcher, it is a dominant reason because using English is seen as a trend, therefore everyone tries to at least use a few English words in their sentences to be regarded as keeping up to date especially among Thai youngsters. In relation to this, Ahmed Abousoud (2019) also claimed that social pressure on the online platforms as the motivation of people utilizing code-switching and code-mixing.

During this age of globalization, the discourse of English is deemed normal, so it is also linked to the reasons of youngsters to code-mix their native language with English in daily conversations

according to remarks made by Hahyesalaemae (2017). With that being said, many people are merely attempting to match with the situation of code-mixing whenever they are interacting. Similarly, a study by Jakob (2020) also emphasized that code-switching or code-mixing phenomenon are done consciously by young people, or in his study the members in the English Youth Community Group on Facebook due to any situational change or change of topics. They usually try to match with others' common act of switching or mixing codes. Research by Ting and Yeo (2019), demonstrated that English is invariably a crucial language in Facebook interactions because it was either employed as the base language or the code-switched language. Other than social factors, personal reasons are also regarded as to why people use code-mixing or code-switching on online platforms such as Facebook or Twitter when they comment, update status, or engage in conversations with one another. Hahyesalaemae (2017) claimed that code-mixing is considered a personal habit among many youngsters in Thailand. This reason is associated with the fact that many of them are bilinguals or even multilinguals as they learn many languages including Thai, English, Malay, Arabic, and others.

Contrary to that, results which Gad (2019) retrieved after data collection revealed that it is not related to personal habits even though those who resort to code mixing are mostly from the spheres of educated Egyptians who are also bilinguals. They collectively view it as a facilitating and timesaving strategy especially when expressing complex feelings, deep emotions, and perhaps opinions during online interaction be it on WhatsApp, Twitter, or even Facebook.

Lastly, Ting and Yeo (2019) discovered from their analysis that students personally preferred to use the language they write best on social media. This explains the reason they are inclined to code-switching mainly for personalization and interjections as the wallposts were targeted at rapport building. Expressiveness was also largely conveyed by them through fillers of Malaysian slang like "ar" or "la" even in English.

To sum up, people have their own reasons in using code-switching and code-mixing in their conversations even on online platform. Many researchers have done extensive studies to find out factors that influence this phenomenon; it could be understood that two main aspects have motivated the usage of code-switching and code-mixing, which include social factors and personal reasons.

D. CONCLUSION

Overall, social media is indeed a medium where people tend to practice code-switching and code-mixing whenever they are engaged in interactions, when communicating with others and even when expressing themselves. All these are driven by several factors which can be classified into social and personal factors. As discussed in this paper, there are several research done from the past five years to study the online phenomenon of switching and mixing of codes among bilinguals or multilinguals especially on prominent social media such as Facebook, Twitter or even WhatsApp. In particular, people's preference of social media is brought upon the researchers and Facebook is mainly said to be the choice where many people go for interaction and engagement. Next, types of code-switching and code-mixing used on social media were also identified and analyzed by these researchers based on different theories suggested by past scholars. Lastly, this conceptual paper also elucidates to ascertain the factors that influence and the reasons behind people's use of code-switching and code-mixing on online platform.

Based on the review of literature above, it could be concluded that there are still gaps or areas for further research. This sociolinguistics aspect can be considered as such a broad and

comprehensive topic with many potential variables to be studied as well as to fill the gaps of previous research. Specifically speaking, many research were done within foreign context of code-switching and code-mixing application on social media such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Jordan. Even though Malaysia is filled with multilingual community, there are a lack of research done within the local context on Malaysians' practice of code-switching and code-mixing in relation to social media. Instead, many local research highlighted more on the educational domain or academic setting. There are a lot of research regarding switching and mixing of codes especially in ESL classrooms by the teachers in their approaches of teaching.

Overall, the aspects of sociolinguistics are eventually applied and assimilated in the new era of globalization where technology breaks the barrier of geographical constraint and paves ways for universal communication. The normal face-to-face verbal interaction that people usually go through now can be done virtually through any digital medium. This has caused some new sensation whereby people now interact, comment, express their thoughts or share life updates on social media. With that being said, people who are mostly bilinguals or multilinguals tend to shift their style of oral code-switching and code-mixing to their virtual engagement on online platforms. Hence, the emerging research done by various scholars revolve around main topic of code-switching and code-mixing on social media.

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