

# MALAYSIAN YOUTH'S RECEPTIVITY TOWARDS CODE-SWITCHING IN MALAY DRAMA TELEVISION SERIES

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## ABSTRACT

*As a reflection of the multilingual characteristics of the Malaysian speech community, some Malaysian television series have incorporated use of code-switching in their shows. This study examined whether Malaysian youths' receptivity towards code-switching in Malay drama television series is linked to their own tendency to code-switch. A short video clip of a Malay drama television series with code-switching was shown before the university students filled in a questionnaire on their frequency of code-switching in daily life, and reasons for acceptability and unacceptability of code-switching in Malay drama television series. The results from 141 university participants indicated that Malay students code-switched more frequently than non-Malay students and they are also more receptive towards code-switching in Malay drama television series. However, a majority of the participants (Malay and non-Malay) found code-switching in Malay drama television series unacceptable, but their objections were not on the grounds that code-switching would adversely affect their ability to learn and speak English and Bahasa Melayu (BM). They also did not believe that code-switching has implications on their image, pro-Western stance and religious fervour. The Malay and non-Malay participants diverged in their views on code-switching and patriotism – 20% of participants who found code-switching in Malay drama television series acceptable did not do so as a result of associating code-switching with educatedness, sophistication, modernity, racial tolerance, 1Malaysia image and potential for BM to develop. The results suggest that code-switching in Malay drama television series is seen as an extension of communicative behaviour in daily life.*

**Keywords:** code-switching; television series; language use; identity; language attitude; code-mixing; multilingual setting.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Code-switching is an inherent feature of language use in speech communities where people speak two or more languages. Code-switching is defined as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59). The two grammatical systems or subsystems can refer to

two languages or two varieties of the same language and the passages of speech that are incorporated during code-switching can range from a word to a string of words. However, as the present study does not deal with the structural constraints and characteristics of code-switching, it is suffice to use one definition of code switching. The different views of what constitutes code-switching and code-mixing are not relevant to the discussion.

Code-switching has been studied in various contexts, including educational, transactional and employment domains. For example, code-switching is used in the teaching and learning contexts to assist learners in comprehension and to manage the class (Mahadhir & Then, 2007; Martin, 2005; Pandian & Ramiah, 2004; Tan & Chan, 2003; Yahaya, Noor, Mokhtar, Rawian, Othman, & Jusoff, 2009). In Malaysia, code-switching is common in the transactional domain to ensure communicative efficiency in interethnic interactions between buyers and sellers (Altehenger-Smith, 1987; Lau & Ting, 2013) and to reduce the social distance (Burhanudeen, 2006). In the workplace, code-switching is a feature of language choice convergence in communication involving employees from different hierarchical levels and ethnic groups (e.g., Venugopal, 2000; Ting, 2002; Ting, 2007).

With so much research on code-switching in various domains, researchers have reached a stage whereby they know why code-switching happens. The Malaysian society has also reached a stage whereby they view code-switching as a part of daily communicative behaviour, to the extent that some Malaysian television channels are airing shows which incorporate code-switching to reflect real life interactions. An example is Malay television drama series where urban professionals are seen to code-switch to English, particularly in shows aired by privately owned channels but hardly on national television channels (Ting, 2010). On national television channels like TV1 and TV2, there seems to be a control on the language used in Malay drama television series in keeping to the national language policy on the use of Bahasa Melayu (BM) as the official language of Malaysia. National television stations are seen as providing a model of national language usage to the Malaysian society. Cable TV networks are not bound by the language policy and have the leeway to portray code-switching as a norm in the daily discourse of certain sectors of the Malaysian population. This means that certain sectors of the society may not be receptive to the presence of code-switching to English in Malay drama television series. However, little is known about the reactions of the society to code-switching in public domains such as the mass media, one example being the television.

This study examined whether Malaysian youths' receptivity towards code-switching in Malay drama television series is linked to their own tendency to code-switch. The specific objectives of the study were to: (1) determine frequency of code-switching in daily lives for Malay and non-Malay participants; and (2) determine reasons for acceptability and unacceptability of code-switching in Malay drama television series for the Malay and non-Malay participants.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section focusses on studies on code-switching in the broadcast mass media, particularly in movies and television shows, to show the meanings associated with code-switching.

Bilingualism in the media is not uncommon and has, in fact, been used for promotion purposes to show authenticity in the portrayal of culture. For example, a Hollywood movie called "In Spanglish" released in late 2004 attracted attention when the Mexican housekeeper

and the Anglo family did not use Spanglish, the mixed code for Spanish and English (Androutsopoulos, 2007). Code-switching is such a natural part of communication that the absence of code-switching is seen as an indicator of cultural conflict. The Spanish-English code switching found in Puerto Rican or Mexican neighbourhoods in the United States is similar to the code-switching between English and Tagalog in the Philippines (Bautista, 2004). According to Bautista (2004), Taglish started off as a language of informality among the middle-class, college-educated, urbanised Filipinos but now it is a lingua franca in urban areas. The mixing of English and Tagalog is so much a part of daily communication that their English newspaper advertisements and news items have long stretches of Tagalog thrown in. On television, government officials switch between English and Tagalog, and interviews, panel discussions and sportscasts are conducted in the same code switching variety.

In television channels, code-switching to English symbolises modernity in some countries. For instance, in South Korea, Lee (2006) analysed 720 advertising spots totalling four hours of commercials broadcasted on major television stations in Seoul, and found that advertisers mixed English with Korean language to construct modernity. Food, medicine and financial institutions are advertised in the Korean language only and feature middle-aged homemakers businessmen, and elderly people whereas commercials on cellular phones, beauty products and cars are in the Korean language and English and feature young professionals. Through the three-way correlation among English, modernity, and youth, Lee (2006) showed that English mixing in commercials is a linguistic mechanism to construct a globalised identity, and this is because English is seen as an international language. The same conclusion was reached by Dimova (2012) from the analysis of television commercials, that is, code-switching to English in non-English commercials is associated with power, prestige, and modernism.

In British television holiday programmes, presenters crossings into local languages to position themselves as cosmopolitan international tourists (Jaworski, Thurlow, Lawson, & Ylänne-McEwen, 2003). Jaworski et al. (2003) reached this conclusion after analysing 106 episodes featuring 33 destinations on 18 BBC programmes and 10 ITV programmes in the United Kingdom. In the interactions between presenters and hosts, transient crossings into local languages is not meant to show their deep engagement with the local people or culture but rather to highlight the exotic ambience in tourism. The main functions of host languages in British television holiday programmes were:

- 1) expert talk (e.g. guided tours, explanations, instructions);
- 2) service encounters (e.g. purchasing foodstuffs in shops or markets);
- 3) phatic communion (e.g. exchanging greetings, thanking – often as part of a service encounter); and
- 4) naming and translating (e.g. providing labels for local concepts, artefacts or dishes, translating local place names).

(Jawarski et al. 2003, p. 9)

Through code-switching to host languages, the presenters portray themselves as British nationals who are global citizens. Code-switching to English can index a global identity because of the status of English as an international language.

In Finnish television, switching to English does not construe modernity or a global identity but is used to portray an English speaker. When the American television series, *The Invisible Man*, was shown on Finnish television in the early 2000s, the audience was encouraged to create fan fiction (Leppanen, 2007). Much of the fan fiction used English in the dialogues to show an American character. Most of the fan fiction was written in English but there were occasional interspersing of Finnish with English. Leppanen (2007) views the use of English as a form of cultural and identity expression by the young Finns.

In Ukraine where people are expected to speak their own pure language, dual-language communication where interactants do not accommodate is becoming increasingly common on bilingual television programmes broadcast nationwide. Russian and Ukraine languages are both means of communication, but Russian dominates in urban centres and the media where Ukraine is the official language. However, for dual-language communication to take place, the interactants need to be bilingual to some extent (Bilaniuk, 2006). From her study of public life in Kyiv, it is apparent that code-switching is a way of accommodating to interlocutors, and is likely to be performed by the younger generation who value the freedom to use languages outside of their official roles. However, at the time of Bilaniuk's study, speaking differently in Ukraine does not carry negative or distancing connotations.

Among the few studies on code-switching in television programmes in Malaysia is that conducted by Ting (2010) on code-switching in Malay drama television series which shows that code-switching is used for constructing particular identities. From her analysis of 24 drama series on Astro channels, she found that the five dramas with religious themes kept to BM because it indexes Islam, and serves to create and maintain the Muslim religious identity. For the other 19 Malay drama television series, the discourse of co-workers in the office setting is interspersed with English. Chunks of English were used by actors and actresses playing the role of professionals in urban settings, usually among the younger group. In her study, Ting (2010) focused on the words which were often code-switched, and a few categories were identified. First, the pronouns "you" and "I" are used by young professionals in urban settings to circumvent the complexity of handling politeness in the Malay culture because *kau/engkau* and *aku* are rude when not used among friends and younger siblings. The use of English phrases such as "please" and "sorry" fall into this category. Second, the use of English in Malay discourse seems to mark modernity (e.g., save *semua gambar*) and Western influence (e.g., magic vs *silap mata*). On the basis of these results, Ting (2010) concluded that code-switching to English represents sophistication and educatedness because English is used as the primary marker of success in business, and a crucial symbolic element in the construction of a modern Malay businessman/woman. Third, code-switching is used in daily exchanges, particularly in romance-related talk (e.g., "handsome", "I miss you"). Ting (2010) interpreted this as allowing distancing in cultural identity in a setting where expressions of feelings are not the norm.

Code-switching for distancing in cultural identity is a plausible conclusion because of evidence from other contexts. Soo (1987) also reported that Malaysian students preferred to say "I *sayang pada* you" instead of an utterance completely in Malay. Soo (1987) also found the use of English to discuss foreign topics and Malay for speaker involvement. Similar findings were obtained from Bautista's (1979) study of Tagalog radio drama scripts. The characters made apologies for minor offenses in English (e.g. arriving late for an appointment) but used Tagalog for serious offenses (e.g., being unfaithful); they used a

variant of the Tagalog “*patawarin mo ako*” meaning “please forgive me”. Bautista (1979) also reported that saying “dear”, “honey” or “sweetheart” is less self-conscious than using Tagalog terms of endearment (*mahal*, *giliw*, or *irog*), and some married couples choose to quarrel in English because of the distance associated with English usage.

### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 141 university students enrolled in English proficiency courses at two Malaysian public universities, namely, Universiti Teknologi MARA and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. The participants’ age ranged from 18 to 25, and the average age was 20 (see Table 1). They were in diploma and degree programmes at the time of the study. Most had regularly watched Malay drama television series and would have formed some views on code-switching. Most of the participants were Malay (75.9% or 107), and 24.1% (or 34) were non-Malay comprising Chinese, Sabah and Sarawak Indigenous and Indian. The disparity in the proportion of Malay and non-Malay participants is reflective of the ethnic composition in the university student population, and the figures cannot be equalised for the study.

Table 1: Participants’ age, ethnic group and frequency of watching Malay drama television series.

Characteristics	Breakdown	Frequency (N=141)	Percentage
Age	18	57	40.4
	19	8	5.7
	20	7	5.0
	21	31	22.0
	22	26	18.4
	23	6	4.3
	24	4	2.8
	25	1	0.7
	26	1	0.7
Ethnic group	Malay	107	75.9
	Chinese	18	12.8
	Sabah and Sarawak Indigenous	15	10.6
	Indian	1	0.7
Frequency of watching Malay drama television series	Every day of the week	22	15.6
	At least once a week	54	38.3
	At least once a month	25	17.7
	3-4 times a year	22	15.6
	Almost never	18	12.8

Non-Malay university students were included as participants in the study although they code-switch to BM in limited contexts as it is not their mother tongue. However, it is relevant to study their receptivity towards code-switching in Malay drama television series as they encounter code-switching in their daily lives and television programmes.



### 3.2 Instruments

The study made use of a short movie clip from a Malay drama television series with code-switching in order to contextualise the code-switching. The clip from *Cinta Secawan Teh* shown on Radio Television Malaysia channel was 2 minutes and 42 seconds. In the short clip, a man and a woman, both professionals, were talking as they sat in the light rail transit train on their way to work. That was how they met, and feelings developed between them. In the following excerpt where they talked about the dilemma they were in, code-switching to English for personal pronouns can be seen. An excerpt containing code-switching is as follows:

Woman: Habis macam mana? Tidak tahu perhubungan ni? *You* tengok kita macamana sekarang ni? Nak kahwin?

[So how? Don't know about this relationship? Look at us, what to do now? Want to get married?]

Man: Tak kisah, kalau itulah, jangan *you* *strai*kannya. Asalkan *you* terima (untranscribable) janji akan sikit-sikit.

[Doesn't matter. If so, don't you strain it. As long as you accept (untranscribable), promise will be little by little.]

Woman: Bang, *you* lelaki *you* senanglah cakap. *I* ni perempuan. Then, tsk ...

[Bang, you're a guy, it's easy for you to say. I'm a lady. Then, tsk ...]

After the participants had watched the movie clip, they were asked to fill in Section 1 of the questionnaire which requested their opinion of the man and woman who code-switched to English when they were speaking BM. They were asked to write down all the characteristics which came to their mind about the man and woman in the movie clip. Their open-ended reasons were used to explain their reasons for accepting or not accepting code-switching in Malay drama television series (elicited by Section 3 of the questionnaire).

Section 2 of the questionnaire was on the frequency of code-switching between English and BM. The 12 items covered code-switching in the family, education and friendship domains. Code-switching with three groups of interactants were examined: family (siblings, parents, grandparents), friends, and lecturers. Within these domains, the formality and mode of the interactions were also examined (results in Table 2). For example, for the education domain, the participants were asked how often they code-switched between English and BM when talking to their lecturers in their office, during lectures and when making oral presentations in front of the whole class. As for the friendship domain, the participants were asked to report the frequency of code-switching between English and BM when they were talking face-to-face, during group discussions, in email communication and in Facebook interactions. The participants were asked to report whether they code-switched in almost every conversation (3); in about half the conversations (2); in some conversations (1); and never (0). The numbers in brackets show the codes used during input of data, and for calculation of group means (results in Table 2).

The third section of the questionnaire contained an item which asked participants whether they agreed that it is good for Malaysia to show television series with people mixing English and BM. Based on their response (yes/no), they were directed to different questions to further investigate their receptivity towards code-switching. Those who agreed that it was good to include code-switching in Malay drama television series were asked for possible reasons for acceptability of code-switching. On the other hand, those who felt that it was not good for Malaysia to air television series with code-switching in Malay drama television series were asked to respond to possible reasons for the unacceptability of code-switching. The reasons were from both the language and identity aspects, identified from the literature review and contextualised in the Malaysian setting. Their agreement or disagreement was elicited using a 5-point Likert scale from “1” for “Strongly disagree” to “5” for “Strongly agree”, and the mid-point was 3 (“No opinion”) (results in Tables 3 and 4).

### ***3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures***

The data collection took place during a two-hour lecture in both sites of data collection. The researchers told the students that they were interested in studying reactions to code-switching in Malay drama television series because it had become a common feature. Then a short video clip of a Malay drama television series with code-switching was shown before the questionnaire was distributed. Students were told that if they did not wish to participate in the study, they need not return the questionnaire. The questionnaires were collected in about 20 minutes, and the researchers thanked the students for participating in the study. The same procedure of data collection was followed in the two research sites. A total of 141 usable questionnaires were obtained for the analysis.

For the data analysis, the data from the questionnaire were keyed into an Excel sheet. The frequencies were computed and percentages calculated for each of their responses to the items. For frequency of code-switching in different domains of language use, group means were calculated for comparisons of the extensiveness of code-switching by Malay and non-Malay participants. Subsequently, group means for the Malay and non-Malay participants' reasons for accepting and not accepting code-switching in Malay drama television series were computed for comparison of the two groups.

## **4. RESULTS**

The first section of the results is on the frequency of code-switching between English and BM whereas the results on receptivity towards code-switching in Malay drama television series are divided into the reasons for acceptability and unacceptability of code-switching. For the open-ended responses, participants are referred to as N1 to N141.

### ***4.1 Frequency of Code-Switching Between English and BM in Daily Life***

The results showed that the Malay participants code-switched between English and BM more frequently than the non-Malay participants. Table 2 shows that the Malay participants code-switched between English and BM most of the time as the means were mostly between 2 (half the time) and 3 (almost all the time). On the other hand, the non-Malay participants would only code-switch in some conversations. For instance, when talking with their family and in the university setting (means between 0 and 1). In addition, they would code-switch a little more frequently when they talked with their lecturers in the office, their Malay friends, and

coursemates during group discussions (means between 1 and 2). These results indicate that Malay participants were more inclined towards code-switching between English and Malay than the non-Malay participants because the Malays speak more Malay in their daily life whereas the non-Malays may speak their ethnic languages and English more frequently. The standard deviation (SD) is slightly higher for the Malay participants than for the non-Malay participants, showing more variability in their reports of code-switching between English and BM.

Table 2: Frequency of code-switching between English and BM by Malay and non-Malay participants.

	Malay (n=107)		Non-Malay (n=34)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. How often do you mix English and BM when you talk with <b>your brothers and sisters?</b>	2.24	1.27	0.53	0.62
2. How often do you mix English and BM when you talk with <b>your parents?</b>	2.25	1.41	0.38	0.49
3. How often do you mix English and BM when you talk with <b>your grandparents?</b>	2.58	1.80	0.09	0.24
4. How often do you mix English and BM when you talk with <b>lecturers in their office?</b>	2.11	0.90	1.23	0.87
5. How often do you mix English and BM when you talk with <b>lecturers during lectures?</b>	2.06	0.96	1.00	0.85
6. How often do you mix English and BM when you make <b>oral presentations in the university?</b>	2.14	1.38	0.65	0.95
7. How often do you mix English and BM when you talk with <b>other Malay friends?</b>	2.21	1.03	1.32	0.67
8. How often do you mix English and BM when you talk with <b>coursemates during group discussion?</b>	2.22	1.04	1.11	0.57
9. How often do you mix English and BM when you <b>email your Malay friends?</b>	2.34	1.22	0.56	0.75
10. How often do you mix English and BM when you <b>write in Facebook?</b>	2.25	1.04	0.85	0.94

(0 Never, 1 In some conversations, 2 Half the time, 3 Almost all the time)

\*SD = Standard deviation

For both Malay and non-Malay participants, the association of code-switching with informality can be seen from the frequency of code-switching in their communication with lecturers and coursemates. The students code-switched more when they talked with their lecturers in their office than in the lecture hall which is a more formal setting (Items 4 and 5). The patterns are the same for the Malay and non-Malay participants. Similarly, both groups of participants code-switched more during group discussions (Item 8) than during oral presentations (Item 6). Group discussions are small group informal interactions conducted to complete assignments and projects in the absence of their lecturer whereas oral presentations are done in a formal setting in the presence of their lecturer and the whole class, often for the purpose of evaluation. These results show that code-switching surfaces in informal situations, and therefore code-switching can be intentionally used to create an air of informality. In the



Philippines, code switching changes “the tenor of the speech situation from a relatively formal one to a more informal one, as when a teacher shifts from English to Taglish to signal that the class should be more relaxed, to ask questions, during the lecture” (Bautista, 2004, p. 231).

As for communication with friends, the Malay and non-Malay participants were different (Items 7, 9 and 10). The Malay participants code-switched between English and BM the most frequently, in emails (mean of 2.34), followed by Facebook (mean of 2.25) and face-to-face interactions (mean of 2.21). In other words, the Malay participants were used to speaking Malay to one another in face-to-face interactions but when the communication was mediated by a digital medium like Facebook and email, English words were incorporated. It may not be the mode of communication alone which is making a difference in the frequency of code-switching because the different modes can be used for communicating on different topics. Students generally use Facebook communication for interpersonal exchanges and email communication for academic matters. Since a lot of terms and concepts learnt are in English, they need to code-switch to English when they write emails to their coursemates on academic subjects. The non-Malay participants, on the other hand, reported the highest frequency of code-switching in face-to-face interactions with their Malay friends (mean of 1.32), followed by Facebook communication (mean of 0.85) and emails (mean of 0.56). The non-Malay participants who did not use much Malay in their daily life, had to code-switch to English in impromptu face-to-face interaction with their Malay friends to overcome gaps in communication. However, in written communication through the Facebook and email modes, they could take time to compose their messages in Malay and need not code-switch much. With greater incidence of code-switching by Malay participants in their daily life, it is expected that they would be more receptive towards code-switching in Malay drama television series, and this surfaced in the results presented in the next two sections.

#### ***4.2 Acceptability of Code-Switching in Malay Drama Television Series***

Table 3 shows that a small proportion of the participants felt that code-switching in Malay drama television series is acceptable (19.9% or 28 out of 141 participants). As a whole, few were in support of code-switching in Malay drama television series, regardless of ethnicity. This comprised four non-Malay participants (which is 11.8% out of the total of 34 non-Malay participants) and 24 Malay participants (which is 22.4% out of the total of 107 Malay participants). Within the ethnic group categories, the percentage of non-Malay participants in support of code-switching was lower compared to Malay participants. As mentioned earlier, the non-Malay participants code-switched less frequently in their daily lives than Malay participants, and this is reflected in lower acceptance of code-switching on Malay drama television series. Although these 28 participants were receptive towards code-switching, their responses to the possible reasons for acceptability of code-switching showed that they actually did not believe that it is a good practice to incorporate code-switching into Malay drama television series.

Table 3: Malay and non-Malay participants' reasons for acceptability of code-switching.

Reasons for acceptability of code-switching	Malay (n=24)		Non-Malay (n=4)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Identity aspect</b>				
1. We look educated	1.88	0.71	2.50	0.71
2. We look sophisticated	2.29	0.71	2.75	0.71
3. It shows 1Malaysia image	2.04	0	2.85	0
4. It shows that they are open to other races	1.71	0	2.25	0
5. It shows the identity of modern Malays	1.92	0	2.25	0
<b>Language aspect</b>				
6. It allows the BM language to develop	2.50	0.71	2.50	0.71
Average	2.06		2.50	

Note:

1 Strongly disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 No opinion, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly agree

SD = Standard deviation

The rest of this section describes the differences between the two ethnic group categories based on a comparison of the group means. The Malay participants were clearly in disagreement as the means for the six items were between 1.71 and 2.50 (2 for “disagree” and 3 for “no opinion”). The results showed that despite the portrayal of urban Malay professionals in the television series, the Malay participants did not think that code-switching is a reflection of a higher level of education, sophistication and modernity. They disagreed that code-switching reflected a 1Malaysia identity and racial tolerance. In the aspect of language, the Malay participants also did not think that code-switching between English and BM allowed the BM language to develop. The four non-Malay participants also disagreed that people who code-switch look educated, sophisticated, modern, racially tolerant and carry a 1Malaysia identity but they were only marginally negative (means between 2.25 and 2.75). They also did not believe that code-switching allowed BM to develop. However, the results on the non-Malay participants cannot be generalised because they are based on the responses of four participants only. At best, the results can be viewed as indicative and further studies with a larger sample need to be conducted for verification of the group trend.

The open-ended responses in the questionnaire indicate how some participants viewed code-switching in a positive light. One Malay participant wrote down on the questionnaire “[It is] ok to mix as long as they know who they are. Process of learning” (N41) whereas another stated that code-switching can improve skills to speak English (N69). For those who often speak BM, code-switching to English enables them to get more oral practice in using English. Many others wrote about how code-switching saved the situation when they could not find the words they wanted to say in either English or BM. The compensatory role of code-switching in communication is the benefit that is highlighted the most by the participants.

### 4.3 Unacceptability of Code-Switching in Malay Drama Television Series

Table 4 shows that majority of the participants felt that it is not good for Malaysia to air television series with people mixing English and BM (80.1% or 113 of 141 participants). Of these, 30 participants were non-Malay (which is 88.2% of the total 34 non-Malay participants), and 83 were Malay participants (which is 77.6% out of the total of 107 Malay participants). The results showed the lack of receptivity towards code-switching in Malay drama television series among both groups of participants. Within the ethnic group categories, the percentage of non-Malays who find code-switching in Malay drama television series unacceptable is higher than the percentage for the Malays. This result is consistent with the earlier results on the acceptability of code-switching. It also provides further support for the contention that frequent code-switching in daily life for the Malay participants promoted greater receptivity towards code-switching in Malay drama television series. Since code-switching is a natural behaviour for the Malay participants in daily life, they viewed code-switching in Malay drama television series as an extension of their own communicative behaviour.

Table 4: Malay and non-Malay participants' reasons for unacceptability of code-switching.

	Malay (n=83)		Non-Malay (n=30)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Identity aspect</b>				
1. It gives Malays a bad image	2.24	0.71	2.20	0
2. It shows that we are too pro-Westerners	2.73	0.71	2.67	2.12
3. It shows that we are not patriotic to Malaysia	2.92	0	3.27	0
4. It shows that Malays have an identity crisis	2.75	0.71	2.80	0
5. It shows that the Malays are not very religious	3.52	0.71	3.03	0
<b>Language aspect</b>				
6. We cannot learn to speak BM properly	1.87	2.12	1.53	0
7. It makes the BM language corrupted	1.55	0	1.60	0.71
8. We cannot learn to speak English properly	1.72	0.71	1.53	0
9. It makes the English language corrupted	1.77	0	1.63	0.71
Average	2.34		2.25	

Note:

1 Strongly disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 No opinion, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly agree

SD = Standard deviation

From the aspect of identity, both groups were marginally negative and the group means were not as low as those for the language aspect. Both groups of participants disagreed that code-switching gave Malays a bad image, a pro-Western identity and impressions of having an identity crisis. They also disagreed that Malays who code-switch was not very religious. This question was posed because Islamic teachings are often given in BM but the results showed

that the participants did not see any problem if their religious teachers used some English. One participant's open-ended response delinked religion and BM, "religion [does] not depend on language but it is belief and trust in the religion." (N65). In other words, the participant viewed code-switching between English and BM as a natural communicative behaviour of Malaysians, despite the close association between Malays and BM. They also detached code-switching from Western and religious affiliations.

A point of divergence for the Malay and non-Malay participants is their response on code-switching and patriotism. The non-Malay participants (mean of 3.27) agreed that code-switching indicates lack of patriotism to Malaysia but the Malay participants (mean of 2.92) disagreed with this view. An example of a statement which indicates that code-switching may be seen as unpatriotic is "BM [is the] official language in Malaysia. Prevent other language that can harm our official language" (N38). In Malaysia, the Malay drama television series are aired by Radio Televisyen Malaysia 1 (TV1), Radio Televisyen Malaysia 2 (TV2), Radio Televisyen Malaysia (TV3) and NatSeven TV Sdn Bhd (NTV7). TV1, TV2 and TV3 are government-owned and the Malay drama television series do not have much code-switching compared to NTV7 which is a private television station (Ting, 2010). Malay drama television series are also aired by All-Asian Satellite Television and Radio Operator (Astro), a pay TV provider established in 1996. The national television stations are the vanguard of the national language policy and enforce the use of only BM in their programmes. It is probably in this context that the non-Malay participants consider code-switching as showing lack of patriotism because only BM is supposed to be used on national television stations.

In the language aspect, the two groups of participants were similar in their views that watching Malay drama television series with code-switching did not affect their ability to speak English and BM properly (Table 4). They also did not believe that code-switching makes English and BM corrupted. The group means were between 1 ("strongly disagree") and 2 ("disagree"). In their view, watching shows with code-switching did not adversely affect their ability to speak or learn English and BM. However, these interpretations are based on the group means.

The standard deviation shows variability in views for some items, and the open-ended responses shed light on why code-switching in Malay drama television series is considered a bad influence on young people's language use as shown in Table 5. N1, N2 and so on refers to the participant number.

Table 5: Participants' reasons for the bad influence of code-switching in Malay drama television series.

Categorisation of detrimental effects	Participants' reasons
Detrimental effects on Malay	Not good as next generation cannot learn the appropriate use of Malay language (N25) Malays should not mix as it will affect the way Malay speaks (N60)
Detrimental effects on English	We cannot learn to speak or write English well, create bad motivation to young generation. Learn English, international language (N7) Malays will have bad image because tourists always think that Malays are good in English when they talk to them (N73)
Detrimental effects on both languages	[Code-switching] makes younger generation harder to differentiate between English and BM before [they] receive any education (N2) make new generation mix English and BM (N4) Use English or Bahasa properly. Don't mix it (N21) Not good cos people do not give value to particular language whether English or BM (N64) Other countries' citizens look down on us. Not really good in English or Malay but still try to show off (N18)

First, the participants stressed the effect on the next generation, the younger generation who may grow up not knowing how to demarcate English and BM and speak either language well since they often hear a mixture of it being used by people who code-switch. In fact, the main reason for them to code-switch is to overcome the problem of not having the vocabulary needed for communication. Code-switching is therefore a useful communication strategy for bridging linguistic gaps. Second, they were concerned about the bad image that foreigners might have of Malaysia because of its citizens who cannot master either English or Malay.

Taken together, the results on the acceptability and unacceptability of code-switching in Malay drama television series are consistent in showing that Malay participants were more receptive than the non-Malay participants although they generally were not in favour of it. The Malay participants code-switched more in their daily lives and, as argued earlier, this is linked to greater acceptance of code-switching on Malay drama television series.

The Malaysian youth's receptivity towards code-switching is influenced by the broader sociocultural context in the country. Code-switching has been found to be in the fabric of Malaysian life (Altehenger-Smith, 1987; Burhanudeen, 2006; Lau & Ting, 2013; Mahadhir & Then, 2007; Martin, 2005; Nair-Venugopal, 2000; Pandian & Ramiah, 2004; Tan & Chan, 2003; Ting, 2002; Ting, 2007; Yahaya, Noor, Mokhtar, Rawian, Othman, & Jusoff, 2009). Because of the prevalence of code-switching in Malaysia, script writers of Malay television series have incorporated dialogue lines where the characters switch to English for specific purposes to portray the culture - much like how code-switching between Spanish and English



is shown on Spanish television (Androutsopoulos, 2007) or how code-switching between Tagalog and English is shown on television in the Philippine (Bautista, 2004).

Surprisingly, in the present study, the university students (Malay and non-Malay) rejected associations of code-switching with identities. They disagreed that code-switching makes them look modern, educated, sophisticated and pro-Westerners. This view is surprising because the Malay television series portrayed young urban professionals as people who code-switch, in comparison to homemakers, senior citizens and blue collar workers who maintain the use of BM (Ting, 2010). In other countries, code-switching to English on television is also used to symbolise modernity, such as in South Korea (Lee, 2006) and Macedonia (Dimova, 2012). English indexes a global identity because it is an international language. In Finland and Ukraine, it is the young people who are seen to code-switch on television (Bilaniuk, 2006; Leppanen, 2007). To the university students in this study, their receptivity towards code-switching in Malay drama television series had nothing to do with whether code-switching is associated with a racially tolerant identity and reflective of the Malaysia image. They also disagreed that people who code-switch are less religious but it was clear from Ting's (2010) study that BM indexes Islam as no code-switching to English occurred in any of the Malay dramas with a religious theme. However, there were some ethnic differences in views because the non-Malay university students felt that code-switching makes them appear less patriotic but the Malay university students did not agree. This is an aspect which needs to be studied further to understand the implications of code-switching vis-à-vis the national identity.

For the university students in this study, code-switching is used for practical reasons rather than identity choices, unlike some Filipino bloggers who code-switched to stylised Filipino English in personal weblogs to reinforce a Filipino identity (Smedley, 2006). However, their views were different in the closed and open-ended questionnaire responses. Their open-ended responses revealed their concern on the bad influence of code-switching on young people's use of English and BM, but these are the views of a small percentage of the participants. As a group, their questionnaire responses showed that code-switching does not make English and BM corrupted, and does not affect their ability to learn and speak these languages. To obtain more definitive findings, it is necessary to employ a mixed method to study attitudes towards code-switching, whether on television or in other contexts.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The study showed that Malaysian university students were not receptive to code-switching on Malay drama television series and felt that it does not fare well for Malaysia's image. The Malay university students who code-switched more frequently in their daily life were not as resistant to code-switching in Malay drama television series compared to the non-Malay university students who hardly code-switch between English and BM in daily life. However, they did not reject code-switching due to the possible adverse effects of code-switching on their ability to learn and speak English and BM, and they also rejected associations of code-switching with various identities, whether positive or negative. In this context, the results suggest that code-switching in Malay drama television series is seen as an extension of communicative behaviour in daily life. But there is a question of whether code-switching is considered desirable language practice that is aired on national television because the mass media can lead language change or safeguard standards in the use of the national language.

This is a potent area of research that will shed light on attitudes towards code-switching on television.

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