CODESWITCHING IN MALAYSIAN BUSINESS AND ITS ROLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT

Elaine Morais
Faculty of Languages and Linguistics
University of Malaya

Introduction

Codeswitching is a striking feature of business communication in Malaysia. It is found at all levels of the business hierarchy, but is particularly evident at the middle and lower levels. In this paper, I shall try to delineate some of the patterns of codeswitching observable in business situations in Malaysia and to spell out some of the implications of this phenomenon for the management of conflict. The first part of this paper will seek to examine business contexts and interactions in some depth with a view to establishing "who speaks what variety of what language to whom, when and concerning what".[1] Any attempt to answer this question must necessarily include some information on the sociolinguistic profile of companies operating in Malaysia, as well as an attempt to relate this to the patterns of language use obtaining at the work place and to the physical and social organization of work.

Methodology

The data for the study was obtained by means of tape recordings of naturally occurring language use in a business context.[2] This was supplemented by personal observations over a three-month period, as well as results of a questionnaire and, wherever possible, self-reports from the staff involved.

[1] Joshua A. Fishman. The Sociology of Language: An Interdisciplinary Social Science Approach to Language in Society. In Joshua A. Fishman (Ed.) 1976. *Advances in the Sociology of Language*, Vol. 1. Mouton, The Hague. Paris P.220.

[2] The data was recorded on the premises (office and factory) of a Swedish multinational in Malaysia.

Definition of Terms

At this point it might be useful to explain how certain key terms are used in the paper. The term "codeswitching" is used to refer to the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation. This would cover changes in language, style and dialect which can occur at intra and intersentential levels. As the type of codeswitching observed is seen to convey both social and linguistic meaning, that is, to cover both the relational

codeswitching and codemixing, that some scholars make[3], has not been maintained. It is worth noting, however, that much of the evidence of codeswitching that I have provided in my data is of the type John Gumperz (1976) has referred to as "conversational codeswitching" In this type of codeswitching "a speaker may switch codes (i.e. varieties) within a single sentence, and may even do so many times ... one gets the impression that the aim is simply to produce instances of the two varieties in some given, say, roughly equal proportion. This balance may be achieved by express-ing one sentence in one variety and the next one in the other, and so on, but it is equally possible for the two varieties to be used in different parts of a single sentence".[4]

The Social Organization of Work

The company from which data was derived for this study exhibited a pyramidal organizational structure that may be considered fairly typical. The hierarchy involved in this structure may be diagrammatically repre-sented as follows:[5]

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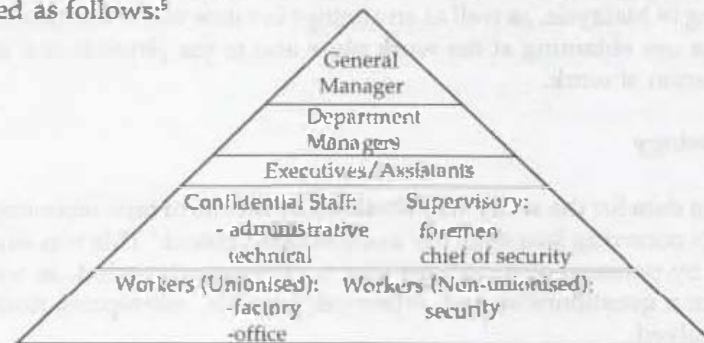
[3]Ozog in his paper notes that Kachru (1976), Thelander (1976), Nababan (1978) and Marasigan (1983) make this distinction.

[4]R.A. Hudson. 1980. *Sociolinguistics.* Cambridge University Press p. 57

[5]The diagram represents the structure found in the company where the study was conducted and was obtained from their records.

The ethnic composition of a multinational operating in Malaysia may be said in general to reflect that of society at large, while taking into account the special interests of the parent company. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is invariably sent from the parent company as is one other senior manager who usually possesses some special/technical expertise that locals are not expected to have. This arrangement is also in keeping with Malaysian laws which permit only two members of the parent company to be resident in the country and actively involved in the daily running of the local operation. Short visits by staff from the parent company and other branches are also permitted as are longer stints but special approval has to be obtained for these in advance. Such arrangements would cover, for instance, staff attached to special projects.

All other staff in the company are drawn from the major ethnic groups in the country. Two of the department managers are Malays while two are Chinese. Of the ten executives/assistants five are Chinese, four are Malay and one is Indian. The next level, comprising confidential and administrative and technical support staff, is made up entirely of Malays and Chinese. At the lowest level you have the workers on the shopfloor[*] who come from all the major ethnic groups, with the largest number being the Malays. The supervisors on the shopfloor are the foremen, six in all, four of whom are Chinese and two Malays. The second in command are the charge hands who come from all the ethnic groups. All the security staff are Malays.

The managerial, administrative and confidential staff are housed in the office area, while the workers and their supervisors are to be found in the factory. The two managers who have the most direct dealings with the factory personnel are the Production Manager and the Manager responsible for Materials, Maintenance and Planning. The former has his office in the factory itself. In fact it is located on a higher level, so he is well-positioned to oversee the smooth running of the factory. The other manager has a room in the office area, but makes frequent trips to the factory where some of his support staff are located. Most interactions between these two managers and their staff are held in the factory area, while those between managers and between managers and confidential and administrative staff are held in the office area.

[*] The shop is the "department of an enterprise where manufacturing or a specific manufacturing process is carried out." From Derek French and Heather Saward. 1975 *Dictionary of Management*. Pan, London and Sydney Thus the "shopfloor" refers to the factory where the work of assembling cars is carried out.

The above information has been provided with a view to showing that there is a clear physical and social demarcation between different grades of personnel depending on the kinds of work undertaken. I would like to argue that this provides a built-in basis for studying patterns of language use in general and patterns of codeswitching in particular To summarize one could say that there are grounds for seeing communication as taking place at three levels: (i) Top level communication amongst administrative staff; (ii) Bottom level communication amongst factory personnel, (iii) Middle level communication involving administrative and shop floor personnel.

In a previous presentation[7], I touched on these matters briefly In this paper I would like to outline the general patterns of codeswitching, and in particular to focus attention on switching involving the use of Malay and English, both the standard versions as well as varieties of these languages.

General Patterns of Codeswitching

The first point to be made is that codeswitching occurs at all the three levels of business communication with each level having its own patterns. This confirms what Ozog discovered in the course of his study: "Private sector offices provide a setting where a great deal of switching takes place" [8] What is particularly striking is that members of all local ethnic groups alternate between Malay and English in heterogeneous group interactions. The Chinese and Indians do, however, sometimes switch to their native languages when interacting with members of their own ethnic groups. The Chinese dialects most resorted to are Cantonese and Hokkien, with the former being by far the more important of the two. The use of these two dialects may be explained in terms of the company's location in Shah Alam. Large numbers of these two communities are known to be well settled in the Kelang Valley and the surrounding areas. The Indian language in use is Tamil, the mother tongue of the largest group among the Indian minority

It has frequently been noted that while the Malays "command" two languages, Malay and English, the non-Malays have, in addition, their

[7]"Some Preliminary Observations on Business Communication in Malaysia:
Perspective" Paper delivered at the 8th International Conference of ASANAL, 28th-31st May, 1990, Language Centre, University
[8]A.C. Ozog, "Codeswitching In Peninsular Malaysia and Brunei: A Study in Contrastive Linguistic Strategies" Paper presented at the 8th International Conference of ASANAL, Kuala Lumpur. 28-31st May 1990. p.14.

native language as part of their verbal repertoire. As with many such generalities, the above statement obscures rather than illuminates the extent to which members of the different ethnic groups may be said to "command" the languages in question. And even more interesting is the little known fact that a number of Malays do in fact have a third language at their disposal. My attention was drawn to the fact that a number of workers on the shopfloor are able to speak Javanese and use it in informal interaction.

At the Administrative Level

At this level, it is common to find staff using words, expressions and even snatches in Malay and Chinese dialects in conversations conducted largely in English. But it is the sprinkling of Malay in the larger context of English that is most evident here. And this occurs in multiethnic interactions when Malays are present, but also and especially in interactions among the Malays themselves. The following extract taken from a conversation between a clerk-typist and a despatch clerk, both Malays, is a clear illustration. Idiomatic translation of the Malay is in parentheses (*Man* and *kan* refer to abbreviated forms of "Rahman", a personal name, and "bukan" (Eng. 'not'), respectively).

Extract 1.

R. *Hirotani? Post Hirotani, post...*
Z. *Hin Press also, post lah. Ta' banyak, Man. (not much, Man)*
R. *Susah lah. Dia pass cheque pada you? Tada check, kah?*
    (Difficult . Did he pass the cheque to you? No cheque?)
Z. *Car Seat... ED ta' release the cheque itu.... Oh, all inside*
your tray? (ED didn't release the cheque)
R. *Not yet. Got ... This one I check first, huh?*
Z. *You better check the invoice ini. Invoice...ta' boleh datang sini*
... (you can't come here) because I'm also not so sure ... that day,
kan? ... Ini macam Coco... Coco Industry. (This is like Coco...)

English-educated non-Malay staff at this level are more fluent in English than in their native language and only occasionally switch to their mother tongue when interacting with members of their own community. The use of the native language would appear to be motivated by a desire to signal membership of the same ethnic group especially when relations are strained and the need to establish goodwill is at a premium.

The Swedish managers and visitors are also known to alternate between Swedish and English even in the presence of local managers. The

locals tend to attribute this to a desire on the part of the foreigners to keep certain matters to themselves. It may, however, also be done in the interest of effective communication. They are after all much more fluent in Swedish than in English and this is especially true of the visitors and those assigned to special projects.

On the Shopfloor

The communication at this level is mainly in Malay with a sprinkling of English words and expressions. The following conversation between two foremen (one Malay and one Chinese) and one chargehand (a Malay), extracted from a production meeting, illustrates this pattern.

Extract 2:

C: Tadi, SA... D sudah kasi salah number, tahu? (Just now SA...
D gave the wrong number, you know?)

S.   Apa itu? (what's that?)

C: Salah nombor Tujuh-puluh dua punya kereta dia taroh sembilan
puluh dua. Itu sembilan puluh punya kereta belum keluar Kita
mahu cari kasi top priority. Tapi saya sudah beritahu orang
tadi. (Wrong number· Car 72 he puts down as 92. The 90 cars
haven't been released. We must find/assign top priority. But I've
already informed them.)

L.   Kita punya switch...uh...kunci... (Our switch...uh...key) Ini
hari (today) start running up. Final line.

C: 740, lah

The Middle Level

Interactions at this level involve both administrative staff as well as workers from the shopfloor, especially supervisory staff, eg. foremen and chargehands. In these interactions speakers frequently alternate between Malay and English.
ship at these meetings represents a kind of middle ground between the administrative office and the shopfloor. Chinese staff do sometimes switch to Cantonese or Hokkien when speaking among themselves before an interaction starts or after it ends or as a whispered aside.

Switching between English and Malay

The motivation for this type of switching which is particularly evident at the middle level may be explained as follows. First, it facilitates communication. By using a combination of English and Malay, senior managerial and supervisory staff ensure that the message gets across to both Malay and non-Malay staff and thus enable the necessary feedback to be provided.

In the following extract taken from a Production Meeting, we find the Chinese assistant to the Manager (W) using a combination of English and Malay to make sure that his point gets across. The other interactants are two foremen, one Chinese (C), one Malay (S), and a chargehand, also a Malay (A). The utterances of S and A do not appear in Extract 3 but may be found in some of the later extracts. There is quite a lot of English in this particular extract because the main addressee is the Chinese foreman.

Extract 3:

W·   *Itu priority number tiga. (That's priority no. 3) 30 P70 GLE, lah. And ...uh. I refer to the last minutes of the meeting Ada tiga unit, ada three unit import punya itu. Ada tulis, tak, dalam minute meeting? (There are three units. Was that noted, or not, in the minutes of the meeting?) All of you have received... the last week...*

C: *One has gone out already, isn't it?*

W·   *One unit, 407899.... Kalau the meeting kira mustahak lah. Ini sampai last minute ... (Consider it important because this is very last minute) because I put in the minutes of the meeting...by Monday to be ready...last week Monday but then until Tuesday the car was not ready.*

C: *Yes, you must know that.*

W: *And then it looks like Company X has to call up our General Manager... Then only the car can be ready.*

This pattern of switching is also seen in the speech of the manager (K) who picks up the thread of the assistant's argument and continues on in the same vein, but with even greater force.

Extract 4:

K: *Looks like sampai bila dia punya manager panggil kita punya General Manager , baru kita boleh siap. (only when their general manager calls our*

general manager, that we can finish) It looks like kita bawah sini bukan kerja. (We down here are not working) Kalau boleh, kita ta' malu dia panggil kita punya (If possible, we don't want them to call our) General Manager. Kita kasi selesai ke bawah. (We settle it down here) Macam ini bila dia panggil sahaja boleh selesai. (Like this, only when he calls can we settle things) Looks like kita tada apa-apa lah. (We are nothing) Yang itu jangan bagi orang ingat lah...(Don't let people think that)

S: *Ah... this one...uh...we do the...earlier but sometimes we...*

C: *No, that one....*

S: *.... Sometimes we pass to the MB and we sign the express form...*

C: *No, this one I also follow up very closely on the car because I myself know that .... because I am the person who personally prepared the car...as if AT here... the sprayer, sprayed four times on this particular car...899.*

K. *Now why when the General Manager calls only things can be fast?...*

C: *No, that car, that car already OK...in C shop they are doing rectification. Then at the same time they call up. That same time OK but actually that car been started earlier already and we have rejected four times, you know, from ...*

K. *Okay, this is just to let you all know...uh...I think it is important..*

C: *But...generally...uh...because car is...*

K. *Saya ingat...ah...(I think)*

C: *Now okay....*

K. *..saya ingat...because mula-mula, you know, peruntukan datang dari...kepada W ...uh....dan W beritahu berkenaannya. Jadi, jika itu ta jalan....Dia punya General Manager...(I think...at first...the allocation came from...to W and W informed him. So, if it doesn't move then...)*

C: *No...*

K. *...telefon, atau dia Manager telefon kita punya General Manger Maknanya tiap-tiap kali dia ingat ta'guna lah kita. Semua kena cakap kepada General Manager Maknanya Mat Salleh sahaja boleh kerja, kita ta'boleh kerja. (... Telephone or their manager telephones our general manager That means each time they think we are of no use. Everything has to be reported to the general manager That means only the white man can work, we can't work.)*

C: *No, you see..ah...*

K. Saya ta' hendak dia ingat kita macam itu. Company X ingat hanya panggil
Mat Salleh sahaja... kita
that. Company X thinks only by calling the white man that we can work)

Why English is Used

The use of English is particularly important in interactions of the sort given above in view of the highly technical nature of motorcar assembly work. The technical jargon which may be seen as an occupational argot, involves the use of special terms, code numbers and abbreviations. The following extract provides some examples.

Extract 5

W·   *... Okay? Shall we start? Rectification stock...*

A.   57

W·   *P20 23, P70 23. Suzuki 11. P70 nya stock tinggi, huh?. (P70's stock is high, huh?.)*

S.   *Ah?*

W·   *P70 nya, tinggi, uh? (P70's high, huh?)*

S: *Tinggi. (high)*

W   *And then are the priority... kalau (if) CBU delivery priority the same, P20 GLM, GLA first priority dengan (with) Suzuki, 240 GLT second priority.*

The use of such jargon is facilitative in that it represents a kind of common ground between speakers of different languages especially when proficiency in the two main languages in use, Malay and English, is not equally distributed among the staff. The other consideration is that technical jargon representing as it does a concise and precise form of communication cuts down on misunderstandings at work, thereby reducing costs and enhancing efficiency

Why Malay is Used

The use of Malay by Malays at all levels may be seen as a natural extension of the social use of their language and this is particularly the case in interaction with other Malays where it signals identification with the

group. The use of Malay by non-Malays, on the other hand, appears as a more deliberate gesture of goodwill and accommodation in recognition of its status as the National Language and the native language of the majority group.

The fact that both Malay and non-Malay managers and supervisory staff frequently resort to Malay in interactions at the middle and lower levels may also be seen as an attempt to close the status gap between administrative and factory personnel in the interests of developing rapport and goodwill. This seems a plausible explanation if we bear in mind that Malay is after all the language of the shopfloor, the language that locals of all ethnic groups and socioeconomic levels, may be expected to be at least functionally proficient in, unlike English which is the language associated with the educated groups. This strategy was already evident in some of the earlier extracts (Extracts 3, 4) which showed a manager (K) and his assistant (W), both Chinese, constantly resorting to Malay when addressing Malay subordinates or when speaking to groups comprising Malays and non-Malays. More pointed examples are given:

Extract 6:

W·   *Apa dia nak modify itu? (What does he want to modify?)*
A.   *I don't know.*
W·   *Ada apa, apa beznan? (Is there any, any difference?)*
A.   *Because the*

Extract 7·

W·   *Okay next one. Last of the... last week meeting ta'dapat. (Didn't receive)
And then for Matters Arising. S, ada apa yang nak bawa? (Is there anything
you want to raise?)*
S·   *Ah...the four Suzuki, ah we got a battle because they arrive ease... late
supply.*

Extract 8:

W·   *Lagi ada apa. S? (Anything else, S?)*
S.   *And one thing... the brake bleeding area. That one you know, the floor,
already, all cracked already lah. So I propose that...*

Extract 9:

S: *Because sometimes maintenance also no time. Sometimes they sweep
they... may be.. only afternoon... they can clean, you know.
We find the paper again.*

K.   *M, kena beritahu...(M, inform them)*

Mutual Convergence

What is equally worthy of note in the above and earlier examples is that Malay subordinates (S and A in the extracts) when so addressed often tend to reply in English rather than Malay The mutual employment of the convergence strategy in this instance may be seen as a powerful force in generating goodwill and thereby facilitating the goals of the interaction.

Further support for the above view may be found in the fact that the Chinese Manager (K) invariably switches to English when speaking directly to his Chinese assistant.

Extract 10

K: *W, when was the car in the off line? How long ago?*
W·   *Quite some time.*

Extract 11.

K.   *Where is A T ?*
W   *I saw him... He had some problem with the Paint Shop, so excusable...*

Extract 12.

K.   *AH is right... uh.... W , can we just monitor it?*
W·   *Yeah, okay...*

Extract 13:

K: *So, W, you coordinate uh... call up L .. uh. L has agreed because that is their fault*

Extract 14:

K.   *Write, write it down. W, about that. The Dept. 600 have to chase. I don't know. By the time the minutes come out it should have arrived ...very slow.*

But when what the manager has to say to his assistant involves Malay subordinates he alternates between English and Malay The following extract clearly illustrates this.

Extract 15:

S: *That one new shipment. That one GL.*
K.   *So, barang bila sampai. (When the goods arrive) W, arrange overtime.*

S: *Wednesday....*
K: *Arrived already? Sudah masuk? (Arrived already?) So arrange lah*
      overtime.

S.   *Still Hari Raya... very difficult.*
K: *Cuba tengok, (try and see) try...*

Varieties of English in Use

There are grounds for seeing at least three different varieties of
English in use. The first is the standard variety, not quite RP, but interna-
tionally intelligible and may be found in those parts of the globe once
colonized by the British. This is the English used by most of the managers,
local and foreign, as well as some of the administrative staff. This prestige
variety carrying connotations of status and education is almost always
found in formal interactions though its use may be extended to other types
of interactions. Speakers of this variety would in all likelihood have
received their education in English and probably make good use of the
language at home and in social interaction with others of a similar
background. Examples of this variety may be found in the exchanges
between the manager and his assistant given in Extracts 10 to 14.

However, when members of the English educated group interact
with people from a different socioeconomic and educational background,
they are likely
This has been described as Malaysian English and includes the use of the
particle "lah" and lexical items like "what" and "one" as well as distinctive
phonological and syntactic properties. This may be found at the middle
level in informal interactions and is used by speakers who have some
familiarity with the standard variety but for professional and social
reasons are more comfortable with the Malaysian variety The following
extract from a conversation between a Malay clerk-typist (Z) and a junior
clerk, an Indian (M), is interesting for two reasons. It provides evidence of
both the varieties referred to: the Indian clerk using the first
clerk-typist alternating between the two. The fact that the former did not
switch to the local variety may be explained in the following terms. He is
in his late forties, one of the longest-serving employees of the company, yet
after more than 25 years' service remains a Grade 3 clerk. He received his
entire education in English and displays a good command of the language
in conversation. In the circumstances, it would seem to me, that his high
linguistic proficiency is something that he can be sure of, can hold on to,
conferring as it does some degree of status and prestige to someone who
has been denied them in material terms. His interlocutor, on the other

hand, is not only much younger (she is in her early thirties), but is probably also more in touch with local influences and generally accustomed to switching between Malay and English (see Extract 1).

Extract 16:

Z.   I was saying this thing, which period? Period 4 or 5?
M.   Period 4.
Z.   Now we are in period 5, right?
M.   Yes, now we are in period 5.
Z.   So, I mean, dated, dated, last period?
M.   Dated... Yes.
Z.   Okay.
M.   Anything else?
Z.   Okay. Only this one for cash cheque only lah?
M: Yes, cash cheque.
Z.   But payable no more already?
M.   No, no more payable. We are still in process.
Z.   Mr. O said for period 5?
M.   Yeah, uh... period 4.
Z.   But period 4, we have finished already, what.
M: Yes.. but that is period 3. We are processing period 4.

Support for this explanation may be drawn from the fact that a younger Indian employee (S), forty years of age, with a higher post in the company conferring some professional prestige and status, alternates between the standard variety and Malaysian English, when speaking to his boss, K. The latter, as in earlier instances when speaking to his Chinese assistant, sticks to the more standard variety This form of language use may be said to be consistent with the status relationship involved at the administrative level, that of boss and subordinate. It is the latter who switches to the "lower" variety, with the former making no attempt at convergence suggesting that he is quite comfortable with things as they are.

Extract 17·

S: See the electricity. They've not included the energy variables. I just put a remark here, lah. They have only put the electricity fixed. Because we have two under 627 100 ... We break up into two, huh, okay? According to our phase, phase-out plan, hm, the period is 31/7 You see they only maintain a 17 which is.....you see the break up one?

K.   Yeah but what is the total budget that we put in?
S.   Total budget, huh? It's more than this, lah.

Extract 18:

S.   *And this one. Lock screw.*
K.   *Hm.*
S: *...from Sweden, one, lah. Supposed to be a stock item... very expensive one.*

The third type of English in evidence is the pidginised variety This will be discussed together with the pidginised variety of Malay known as bazaar Malay in a later section.

Varieties of Malay in Use

Three main varieties of Malay may be observed at the workplace: the standard version, the social variety and the pidginised one. The first, which is rarely used, is confined to formal interactions and resorted to by members of all ethnic groups in such encounters. Nominal switching between this variety and standard English is common. Foreign managers have been known to begin their speeches with "Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan" (Ladies and gentlemen), to use Malay words and expressions where appropriate in the main body of the text and to conclude with "Terima kasih" (Thank you), all of which may be seen as a formal and token degree of convergence to the local staff.

It is the social variety however, which is widely in use at all levels. This is the characteristic speech of native speakers of the language in informal interaction at all levels. Members of other ethnic groups are also known to use this variety with varying degrees of success. It is this variety that Malay managers and supervisory staff are likely to use when interact-ing among themselves. It is quite common for speakers of this variety to alternate between it and Malaysian English.

At this point something needs to be said about the suffix particle "*lah*" which is used as an emphatic marker in Malay Over time it has come to be associated not only with the informal use of Malay and English but also with the pidginised varieties of both languages on the shopfloor Examples may be found in Extracts 1,2,8,15,16,17,18 and 19 In Extract 15, you have a manager saying "So arrange *lah* overtime", and in Extract 18 an executive says "from Sweden one *lah*" in a conversation where his utterances are studded with *lah*. All of this suggests that the use of "*lah*" by cutting across linguistic, ethnic and class lines has become a symbol of a Malaysian identity that is in the process of being forged. In this sense its use may be said to reflect the dissolution of barriers between diverse groups thereby facilitating the communicative goals of multiethnic interaction.

Pidginised Varieties

Pidginised varieties of English and Malay may be found at the lower middle and lowest levels of the organizational structure. Both Malay and non-Malay supervisory staff frequently alternate between English and Malay A close examination of their utterances at this level clearly indicates, however, that it is the pidginised variety of English that is used by members of all ethnic groups, and the pidginised variety of Malay that is used by the non-Malays. Examples of the former may be found in Extracts 3, 4, 6, 7, and 9 as well as the one given below An example of the latter may be seen in Extract 2.

Extract 19:

S: *So, sometimes...uh...we follow what is AT doing... when he go looking for CBU, okay... He go and take the 240, the easier one because they want to release the stock but they not jalan the 740 and 240 lah....(The 740 and 240 have not moved)*

The extracts given so far also indicate that non-Malay managerial and administrative staff seem to slide between informal Malay and the pidginised variety reflected in the use of words/expressions like "kasi selesai", "macam ini", "macam itu", and "dia punya"

As with the pidgins in other areas the local varieties are characterized by "a markedly reduced grammatical structure, lexicon and stylistic range."[9] It is interesting to note at this point that many scholars believe that the term "pidgin" actually comes from the English word "business" following its pronunciation in the pidgin English of China.[10]

Hall, who has done extensive work on Melanesian pidgin, has drawn attention to the role it played in facilitating communciation between Europeans and natives and in breaking down barriers arising from the existence of numerous languages in Eastern New Guinea.[11] Ervin-Tripp has drawn attention to the fact that "values of identity may be unimportant and the practical need to communicate dominates. In fact pidgins tend to

[9]David Crystal. 1985. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics.* Oxford and London: Basil Blackwell and Andre Deutsch. p 234.

[10]Reported in R. A. Hudson. 1980. *Sociolinguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.61-62.

[11]Reported in Allen D. Grimshaw. Sociolinguistics. In Joshua A. Fishunan(Ed). 1976. *Advances in the Sociology of Language, Vol. 1. Basic Concepts, Theories and Problems. Alternative Approaches.* The Hague and Paris: Mouton.

develop when the norms which sustain co-occurrence rules are missing. Thus they appear *in the transitory encounters of traders away from home, in the fortuitous combination of diverse speakers in the setting of work* in plantations, mines and harbour cities. ....Pidgins are characterized structurally by morphological simplification and regularization, by use of material from more than one language. At first, they are spoken with the phonetic features of the respective mother tongues. *Of course with time the pidgin can come to symbolize the subordinate-employer situation"*[11] (my emphasis).

Much of what Hall and Ervin-Tripp have had to say has considerable bearing on the patterns of codeswitching involving the pidginised varieties of English and Malay that I have described. Communication on the shopfloor in general and in particular that between managers and administrative staff and foremen and chargehands in particular is greatly facilitated by the use of the pidginised varieties. The ease and frequency with which staff from different ethnic groups and socioeconomic levels switch from Malay to English is made possible to a large degree by their lack of inhibition in using the pidginised varieties as "the practical need to communicate dominates" Such use no doubt goes a long way in breaking down barriers in a multilingual setting. And this pattern has indeed in the main come to symbolize the subordinate-boss relationship especially at the lower levels of the organizational structure.

Verbal Repertoire, Power and Solidarity

By way of conclusion I shall try to spell out some of the implications of a speaker's verbal repertoire for the conduct of interactions in general and the establishment of control at the workplace. On the whole, the verbal repertoire of managers and supervisory staff greatly exceeds that of their subordinates both in quantitative and qualitative terms. This enables the former, as we have seen, to slide in and out of different types of interactions with great frequency, ease and effect, in the course of implementing professional goals. The latter are no match for them in this respect and linguistic differences may thus be said to reflect and reinforce the differences in power the boss–employee relationship entails. The above finding is consistent with the work done by Owsley and Scotton [13] who note that

[11]Susan Ervin-Tripp. Sociolinguistics. In Joshua A. Fishman (Ed.) 1976. *Advances in the Sociology of Language. Vol. 1 Basic Concepts, Theories and Problems, Alternative Approaches.* The Hague and Paris: Mouton.
[13]C.M. Scotton, What the heck, Sir: Styleshifting and lexical colouring as features of powerful Language. In R. L. Street and N.J. Capella (ed), 1985. *Sequence and Pattern in Communicative Behaviour* London: Edward Arnold. p. 103

"powerful language... the aggregate of linguistic features negotiating the position of "taking charge" in a talk exchange... Such language attempts to control the overall exchange, including the addressee's conversational contribution, in three main ways: it directs the amount and content of what gets said, it evaluates such talk by passing judgements or providing interpretations and it organizes the exchange. Obvious examples of powerful linguistic features are interruptions, leading questions and challenges.."

Examples of all the linguistic features referred to may be found in the data provided, especially in the utterances of the manager, K, and to a lesser extent in those of his assistant, W. The latter's "Ada tulis, tak, dalam minute meeting?" (Extract 3) is a leading question, while K's "Now why when the General Manager calls only things can be fast?" (Extract 4) is a direct challenge. There are many instances of interruptions in the exchanges, but only K's appear to have the effect of "cutting the other person short"

Those in power may not only attempt to "take charge" of an interaction, they may also initiate moves towards solidarity. The attempts made by K and W to switch to Malay when talking to subordinates on the shopfloor may be seen as "downshifts" in the interests of lessening the social distance between participants and thereby establishing solidarity As Scotton has noted, "initiating shifts can be seen as latent statements that the shifter is more powerful since the prerogative to move towards solidarity belongs to the superior". [14]

The data also provides at least one example of lexical colouring which involves "embedding a lexical choice implying a value judgement in an otherwise neutral utterance" [15] The argument here is that by passing judgement on what is said, the speaker attempts to control the interaction. It seems to me that K's use of the term "MatSalleh" (Extract 4) is an example of such a use of lexical colouring. "Mat Salleh" is the Malay term for "the white man" which is used in a derogatory way in this context. He appears to be annoyed by the fact that it is only when the "white man" (in this case the General Manager) intervenes that action is taken. It appears from what he says that the instructions of the local bosses are not heeded in the same way

What about the options open to subordinates? The data provides evidence of interruptions by subordinates, but these are not as forceful as those of the bosses, and invariably trail off in the face of quick and decisive

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[14]Scotton, (1985: 114)
[15]Ibid, p. 106

rebuttals. But the fact that subordinates do interrupt is worthy of note. Their inability to hold their own in interactions with their bosses may be explained in terms of their subordinate status as well as their limited verbal repertoire.

A final point needs to be made. This has to do with the fact that subordinates do not always go along passively with the moves made by their bosses. The continued use of English by C and S in the face of switches to Malay by their bosses may be viewed, as I suggested, as a sign of mutual convergence. What is significant here is that theirs is a counter move, representing some degree of initiative, and possibly made in order to preserve some semblance of balance in the interaction.

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