CODE-SWITCHING IN MALAYSIAN STAND-UP COMEDY PERFORMANCES: A CASE STUDY OF COMEDIAN HARITH ISKANDER

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ABSTRACT

Usage of code-switching in the scene of stand-up comedy is one of many creative strategies for comedians to deliver jokes and connect with a multilingual audience. However, not many employ this strategy, especially in Malaysia. Malaysian stand-up comedians rarely use code-switching in the delivery of their jokes as many use the local variety of English in achieving humour. Code-switching enables comedians to reach out to their audience and ensures their jokes are delivered more effectively and appreciated by the audience. Centring upon the use of code-switching from English to Malay in two stand-up comedy performances by a well-known Malaysian artist, Harith Iskander, this article delves into the frequently used forms and functions of code-switching found in the performances. Shana Poplack's categorisation of code-switching and Hoffman's functions of code-switching frame the basis of this descriptive analysis. Both frameworks are used to determine the types of code-switching used and its functions. The findings show that intrasentential code-switching is the most used in one performance while tag switching is used most frequently in the other performances. The discrepancy of outcomes between the two performances is a result of language accommodation by the comedian for the target audience; the first performance is targeted to a Malay audience while the second has a more diverse audience. In terms of functions of code-switching in both performances, they differ only in frequencies; where code-

switching is mostly used to talk about a particular topic and express group identity in the first performance while in the second, it mainly functions as interjection. The overall results show that the target audience influences the way code-switching is used by stand-up comedians in order to engage with them. The findings indicate that code-switching becomes less prominent when the audience is more diverse. This implies that the type of audience influences the extent and limits on code switching in stand-up comedy. This research can benefit stand-up comedians regarding the incorporation of code-switching in delivering jokes.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of code-switching has been widely researched as language contact occurs more frequently and languages continue to evolve. Milroy and Muysken (1995) noted that code-switching is not just about the switching of languages in which you speak, it also denotes other phenomena that is fundamental in regard to bilingualism and multilingualism. Poplack (1979) described code-switching as the alternating between two languages in the same single sentence or discourse while Gumperz (1973) defined it as usage of two or more languages alternately within an utterance or exchange. Cheng (2003) summarised code-switching as using two or more varieties of languages in the same conversation during which switching between the codes can occur at any point within the discourse while Almelhi (2020) described it as a sociolinguistic phenomenon related to any switches at any levels (word, phrase, or sentence) between languages, dialects and stylistic, pragmatic changes and structural variations.

Code switching among Malaysians is a common occurrence as Malaysia is multiracial and multilingual. Code-switching serves as an integral part of communication as it has been found that its usage in different contexts serves different purposes and functions. The use of code-switching in stand-up comedy is also a common occurrence as it can be used in many ways as comedic strategies. Creatively switching and mixing up different elements from one or more languages during joke delivery (Woolard 1988) or to create persona (Aranda 2014) are some of the examples of practical uses of code-switching in stand-up comedy performances. Nonetheless, only one study probed into the phenomenon of code-switching in Malaysian stand-up comedy (see Chan et al. 2018). The current study explores the use of code switching by Malaysian stand-up comedians, focusing on Harith Iskander, a well-known Malaysian stand-up comedian.

The use of English over the mother tongue in comedy helps comedians to reach a wider audience, and this is due to the globalisation of the English language. This is evident when Harith Iskander was crowned "Funniest Person in the World" in 2016 in Levi, Finland (Toh 2016). Harith started his profession as a stand-up comedian in 1991 when he performed at Subang Airport Hotel's lobby lounge stage. Since then, he has received numerous invitations to perform at events (Nur Asyiqin 2015) and became a household name in Malaysia. His career reached a peak and he received international attention after being nominated to compete in Laugh Factory's Funniest Person in the World in 2016 (*New Straits Times* 2016) as well as holding his own tour in Australia in 2018 (ACMI 2018). In Malaysia, Harith would also occasionally perform in Malay. Dubbed as the godfather of Malaysian stand-up comedy for being the first person to popularise stand-up comedy in the country (Nur Asyiqin 2015), Harith Iskander is also one of the earliest comedians to make an effort in bringing stand-up comedy to Malay audiences by performing in Malay (*Selebriti Online* 2015).

Apart from performing in English and Malay, Harith would, at times, code switch back and forth between English and Malay. This has prompted the current research regarding the functions of these switches in his performances: "Why does he code switch?" and "Does the switching have any influence on the jokes?". Thus, this article examines the objectives of identifying the types of code switching used in Harith's stand-up comedy and examining the functions of code switching in his stand-up comedy using Poplack's (1980) categorisation of code-switching and Hoffman's (1991) functions of code-switching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The most prominent work on code-switching in stand-up comedy is by Woolard (1988) who studied Eugenio, a professional Barcelonan stand-up comedian, who gained local fame among both bilingual Catalan speakers and monolingual Castilian Spanish speakers despite the socio-political tension between these groups at that time. He found that Eugenio's style of code-switching between Catalan and Castilian in his performances was unique in that he used both languages differently from the way they were used in their respective communities. While Eugenio speaks mainly in Castilian Spanish, it seemed as if he was using both languages in equal frequency due to his use of Catalan patterns of pronunciation and intonation and frequent the borrowing and mixing of Catalan words and phrases. Woolard (1988) then concluded that the success of Eugenio's comedy was not in his jokes but rather in the code switching and the way the jokes were delivered. Through his use of Catalan accents and code-switching, Catalans were able to hear and enjoy

their language that was being repressed at the time. On the other hand, Castilians were given the impression that they were able to understand Catalan when they listened to Eugenio's Catalan accented Spanish.

Lamidi (2017) examined the use of code switching along with multimodal pairing as comedic strategies to elicit laughter among nine stand-up comedians in Nigeria. Six DVDs and six video clips were analysed using three theories within a comedic context: (1) incongruity theory which explains the conflict between logical expectation and what is delivered in a joke; (2) layered meaning theory that supposes that there are two layers of meanings in texts - denotational and underlying; and (3) visual semiotics theory which deals with signs interpretation. Lamidi (2017) concluded that due to the nature of the multiracial and multilingual audience in Nigeria, Pidgin was the most dominant language followed by English as most Nigerians would understand these two languages compared with other languages used across the performances analysed. Multimodal codes such as gestures and costumes with visual codes were also found to be effective strategies to create comedic effect.

In the research on the use of code-switching as a strategy to build identities in stand-up comedy, Aranda (2014) and Nadia (2014) discovered various ways code-switching can be manipulated to build one's persona onstage. Aranda (2014) analysed the performance of Gabriel Iglesias, a Mexican American stand-up comedian, categorising the theories of humour found in his code-switching between English and Spanish. The study found that by switching to Spanish, Iglesias was able to build a Latino persona as one of his strategies to achieve comedic humour as well as to build rapport with the audience. On the other hand, by analysing five short clips of performances by Algerian stand-up comedian Abdelkader Secteur, Nadia (2014) studied the strategy of building rapport with the audience in joke delivery through code-switching between Algerian Arabic and Standard Arabic, as well as French. It was revealed that code-switching between Algerian Arabic and French, as well as Standard Arabic and English, has helped the comedian project his Algerian identity to the audience and create a connection with them.

Looking into Malaysian stand-up comedy, Chan et al. (2018) delved into the navigation of ethnic and political issues by Malaysian stand-up comedians and their strategies to avoid negative reactions. Analysing 17 ethnic jokes and 13 political jokes using Hockett's (1960) Internal Structure of Jokes, which consists of the build-up, pivot and punch line, Chan et al. (2018) found that ethnic jokes require more build-up in addressing the stereotype of a certain group to prevent generalisation. Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Strategies, they identified that off-record strategy – a way of using indirect language to evade

responsibility – was mainly used by comedians in their effort to avoid a negative backlash from what can be viewed as sensitive jokes.

On the other hand, Putu's (2014) research on the use of code-switching by Indonesian stand-up comedians was structured similarly to the current study that looks into the types and functions of code-switching and how the switching of codes could evoke humour among the audience. Putu (2014) studied the performances of 10 comedians who appeared on the "Stand-up Comedy Show Edisi Akhir Tahun 2011". After applying Romaine's (1995) types of code-switching, Gumperz's (1982) conversational functions and Raskin's (1985) three classes of psychological theories, the author concluded that, aside from creating humorous effect, there were two main purposes of code-switching from bahasa Indonesia to English by the comedians. First, it was to connect with the audience as the use of foreign language was regarded as popular and it seemed to be "cool" to do so. Second, it was to avoid misinterpretation as there is no equivalent Indonesian words to capture the humour. Putu (2014) referred to Gumperz's (1982) conversational functions while this article draws from Hoffman's (1991) functions of code-switching in order to find out whether the code-switches in Harith Iskander's comedic performances were done to avoid misinterpretation or to unite its multilingual audience.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied Poplack's (1980) categorisation of code-switching and Hoffman's (1991) functions of code-switching in the analysis of data. The data for this research were derived from videos of stand-up performances by Harith Iskander as well as an interview conducted with him. A mixed method approach was employed in designing the methodology of this study where both quantitative and qualitative procedures of research were integrated in the data collection. A purposive sampling method was employed where certain criteria were used to select materials for analysis. The selection in purposive sampling was very deliberate as the information needed cannot be gained through other options (Maxwell 1997). Thus, the data for this study were selected based on the following criteria set by the researchers:

1. Stand-up comedy performances by Malaysian comedians that have code-switching.

2. Performance recording of more than 20 minutes.

3. Code-switching used in the performances.

Using these criteria as guideline, clips of stand-up performances by Malaysian stand-up comedians were searched on YouTube. The researchers filtered the stand-up performance videos that were more than 20 minutes long, six videos of Harith Iskander's performances were found to be available and three recordings of Loga and Singam performances appeared along with two videos of Douglas Lim's. Except for Harith Iskander, none of the comedians used code-switching in the delivery of their jokes. Rather, they performed using the local variety of English where the pronunciations were notably altered to a "Malaysian English" variety with a few local examples of jargon and lexical features sprinkled into their lines, thus disqualifying them from the data set list. The important criteria for data selection for this study was the use of code-switching. Hence, only Harith's clips were chosen.

Looking through the six clips of stand-up performances by Harith Iskander, only two performances by the comedian were found to be suitable for the purpose of this study; the other four were excluded as the code-switching elements were absent. The first video was from Harith's 2012 comedic show, "Lawak Ke Der?" (LKD) (Mambang666 2013) and the second was from his performance in the 2014 show "To Know Malaysia is to Laugh Malaysia" (TLM) (Nazrul 2015). Both videos were used to ensure enough data could be obtained. The two performances, performed mainly in English, were 29 minutes and 45 minutes 20 seconds long, respectively. It was important to note that even though LKD was an event intended for a Malay audience, Harith Iskander's main language here was in English, thus the switching he used was from English to Malay. On the other hand, the audience for TLM were a mix of races and nationalities. Hence, having a multilingual group, Harith mainly used English to not only engage with his audience, but as a means to unite his diverse audience. As the setting was in Malaysia, switching to Malay helped in connecting with his local audience. Thus, this article looked at the order of switching from English to Malay.

Interview with Harith Iskander

An interview was also carried out to answer the second research question: to identify the reasons for code switching. The interview was held with the subject, Harith Iskandar, in The Joke Factory, a comedy club owned by him. A set of questions were prepared for the semi structured interview to guide the direction of the interview. Harith Iskander and his team gave their consent in person for the use of their data for this study. This was to avoid any ethical issue.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data from the two stand-up comedy performances chosen were transcribed for data analysis purposes by breaking them into lines. Each line was labelled L and then numbered such as L (line number) for ease of reference in the analysis. The lines were separated based on three criteria set by the researchers: completed statements, pauses and contexts; for example, statements about certain topics, when made with multiple sentences, and spoken together, would have a clear pause after the comedian completes the statement. Such pauses, along with long pauses, were considered as clear breaks for the lines to be separated. There were also parts during which Harith Iskander spoke rapidly, in which different topics were discussed together. In these cases, the lines were separated based on the context of the joke. Aside from talking at a rapid pace, there were also instances where the comedian stuttered. During these instances, his utterances at times were not intelligible. Thus, these were not transcribed as they were not considered as indicators of code-switching due to their unintelligibility. Apart from that, in order to mark the code switches, Malay lexical features and sentences were italicised. Malay name of places and celebrities were considered neutral as they cannot be translated and thus, when these names were uttered in English sentences, they were not considered as code-switching.

Once the switching of codes had been ascertained, the overall number of lines, in which the switch from English to Malay language was used, were firstly calculated to verify the frequency of code-switching occurrences in the performances. This was done by dividing the number of lines with code-switching and the total number of lines in each performance, which was then converted to percentage. Next, three types of code-switching were identified and the frequency of the appearance of each type was determined through the tabulation of occurrences of the types of switches (Poplack's 1980). The types of code-switching were tag switching (lexical or phrasal insertion), intersentential code-switching (clause/sentence boundary switch) and intrasentential code-switching (internal clause boundary switch). Then, the functions of each switching were matched with Hoffmann's (1991, 116) 10 types of functions for code-switching, as listed below. It was then tabulated to determine the occurrence frequency of each item from the list:

1. Talking about a particular topic: The preference or easiness to discuss certain matters in certain languages in comparison to another.

2. Quoting somebody else: Some quotes were not translated as they could be well known or purposely done for an effect that cannot be achieved in other languages.

3. Being emphatic about something (expressing solidarity): Switching language to assimilate oneself with the hearer or the preference to express one's opinion using a particular language.

4. Interjection (inserting sentence fillers or sentence connectors): Usage lexical features of a language to express strong emotions or gain attention.

5. Repetition used for clarification: The repetition of the same words or phrases but in a different language to make sure that the listener understands their meaning.

6. Intention of clarifying the speech content for the interlocutor: Switching to a certain language as it easier for the listener to understand the language though the message is modified instead of being repeated.

7. Expressing group identity: Assimilating oneself with a group of people by using particular words or phrases exclusively used by the said group.

8. Softening or strengthening request or command: The use of another language that is not a native tongue to soften a command or the reverse to strengthen it.

9. Real lexical need: The lack of appropriate lexicon to replace the word with a specific meaning in a certain language.

10. Excluding other people when a comment is intended for only a limited audience: Using a chosen language for the understanding of only the listener(s) with the intention of limiting the number of people understanding the utterance or conversation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the study, the chosen performances were referred to as LKD for "Lawak Ke Der?" and TLM for "To Know Malaysia is to Laugh Malaysia". The total number of code-switching occurrences in the overall performances was calculated to identify the significance of code-switching (see Table 1).

Table 1: Total number of code-switching occurrences in the overall performances

	LKD	TLM
Number of lines with code-switching/Total number of lines	183/308	119/454
Percentage	59.2	26.2

Table 1 shows the frequency of code-switching usage in LKD was higher in comparison to TLM despite the show being shorter and with less lines delivered than in TLM. Even though LKD was a show that was only approximately 29 minutes long, in which 308 lines were delivered, the occurrence of code-switching in LKD was 183 times, totalling 59.2%, while in TLM, a 45-minute show 454 lines and nearly two times longer in minutes in comparison to LKD, the frequency of the appearance of code-switching was recorded at 26.2% which was only 119 times within the 454 lines. Through this observation, neither the length nor the number of lines affected the number of occurrences of code-switching in Harith's stand-up comedy performances (see Example 1).

Example 1:

> L15.   It's okay because I am *botak*. I am *botak*.
>
> [It's okay because I am bald. I am bald.]
>
> > > > > > > > LKD

In this example, it could be seen clearly the switches between English and Malay where the comedian began the first sentence in English and then finished it in Malay and repeating this pattern in the second sentence. In order to determine the variable that influences the frequency of code-switching, it is only appropriate that first and foremost, the comedian himself is referred to. According to Harith Iskander during the interview, his use of code-switching was influenced by the target audience of the comedy show. The LKD, as hinted in the Malay title, was aimed at a Malay audience as it was an attempt to bring stand-up comedy to this particular group; "So, Lawak Ke Der was the idea of Hans Isaac. He's my friend. He's basically doing English and he wanted to bring stand-up comedy to a Malay speaking audience."

It was not unusual to find that code-switching from English to Malay had occurred at the rate of 59.2% of the entire show as code-switching to Malay form was used in the performance to help him connect with the target audience. Hence, code-switching was used as a strategy to popularise stand-up comedy among the targeted local audience.

On the other hand, TLM was organised in response to the issue of disparity as well as tragedies that had occurred in Malaysia that year (KYSpeaks 2014). Therefore, Harith's comedic performance, which was mostly in English during his segment, would be more effective in order to achieve the aim of the show which was to unite Malaysians through comedy. This case can be drawn in line with Eugenio's case of comedy with which he was able to unite the Catalans and Castilians through his unique Catalan accented Spanish in his stand-up comedy (Woolard 1988). Similarly, Harith Iskander was able to unite the multi-racial Malaysian community during his show not only through a Malaysian accented English but also code-switching from English to Malay to establish his identity as a Malaysian. Unlike LKD, this event was not targeted at a specific local audience but a wider range of people, an international audience where switching codes frequently may result in the jokes falling flat. In Example 2, Harith was speaking only in English while interacting with the audience for this segment where he identified famous shows by only playing the theme song. The discourse was entirely in English and used as a means to unite the audience as the theme songs were from popular American dramas in the 1970s and 80s. If it had been intended primarily for a Malay-speaking audience, he would have switched to Malay in L181 to ensure that the audience was aware of his intention before proceeding to explain and play the game with them.

Example 2:

L179.   When I grew up, we had a different type of show. [stutter] We had shows where - First of all, you listen to the themes of the show, the musical theme of the show, you would instantly recognise it.

L180.   Anyway, I just want to check out how many people here are above the age of, let's say 35. Say hey!

L181.   All right. [stutter] Those of you in 35, [stutter] I want to play a little game with you.

TLM

Types of Code-switching

The LKD and TLM used three types of code-switching in reference to Poplack (1980). The occurrences of each type were then calculated and then converted into percentage in order to identify which were the most popular. Table 2 presents the types of code-switching found in both of Harith's stand-up performances.

Table 2: Frequency of types of code-switching in Harith Iskander's performances

Types of code-switching	LKD		TLM	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Tag switching	35/183	19.10	58/119	48.70
Intersentential	39/183	21.30	17/119	14.28
Intrasentential	109/183	50.99	45/119	37.80

Referring to the data in Table 2, the number of tag switching items is the least occurring in LKD at 19.1% and appearing only 35 times whereas in TLM, tag switching was the highest in frequency at 48.70%, appearing 58 times in the performance. Tag switching in Harith's performances appeared mostly in the form of interjections and exclamations as well as particles such as "*lah*" and "*kan*". The following examples of tag switching were extracted from LKD and TLM, respectively.

Example 3:

L141.   "*Eh*, got nothing on *lah*!" Tag switching,

LKD

Example 4:

L33.   […] I don't know who that fellow was *lah*. I think the brother or something *lah*.

[I don't know who that fellow was lah. I think the brother or something lah.]

Tag switching, TLM

As shown in the two examples, the switches occurred when the Malay tags were inserted into the sentences. In Example 3, the dialogue started with a Malay tag, then switched to English after which Harith switched again to Malay by using another Malay tag. In Example 4, Harith started the first sentence in English with a Malay tag at the end and repeated this pattern in the second sentence. This type of code-switching does not alter the original meaning of the English sentences. Thus, the audience would have had little to no trouble understanding Harith when he used this type of code-switching.

Intersentential code-switching was the second highest in frequency in LKD at 21.3% and appearing 39 times while in TLM, it was the least used type that

occurred only 17 times out of 119 instances of code-switching, with 14.28% in frequency. The following are the examples of intersentential code-switching taken from LKD and TLM respectively:

Example 5:

L24.   When we stand at the bus stop, *kalau orang datang, apa yang dia tanya?*

[When we stand at the bus stop, if people come, what will they ask?]

LKD

Example 6:

L90.   All the other people were like *"Eh, siapa orang gila ni?"*

[All the other people were like "Hey, who is this crazy guy?"]

TLM

The switching in both examples could be identified as intersentential as the switches occurred at phrasal level. In Example 5, the sentence started with an English phrase and ended with a Malay one, with a question directed to the audience. A similar pattern was found in Example 6, also in English that ended with a quote of someone asking a question, in Malay. This was done in order to create relatability by transposing a common local phrase into the foreign context of the story being told. In contrast with tag switching, for intersentential switch, the audience would require a degree of Malay language proficiency, especially in L90, where the punch line is delivered.

The third type of code-switching, intrasentential code-switching, was also found in the two performances with high frequencies. This type of switching was most popular in LKD at 50.99%, occurring 109 times while in TLM, it was the second highest in frequency with 37.8%, appearing 45 times in the performance. Examples of intrasentential code-switching in Harith's performances are presented as follows:

Example 7:

L144.   *Selain daripada itu, perbezaan* is music. Music old school *dengan* music new school *berbeza*.

[Aside from that, the difference is music. Music old school with music new school is different.]

LKD

Example 8:

> L269.　In Sweden, all the *kanak-kanak pergi sekolah, tak* study, *tak kisah apa,* they come back-
>
> [In Sweden, all the children go to school, don't study, don't care about anything, they come back-]
>
> <div align="right">TLM</div>

In Example 7, the switch of codes occurred mid-sentence at the word level, as Harith began the first sentence in Malay which ended in English while the second sentence began in English. Harith then used the Malay word "*dengan*" to replace the preposition "with", continuing in English and then ended the sentence using another Malay word. In Example 8, code-switching occurred mid-sentence at both the word and phrasal levels. The sentence also began in English, after which Harith switched to Malay then back to English. Gonzales-Velásquez (1995) noted that this type of switching is not randomly done, but instead in accordance with syntactical structure. Poplack (1980) also commented on intrasentential code-switching specifically, noting that as this type of switching involves a great deal of integration, it requires a high level of proficiency in both languages.

Aside from code-switching occurring multiple times in one line, there were also lines in which multiple types were found, as seen in Example 9:

Example 9:

> L82.　*Pernah tak?* At the highway, *kan* highway, (car zooming sound), *tiba-tiba, tengok* jam.
>
> [Have you? At the highway, highway right, (car zooming sound), suddenly, you see traffic jam.]
>
> <div align="right">LKD</div>

As shown in Example 9, in L98, all three types were found in that one line. The phrase "*Pernah tak?*" (Have you?) was followed by "At the highway". Here, the switch was at phrasal level, making it intersentential switching. Tag switching was found in the second sentence "At the highway, *kan* highway". The tag "*kan*" (right) was inserted after the English phrase "At the highway" and followed by an English word. This line then ended with intrasentential code-switching where the comedian switched back to Malay at phrasal level using *tiba-tiba* (suddenly) and at word level using *tengok* (you see) which was paired with the English word jam.

Table 2 indicates that intrasentential code-switching was the most used type in LKD while tag switching was the highest in frequency in TLM. This finding is in line with the form of language used in the performance which is influenced by its target audience. Harith Iskander stated:

> So, I was doing English and I was doing performances in English. […] If it's a mixed crowd, I do English Malay. Sometimes I get a very *kilang* crowd […] a very predominantly Malay, 90% to 100% Malay, I would consciously switch to *Bahasa*.

The LKD was aimed at the Malay audience, and thus, the frequent use of intrasentential code-switching was to ensure that the Malay audience were able to comprehend the jokes and ultimately enjoy the performance. Putu (2014) also found that intrasentential switching occurred the most in her study noting that it was due to the ease of incorporating words in comparison to phrases or sentences. On the other hand, in TLM, the use of tag switching was the highest as it helped the comedian build his identity as a Malaysian without having to compromise the English meaning of his jokes, which may result in the exclusion of non-Malay speaking members in the audience.

In short, the use of intersentential and intrasentential code-switching in both of Harith Iskandar's performances, particularly in LKD, was essentially for the benefit of the Malay speaking audience. Furthermore, the ability to incorporate these two types of code-switching into his lines was proof of Harith Iskander's high proficiency in both Malay and English. Nonetheless, as English is his first language, the crafting of jokes and stories are accomplished primarily in English, indicated by the high frequency of tag switching in TLM and confirmed by Harith's own comment about his preference for English. Thus, it might create awkwardness if the show was done in Malay and the code switching was from Malay to English as the jokes might not be delivered as effectively since English is Harith's first language. "I can't authentically think in Malay.… For me, [it's easier for me to maintain authenticity] English because I grew up speaking and thinking in English."

Harith has also admitted that he struggles to craft his shows entirely in Malay which explains his segment in LKD being performed in English even though the show itself was targeted at a Malay audience. "In fact, Lawak Ke Der the first, one you will find some words, even I listened to it I was like… I feel *janggal* (awkward) coz I slightly have the Mat Saleh-nisism. …Yeah, it was directly translated."

Functions of Code-switching

Referring to Hoffmann's (1991) 10 reasons for code-switching, the function of each code-switching found in the two performances were first identified before they were totalled and converted into percentage, while determining the most significant function used in the two stand-up performances by Harith Iskander. The results of the analysis are tabulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of functions of code-switching in Harith Iskander's performances

Functions	LKD		TLM	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Talking about a particular topic	65/183	35.5	30/119	25.8
Quoting somebody else	24/183	13.1	13/119	10.9
Being emphatic about something	–	–	–	–
Interjection	35/183	19.1	58/119	48.7
Repetition used for clarification	2/183	1.09	1/119	0.84
Intention of clarifying the speech content for interlocutor	–	–	–	–
Expressing group identity	57/183	35.1	17/119	14.28
Softening or strengthening request or command	–	–	–	–
Real lexical need	–	–	–	–
Excluding other people	–	–	–	–

In Table 3, the functions of code-switching found in both LKD and TLM were similar but only five of Hoffmann's (1991) 10 functions of code-switching were present. In LKD, code-switching was used to talk about a topic 65 times out of 183, totalling 35.5% in frequency. As for TLM, code-switching functioning as a medium to broach a certain topic occurred 30 times out of 119 code-switching at 25.8%. The examples of Harith Iskander using code-switching while talking about certain topics in both shows are:

Example 10:

L6.   Okay, my name is Harith Iskander.

L7.   This is the first time… *Ini kali pertama* that there's actually a full comedy show in […] Istana Budaya, the history of Istana Budaya tonight. How, so far, okay? Yeah!

[This is the first time… This is the first time that there's actually a full comedy show in […] Istana Budaya, the history of Istana Budaya tonight. How, so far, okay? Yeah!]

Talking about a particular topic, LKD

Example 11:

L268.   That's the Malaysian style, that's the Malaysian style.

L269.   In Sweden, all the *kanak-kanak pergi sekolah, tak* study, *tak kisah apa,* they come back-

[In Sweden, all the children go to school, don't study, don't care about anything, they come back-]

Talking about a particular topic, TLM

Referring to Example 10, Harith addresses the audience in English as he introduces himself in L6. In L7, though at first he started in English, he switched to Malay when he broached the subject of history of Istana Budaya (Malaysia's primary venue for cultural events). This was early in the performance as he familiarised himself with the audience using Malay to bridge the gap, which could be interpreted through his repetition of English phrase in Malay. In Example 11, the switching of topics can be seen clearly as he talked about the Malaysian style of parenting in L268; then he changed the subject to the topic of parenting in Sweden in L269. As he talked about the children in Sweden, Harith switched to Malay. By switching to Malay, the comedian ensured that he was able to gain the attention of the Malaysian audience so that they would be able to relate to the story about the children in Sweden.

As for the second function, there were multiple instances in both performances when Harith Iskander switched to Malay to quote someone else. In LKD, this occurred 24 times out of the 183 appearances of code-switching in the show, which was 13.1% and in TLM, Harith switched codes 13 times to quote someone in Malay which amounted to 10.9% in frequency.

Example 12:

> L96. Because when we *sampai* accident, *kita pun* "Oh! Oh, *ni* accident *ni*. Oh, *ni* accident *ni*, *bawak laju ni*. Accident. Accident. *Tengok, tengok. Tayar dengan* skid mark *tu ha.* Accident *ni. Bawak laju ni.*"
>
> [Because when we arrive at the accident, we're like "Oh! Oh, this one accident. Oh, this one accident, speeding one this one. Accident. Accident. See, see. The tire with the skid mark. Accident this one. Speeding one this one.]
>
> <div align="right">Quoting somebody else, LKD</div>

Example 13:

> L90. All the other people were like "*Eh, siapa orang gila ni?*"
>
> [All the other people were like "Eh, who is this crazy person?"]
>
> <div align="right">Quoting somebody else, TLM</div>

In both Examples 12 and 13, Harith Iskander switched to Malay frequently when he quoted someone else in a dialogue. This, according to him, is to maintain authenticity:

> I've tried occasionally. I would do the Malay policeman speaking in English. And even for me, it sounds very *janggal* (awkward), very *tak kena* (not spot on). Even to the audience like er… It's like when you see a Malay drama, you see the advertising, you just see they all speaking Malay and there will be [inaudible] with subtitle. "Er... *kami rasa konsep ini*…" (we understand the concept) and then if you know advertising you like, nobody in advertising speaks Malay. You know what, really it feel like […] *tak* (not) authentic."

Such occurrence can also be found in everyday contexts such as the cases in Siti Hamin and Nurul Nadiah's (2016) study where it was observed that participants would code-switch when they quoted others with the intention of conveying messages in their original form to retain the meaning.

The fourth function in Hoffmann's (1991) list, using code-switching as interjection, was also found in the two stand-up performances. In LKD, out of 183 instances of code-switching, the occurrences of code-switching functioning as interjection

emerged 35 times which was 19.1%. In contrast, in TLM, the use of code-switching as interjection occurred 58 times out of 119 code-switching appearances which amounted to a frequency as high as 48.7%. Examples of these instance are presented as follows:

Example 14:

L60.   When the red man turn green, [clicking sound] *haa…* then they cross the road.

Interjection, LKD

Example 15:

L35.   I remember I was backstage – I was hanging out backstage, the Corrs were all hanging out backstage and I was doing a Malaysian thing *lah*.

Interjection, TLM

As shown in Examples 14 and 15, Harith used different interjections when he code-switched such as "*haa*" in L60 and "*lah*" in L35. These tags are very much known as Malaysian features in speech, and they represent an array of conversational functions (Baskaran 2005).

The instances of the next item, using code-switching to repeat with the intention of clarifying, were not of very high in frequency in either of the two performances as this function was found only twice (1.09%) in LKD while in TLM, code-switching used for this function was found once in the entire show (0.84%). The examples of the few occurrences of this function are shown below:

Example 16:

L79.   *Dia akan* avoid. *Elak*.

[He will avoid. Avoid.]

Repetition used for clarification, LKD

Example 17:

L373.   And then came out the question race, *bangsa*, race, Malay, Chinese, Indian, other.

[And then came out the question race, race, race, Malay, Chinese', Indian, other.]

Repetition used for clarification, TLM

Examples 16 and 17 represent the use of repetition with code-switching. In L79, the word "avoid" was repeated in Malay with the word "*elak*" while in L373, the word "race" was repeated in Malay using the word "*bangsa*" and repeated in English. Harith explained his intention in repeating words in his performance, which was to ensure that the audience would still be able to understand the jokes despite not speaking the language he was switching to:

> So, I will always speak Malay or […] code-shift because of the authenticity. If I'm performing in front of Mat Salleh audience, what I will do is I will, afterwards I will […] pre-explain one word and then just go in Malay. And, comedy the way it is, even the Mat Salleh will understand. So, I explain to Mat Salleh, oh em… that we repeat ourselves and the word *mati* means dead. So, when I go, Malay policeman goes, "Oh, *mati ya*? [smack lips] Em… *dah mati ni*. Oh, *ni dah mati ni*. Oh, *ni dah… Dah mati lah, dah mati, dah mati*." See that Mat Salleh will laugh already because they know *mati* dead and repeat. So, […] they don't understand but they'll get it.

The last element in Hoffmann's categorisation of code-switching is the use of code-switching to express group identity. There were many instances where Harith Iskander addressed the audience in Malay as a way to assimilate himself not only with the Malays as a Malay, but also with the audience in general as a Malaysian. This function was greatly used in LKD as shown in Table 3, with its frequency totalling 35.1%, occurring 57 times. This function was not as significant in TLM as it occurred only 17 times (14.28%). Below are the examples of Harith using code-switching to express his identity as a Malay and Malaysian.

Example 18:

L33.   No, it's okay. No, […] I like Singapore. […] I like Singapore.

L34.   Singapore *dengan* Malaysia, we like to - we like to *kutuk-kutuk* each other, *kan*?

[Singapore and Malaysia, we like to - we like to make fun of each other, right?]

L35.   Singapore *kutuk* Malay - No, it's friendly. […]

[Singapore make fun of Malay - No, it's friendly.]

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L40. *Kita macam adik-beradik tapi kadang-kadang kita gaduh* but at the end of the day we are brothers.

[We're like siblings but sometimes we fight but at the end of the day we are brothers.] Expressing group identity,

LKD

Example 19:

L334. When I say they are up there, you all know what I'm talking about because Malaysian, we are spiritual people.

L335. *Kita percaya* the up there part.

[We believe in the up there part.]

Expressing group identity, TLM

In Examples 18 and Example 19, Harith spoke to the audience in English, particularly when assimilating with them using his identity as a Malaysian with the use of the word "*kita*" (we). This was clear in L40 and L335 when he referred to both himself and the audience while talking about the similarities between them. This was another strategy used by the comedian to cement his group identity and harmonise with the members of the audience so that they would relate more to the stories and jokes being told during the performances. Filani (2015) also concluded that code-switching helps to establish the comedians and audience as community members of the same discourse which he termed "we" code in the performance context that ultimately creates an intimate relationship between the two parties.

It is interesting to note that five items from Hoffmann's (1991) functions of code-switching, namely being emphatic about something, intention of clarifying the speech content for interlocutor, softening or strengthening request or command, real lexical need and excluding other people, were notably absent in both of these performances. This could be due to the audience member not being allowed to engage in Harith's dialogue at any point as comedic performances focus on generating reactions from the audience. Hence, the absence of the other five functions is due to the context of the situation as well as what is being talked about. Apart from that, the light nature of stand-up comedy could also be another factor, and while there were instances where Harith did make explanations for the understanding of the audience, he accomplished this in English. Similarly, requests were made to the audience to reply to his questions by saying words such as "Hey!" which were also done in English. In regard to the use of code-switching for real lexical need, there was none to be found as the Malay words

or phrases used in the comedy performances were due to preference or common usage among Malaysians rather than the results of the lack of equal or appropriate substitutes. In contrast, when the comedians switched from Indonesian to English, Putu (2014) found that this was the most common function of code-switching either due to the lack of replacement words with similar meaning or because the English words were considered "cool". Lastly, the intention to exclude any group of people through code-switching is not an element that was found as it was not in line with the inclusive and conversational nature of stand-up comedy itself as noted by Harith Iskander:

> Stand-up comedy by the way is a conversation. If you ever watch stand-up comedy, people say, "Eh, how does it work, huh?" It's a conversation. Stand-up comedian is having a conversation with the audience. What the comedian says on stage is 100% dependent on how the audience reacts.

The results shown in Table 3 suggest that code-switching in LKD was used mainly when Harith Iskander was talking about a certain topic or sharing experiences or stories with them. The comedian also employed code-switching to express his group identity with the audience as a Malay, as he switched to Malay often when he was addressing them as if he was having conversation with them when he was relaying his lines. As for TLM, code-switching functioned primarily as interjections with particles such as "*eh*" and "*lah*", often found across the performance. These particles were an effective way for Harith Iskander to assimilate himself with the multilingual audience as the use of discourse particles is common among Malaysians.

CONCLUSION

This article showed the target audience of the performance greatly affects the types and functions of code-switching used in a stand-up comedy performance. Code-switching used while delivering jokes is based on the type of audience, and as the crowd changes, the form and functions of code-switching changes accordingly. The comparison made between the audience of the two performances and Harith Iskander's use of code-switching in the two performances suggest that when the audience is more diverse, code-switching becomes less prominent.

All three types of code-switching categorised by Poplack (1980) were found in both LKD and TLM performances. In LKD, intrasentential code-switching is the type with the highest frequency while in TLM, it is tag switching. These outcomes were influenced by the nature of the show, LKD, being targeted to a Malay audience resulting in the comedian, Harith Iskander, using more bahasa Melayu phrases and

words in the show. In comparison, TLM targeted a more mixed crowd. Hence, instead of incorporating bahasa Melayu words and phrases in his lines, Harith incorporated more tags into his English lines. The functions of code-switching in this comedian's performances revealed that the most common reasons for code-switching in LKD are for discussing a particular topic and expressing group identity as Harith Iskander often shares stories with the audience and addresses them in Malay during his performance. In TLM, code-switching was used mainly for interjections. These interjections were made up of discourse particles such "*lah*" or "*kan*", results of years of language contact among the multilingual locals (Tay et al. 2016). Though these are Malay discourse particles, they are commonly used by Malaysians while speaking in Malaysian English (Tay et al. 2016). Thus, it is an effective way to project Harith's identity as a Malaysian while performing and uniting an audience of diverse ethnicity and background.

This study inspires further research on Malaysian stand-up comedy, particularly on the use of code switching in stand-up performances. It would be interesting to see this topic discussed from other perspectives. More stand-up comedians can be incorporated for data analysis to provide a bigger picture on the usage of code switching in Malaysian stand-up comedy in general instead of focusing on only one comedian. With access to performances from multiple comedians, a comparison can be made between the comedians to see patterns and styles in terms of code switching. Furthermore, a factor that can be taken into consideration is the effect of code switching on the delivery of the jokes during performances. Future research may also involve non-Malay speakers in data collection through surveys or interviews to identify the relationship between code switching and comprehensibility of jokes from their perspective.

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