

# An Analysis of Code-Switching in the Lyrics of Selected Malaysian Hip-Hop Songs

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## ABSTRACT

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*As one of the biggest music genres in the world, the widespread popularity of hip-hop has prompted many hip-hop artists from around the world to apply code-switching in their songs (Smet, 2019). Despite the popularity of hip-hop songs in Malaysia, the research on code-switching in the lyrics of Malaysian hip-hop songs, specifically on Malay-English code-switching is still underexplored. Hence, this study aimed to analyse the types of code-switching, and the functions of code-switching used in Malaysian hip-hop songs. To ensure that the objectives of the research were met, three Malaysian hip-hop songs were selected and analyzed based on the theoretical frameworks by Poplack's (1980) types of code-switching and Appel's and Muysken's (2006) six (6) functions of code-switching: referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistics and poetic. The findings revealed all three (3) types of code-switching, namely Intersentential, Intrasentential, and Tag-Switching were used in the selected songs, with Intrasentential recorded the most occurrence of all three. Meanwhile, only four (4) functions of code-switching were found throughout all three songs, with Poetic being the most popular function of all four. Therefore, it is demonstrated that code-switching in Malaysian hip-hop songs is prevalent and more than just a random switch, as each of them conveys its own function. The present study only focuses on selected Hip-Hop songs with Malay-English code-switching, therefore bigger scope and other languages are recommended for future studies.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The mixes of different languages used in daily life has led to the phenomenon called code-switching. Code-switching is defined as the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent (Poplack, 1980). Moreover, Hoffmann (1991) defined code-switching as the act of alternating two languages or linguistics varieties within the same utterance or during the same conversation. As a phenomenon that commonly occurs in multilingual societies, linguists study code-switching in order to / to understand when people do it, such as when bilingual speakers transition from one language or dialect to the other, while sociologists study code-switching to understand why people do it. In a multilingual nation like Malaysia, code-switching is a common phenomenon of when and why it happens. This is due to the amalgamation of Malaysia's diverse, multicultural citizens that indirectly has affected the application of language and communication strategies among its people (Wan Ainaa Atiqah et al., 2020). Hence, it could be said that code-switching is a common phenomenon that occurs extensively in multilingual societies such as in Malaysia.

The existence of code-switching in many discourse including spoken and written, as well as genres are prevalent to achieve diverse purposes. Genres refer to the form and type of delivery of discourse (Salsabila et al., 2021). Code-switching appears in various genres, including in music in a multicultural setting. Music from English-speaking countries often shows a reflection of the multilingual communities that existed and thrived in the said countries. Smet (2019) posited that code-switching between the native language and English in music occurs to express emotions and represent the native culture as well as a means to gain acknowledgement globally. On the other hand, Wan Nur Syaza Sahira et al. (2018) stated that code-switching in music serves certain social purposes that emphasise the development of people's intimacy, solidarity, and local identity, rather than just being a random switch from one code to another. Daoh (2016) meanwhile suggested that code-switching in songs is to serve a quotation, an interjection, quality or clarify a message, and to reiterate. Therefore, it can be concluded that code-switching in music is prevalent and has its own effects and purposes.

This study aims to fill the current gap of code-switching in music, particularly in Malay-English hip-hop songs as the research in this area is still understudied. Balakrishnan (2020) focused on the code-switching between Tamil-Malay-English hip-hop songs, while Wan Nur Syaza Sahira et al. (2018) conducted an analysis of code-switching in modern Malay songs, from their analysis of 25 modern songs of various genres, most of the genre analysed (14 songs) was hip-hop. They also added that thus far, no empirical study has been done to reveal why the occurrence of code-switching is high in hip-hop songs. Hence, by pitching an angle from this although not empirically, it is significant to explore codes-switching focusing on the hip-hop genre as there have been limited studies being done specifically in Malaysia. On the global scale, more studies are found on the code-switching between native languages or dialects with English in hip-hop songs. In Africa, Smet (2019) has conducted a study on the code-switching in contemporary Ghanaian hip-hop lyrics. Another example of other musical genres is the study conducted by Ria (2016) on the code-switching phenomenon in the lyrics of songs by Indonesian pop singer, Bondan Prakoso. Hence, this study is intended to fill the gap for code-switching in Malaysian hip-hop songs, specifically on Malay-English code-switching based on these two research questions:

1. What are the types of code-switching used in the selected Malaysian hip-hop songs?
2. What are the functions of code-switching in the lyrics of the selected Malaysian hip-hop songs?

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### ***2.1 Types of Code-switching***

According to Poplack (1980), code-switching is the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent. In line with Poplack's definition, Hoffmann (1991) defined code-switching as the act of alternating two languages or linguistics varieties within the same utterance or during the same conversation. Poplack (1980) has classified code-switching into three (3) types:

- a) Intersentential code-switching – Occurs at clause or sentence level, where each clause or sentence is conveyed in one or another language. This switching is commonly used by fluent bilingual speakers.
- b) Intrasentential code-switching – Occurs within the sentence, where the switch happens within the clause or sentence boundary but also may include mixing within word boundaries. Usually, the speakers are unaware of this switching.
- c) Tag switching – Occurs when the speaker inserts a tag in one language into a sentence that happens in another language. The location of the tag inserted can be anywhere and this tag is commonly used by speakers who lack the necessary vocabulary in one language.

### ***2.2 Functions of Code-switching***

Apart from having different types, code-switching also comes with different functions that cater to its users' requirements. This is especially true in songs, as code-switching in music serves certain social purposes rather than just being a mere switch from one code to another (Wan Nur Syaza Sahira et al., 2018). With these functions, code-switching became a more potent communication strategy that can be utilised by multilingual speakers in expressing their emotions, while also helping them to represent their native culture to the broader global audience (Smet, 2019). Appel and Muysken (2006) classified six (6) functions of code-switching:

- a) Referential - Code-switching functions as referential when the user lacks the vocabulary of the target language.
- b) Directive - Speakers utilise the directive function of code-switching in order to build or maintain solidarity.
- c) Expressive - Used by speakers in order to express their feelings or demonstrate their self-identity.
- d) Phatic - Involves a change in intonation, speakers use phatic when they want to emphasise the important parts of their speech or conversation.
- e) Metalinguistic - Speakers apply this function when they want to insert a quotation, phrase, or metaphor.
- f) Poetic - Used for entertainment purposes, involving the insertion of words or phrases of different language from the conversation or speech.

### ***2.3 Code-switching in Hip-Hop Songs***

Hip-hop is one of the biggest music genres in the world. Originating in The Bronx, New York, hip-hop music has taken the world by storm. The widespread popularity of hip-hop across the world has prompted many hip-hop artists from around the world to apply code-switching in hip-hop songs. In a study of code-switching in Ghanaian contemporary hip-hop lyrics, Smet

(2019) has analysed lyrics of songs from three (3) Ghanaian contemporary hip-hop artists in order to determine the functions of code-switching that exists in Ghanaian contemporary hip-hop lyrics. The result of the study showed that the code-switching in Ghanaian contemporary hip-hop lyrics functions to identify with the African-American hip-hop culture as well as to make the topics of their native culture globally acknowledged. On the other hand, Sarah & Oladayo (2021) has conducted a comparative analysis on the code-switching and code-mixing phenomenon in the Nigerian music industry. In this study, the lyrics of two selected Nigerian hip-hop artists, Flavour and 9ice songs are transcribed and studied. The study concludes that code-switching in Nigerian hip-hop songs becomes a depiction of the Nigerian state due to the nation's diverse languages and unique identity created by code-switching and code-mixing. This phenomenon in the Nigerian music industry has garnered a positive influence on music fans and enthusiasts, helping artists to achieve wide patronage while at the same time reflecting the ethnolinguistic diversity of the Nigerian nation (Sarah & Oladayo, 2021). Hence, code-switching in hip-hop songs and lyrics has become a common phenomenon that helps hip-hop artists to express their feelings and thoughts.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### ***3.1 Research Design***

This research employed the qualitative research method using discourse analysis to identify and analyse the data that contain code-switching in the lyrics of selected Malaysian hip-hop songs. According to Hjelm (2021), discourse analysis is “the study of how to do things with words and it examines how identities, relationships, beliefs, and knowledge systems are constructed in language use” (p. 229). Hence, discourse analysis is employed in this study to analyse the Malay-English code-switching in the lyrics of selected Malaysian hip-hop songs.

#### ***3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique***

The samples for this study involved three (3) hip-hop songs that contain Malay-English code-switching. The selected hip-hop songs were *Runcit* by Aman RA ft. DATO' MAW and Kudoshi, *CIAO* by Joe Flizzow ft. MK K-Clique and Jay Park, and *Satu Malam di Temasek* by Joe Flizzow ft. SonaOne. After a review of the related studies such as by Daoh (2016), Smet (2019), and Sarah and Oladayo (2021), the researcher determined that the most appropriate number of songs in answering the research question is three (3). Next, the samples were selected using purposive sampling since it is a helpful non-probability sampling technique that enables the researchers to swiftly achieve a specific sample since it is chosen based on demographic characteristics and the study's purpose (Crossman, 2020). The purposive sampling method was employed in the data collection as it was intended to discover information-rich situations in order to draw answers to the research questions (Nor Hairunnisa and Nor Syamimi Iliani, 2022; Patton, 2015). In this case, the songs were chosen based on the criteria set before the selection began to meet the objectives of the study for instance, based on the review of related studies, the lyrics that only contain Malay-English code-switching, their top-charted and most-streamed record, and were released between 2021 to 2022. The selection of hip-hop songs containing only Malay-English code-switching was also due to the need to address the limitations from previous research and contribute further insights into this field of study.

#### ***3.3 Data Collection***

The data collection for this study started by identifying three (3) Malaysian hip-hop songs that contain Malay-English code-switching in their lyrics based on the criteria outlined. After that,

the lyrics from the selected songs were tabulated into a Microsoft Word document based on the classification of Poplack's (1980) three (3) code-switching types and later coded into Appel's and Muysken's (2006) six (6) functions of code-switching using thematic analysis. Next, the lyrics were arranged and tabulated according to the research questions and objectives. Both researchers participated in the coding process, which was mostly used to determine the types and functions of the code-switching found using the theoretical frameworks adopted.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data from the selected hip-hop songs was done descriptively whereby the occurrences of Malay-English code-switching was firstly counted and distinguished based on Poplack (1980) three types of code-switching which are intersentential, intrasentential, and tag-switching. Secondly, their occurrences were classified based on Appel's and Muysken's (2006) six (6) functions of code-switching which are referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic. Next, using Microsoft Excel, the frequency of the data's occurrences was analysed and displayed in descriptive statistics. This study employed inter-rater reliability, in which assessments were conducted among raters to ascertain the extent to which different raters can reliably get the same score of categories for the research subject (Harvey, 2021). The data was examined, contrasted, and discussed by the researchers to arrive at a consensus for each particular category and to confirm the study's result in an effort to increase reliability.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Types of Code-Switching Used in the Selected Malaysian hip-hop songs

According to Poplack (1980), there are three classifications of code-switching which are intersentential, intrasentential, and tag-switching.

Table 4.1.1: Types of Code-Switching used in the selected Malaysian hip-hop songs

Type of Code-Switching	Occurrences	Percentage (%)
Intersentential	4	8.2
Intrasentential	40	81.6
Tag-Switching	5	10.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.1.1 demonstrates all three classifications of code-switching laid out by Poplack (1980) were found in the lyrics of the selected songs. The data above shows that there are a total of 49 code-switching occurred in all three songs, with intrasentential code-switching as the most common type of code-switching at 40 occurrences, followed by tag-switching at five (5) occurrence and intersentential at four (4) occurrence. Intrasentential code-switching alone makes up about 81.6 percent of the total code-switching found in all three songs. This type of code-switching is usually used by its user unconsciously, where it occurs within the clause or sentence boundary but also may include mixing within word boundaries. This is followed by tag-switching (10.2%) and lastly intersentential (8.2%). Overall, the findings proved that code-switching despite the types, is heavily used in hip-hop music. The findings resonate with Sarah and Oladayo (2021), as well as Smet (2019) whereby code-switching or code-mixing is a

prominent feature in hip-hop songs as the music has been vastly domesticated in a multilingual community.

In terms of specific types used, the findings from this study contradict Daoh's (2016) who focuses on code-switching found in the lyrics of Thai pop star Bird Thongchai McIntyre's songs. According to Daoh (2016), intersentential was the most common type of code-switching used in the lyrics of the songs, followed by intrasentential and tag-switching. Aside from that, the finding also conflicts with another study by Ria (2016) whereby his study concluded that intersentential code-switching was more commonly used in Bondan Prakoso's songs than intrasentential code-switching. The justification for the abundant use of intrasentential code-switching in Malaysian hip-hop songs compared to Thai and Indonesian pop songs in Daoh (2016) and Ria (2016) is that code-switching in song lyrics often happens to provide continuity rather than interfering with the speech (Wan Nur Syaza Sahira et al., 2018), which is a prevalent feature in many hip-hop songs. Hip-hop songwriters or rappers use intrasentential code-switching in order to maintain the continuity or the flow of their rapping because it can occur at any part of the sentence, thus providing more flexibility for them. Therefore, intrasentential is the most effective type of code-switching, which reflect its broad use in all three of the selected Malaysian hip-hop songs.

#### ***4.2 Functions of Code-Switching in the Lyrics of Selected Malaysian hip-hop songs***

According to Appel and Muysken (2006), there are six (6) functions of code-switching, namely referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistics, and poetic. The table below shows each of the code-switching functions laid out by Appel and Muysken (2006) and their occurrence in the three selected Malaysian hip-hop songs.

Table 4.2.1: Functions of Code-Switching in the lyrics of selected Malaysian hip-hop songs

<b>Function of Code-Switching</b>	<b>Occurrences</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Referential	11	23.0
Directive	-	-
Expressive	5	10.4
Phatic	-	-
Metalinguistic	5	10.4
Poetic	27	56.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.2.1 shows only four out of the six functions were found in all three songs except for directive and phatic code-switching functions. The data above shows that the Poetic function, by far, is the most common code-switching function used in these songs at 27 occurrences or 56.2 percent, followed by the Referential function at 11 occurrences (23%). Additionally, both Expressive and Metalinguistic functions are tallied at 5 occurrences, making about 10.4 percent of the total occurrences each. Evidently, four types of code-switching functions laid by Appel and Muysken (2006) can be found in all three songs with differing levels of occurrences. The four functions have distinct differences between them that will be further elaborated below.

This finding contradicts Wan Nur Syaza Sahira et al. (2018) whereby all six of the code-switching functions fronted by Appel and Muysken (2006) were present in contemporary Malay songs, with the expressive function being the most common function of code-switching used in contemporary Malay songs (138 occurrences), while metalinguistic function has the lowest at 10 occurrences. Since the present study only focused on one music genre compared to the previous study, the functions were also expressed differently. The use of poetic function was more frequent in all three Malaysian hip-hop songs because code-switching activity can be a linguistic strategy that brings out the poetic aspect of a text, especially if the words of multiple languages rhyme with each other (Chan, 2009). Thus, it can be concluded that Poetic is the most prevalent code-switching function found in all three selected Malaysian hip-hop songs because it provides rappers with an avenue to play around with words from other languages in order to rhyme out their lines for better flow and continuity.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study aimed to fill the gap for code-switching in Malaysian hip-hop songs, specifically on Malay-English code-switching. This area is seldom explored in the specific Malaysian and hip-hop contexts due to past research that focused more on other languages, textual and spoken genres, as well as other music genres. Specifically, this study aims to benefit the students and instructors in the sociolinguistics field to further develop an understanding of sociolinguistic elements such as code-switching in music to contribute to the pedagogical implication of this field. Moreover, this study also aims to benefit other researchers as a source of reference for future research, especially those who are interested in expanding or replicating the study. For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope since this study was conducted on three Malaysian hip-hop songs. A larger sample size would be ideal for better representation and generalisation of the genre. Apart from that, the sample analysed for this study was only Malaysian hip-hop songs with Malay to English code-switching. Thus, it is also recommended for future studies to focus on other codes such as English to Malay, Mandarin to English, and many more. Such studies will provide diverse findings and may also contribute to comparative analysis between different types and functions of different languages. Finally, future studies should also consider choosing different music genres for code-switching in songs, which can make a great indicator of the unique sociolinguistic diversity in Malaysia.

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## **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

MA and NEA both worked on the introduction, literature review, and methodology. MA collected the data, and wrote the analysis, discussion, and implication of the study. NEA reviewed and refined the analysis and discussion. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None declared

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