UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

LANGUAGE CHOICE AND USE IN TRAINING SESSIONS OF SELECTED MALAYSIAN PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS

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By

KAMISAH BINTI ARIFFIN

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 2007

UPM

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Abdul Shukor Dato' Samat, my daughters, Allysha Nashwa and Allyyah Najwa, my parents, Haji Ariffin Ismail and Hajjah Maimunah Yatim, Dato' Haji Samat Hasan and Datin Hajjah Kamsiah Shaari, who have believed in me and given me all the encouragement and support needed during these challenging years.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman : **Associate Professor Shameem binti Mohd Rafik Khan@Rafik-Galea, PhD**

Faculty : **Modern Languages and Communication**

This study examined the language choice and use of the speakers in the formal workplace domain of public organisations in Malaysia. It was the assumption of this study that, other languages understood by the speakers in the context of interaction were also used in public organisations despite the country's policy on the use of the national language, Bahasa Malaysia (BM) for official purposes. The discourse of the organisational training sessions was analysed in terms of the speakers' language choice and use, and the factors governing the choice.

The data for the study mainly consist of the transcribed discourse of the training sessions of the selected public organisations. The data were complemented by the data from the survey questionnaire and interview. The factors governing the speakers' choice of language in their interactional context were examined under

their societal institutional and socio-psychological levels. The findings could provide insights into a range of perspectives underlying the choice.

The data were analysed in two parts: domain analysis and linguistic analysis. The domain analysis described speakers' language use from the socio-psychological and societal levels. In this analysis, observable themes or patterns that emerged from the speakers' speech were discussed to explain the language use within the context of interaction. The linguistic analysis, on the other hand, focused on speakers' choice based on the linguistic and stylistic features inherent in the speakers' speech. These include the language features of colloquial BM and Malaysian English (ME), and the occurrence of code-switching in terms of levels and types, and the discourse functions of code-switching.

Evidence from the discourse revealed that the use of BM in formal context as stipulated in the National Language Policy was not really adhered to in the studied organisations. The analysis showed that BM and English were used in varying proportions in the interactional context. The findings also suggested that the language use depended largely on the societal-institutional and socio-psychological levels of the speakers and their communicative intent.

The data displayed extensive use of the colloquial BM and the local variety (ME). Another pertinent feature found was the code-switching phenomenon. The data demonstrated that code-switching, both at intra- and inter-sentential

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levels, emerged as speakers' choice to fulfill various communicative functions in their speech.

The study concluded that the stipulated language use in the domain of public organisations had oversimplified the complexities of the actual language use in a multilingual context. Speakers would use any language in their repertoire to suit their communicative needs. The language use could also be influenced by an array of factors from the societal institutional and socio-psychological levels of the speakers. The study also offered a model that could illustrate the pattern of language use in the studied organisations based on the ethnographic and linguistic evidence derived from the data.

Finally, the study discussed the theoretical, methodological and socolinguistic implications of the evidence that may be of interest to those concerned with sociolinguistic research and the country's language planning and its implementation. Some recommendations for further research were also put forward.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PEMILIHAN DAN PENGGUNAAN BAHASA DALAM SESI LATIHAN DI ORGANISASI AWAM MALAYSIA YANG TERPILIH

Oleh

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Kajian ini menganalisis pemilihan dan penggunaan bahasa para pekerja di dalam domain formal tempat kerja di organisasi awam di Malaysia. Kajian ini beranggapan bahawa bahasa lain yang difahami oleh penutur akan digunakan juga oleh organisasi awam dalam konteks interaksi mereka walaupun Dasar Bahasa Kebangsaan telah mewajibkan penggunaan Bahasa Melayu (BM) dalam urusan rasmi. Wacana sesi latihan dianalisa dari segi pemilihan dan penggunaan bahasa dan juga faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pemilihan bahasa tersebut.

Data kajian terdiri daripada transkripsi wacana sesi latihan dari tiga organisasi awam yang terpilih. Data ini juga disokong oleh data yang diperolehi daripada soal-selidik dan temuduga. Dua peringkat penutur, iaitu institusi-masyarakat (*societal-institutional*) dan sosio-psikologi (*socio-psychological*) dikaji untuk mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi pemilihan bahasa penutur

dalam konteks interaksi mereka. Ini dapat memberikan pemahaman yang mendalam akan faktor-faktor di sebalik pemilihan bahasa tersebut.

Analisa data dibahagikan kepada dua bahagian, iaitu analisa domain dan analisa linguistik. Analisa domain merangkumi keterangan mengenai penggunaan bahasa dari dua aspek penutur; institusi-masyarakat (*societal-institutional*) dan sosio-psikologi (*socio-psychological*). Dalam analisa ini, corak atau tema penggunaan bahasa yang jelas diperolehi daripada ucapan penutur dibincang bagi menerangkan penggunaan bahasa yang terlibat. Manakala analisa linguistik pula memfokus kepada pilihan bahasa dari bentuk linguistik dan stail bahasa yang digunakan oleh penutur. Ini termasuk bentuk Bahasa Malaysia kollokial dan Bahasa Inggeris variasi tempatan, iaitu Malaysian English (ME), dan perlakuan penukaran kod dari segi tahap, jenis dan juga fungsinya dalam wacana.

Dapatan kajian membuktikan bahawa penggunaan BM dalam urusan rasmi, seperti yang telah diperuntukkan dalam Dasar Bahasa Kebangsaan, tidak begitu dipatuhi di organisasi-organisasi yang dikaji. Analisa menunjukkan bahawa BM dan Bahasa Inggeris digunakan dalam kadar pembahagian yang berbeza dalam konteks interaksi di organisasi-organisasi tersebut. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan bahasa banyak bergantung kepada tahap institusi-masyarakat (*societal-institutional*) dan *socio-psychological* (sosio-psikologi) penutur dan tujuan komunikasi itu sendiri.

Analisa linguistik menunjukkan kepada kecenderungan penggunaan Bahasa Malaysia kollokial dan Bahasa Inggeris variasi tempatan. Selain dari itu, fenomena penukaran kod juga didapati signifikan dalam wacana tersebut. Penutur memilih untuk menukar kod pada tahap *intra-* dan *inter-sentential* bagi memenuhi fungsi komunikasi dalam pengucapan mereka.

Sebagai kesimpulan, kajian ini mendapati bahawa peruntukkan penggunaan bahasa di dalam domain organisasi awam telah mengambil mudah akan penggunaan sebenar bahasa yang kompleks dalam konteks kepelbagaian bahasa. Penutur akan menggunakan bahasa yang ada di dalam *repertoire* mereka untuk disesuaikan dengan keperluan komunikasi. Penggunaan bahasa juga dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor dari aspek institusi-masyarakat (*societal-institution*) dan sosio-psikologi (*socio-psychology*). Kajian ini juga mencadangkan satu model yang menggambarkan corak penggunaan bahasa di dalam organisasi berdasarkan kepada bukti etnografi dan linguistik yang diperolehi daripada data.

Akhir sekali, kajian ini membincangkan implikasi dari segi teori, metodologi dan sosiolinguistik yang mungkin dapat dimanafaatkan oleh pihak yang terlibat dengan kajian bahasa dan juga program perancangan bahasa dan pelaksanaannya. Beberapa cadangan untuk kajian di masa akan datang juga dikemukakan.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 5 November 2007 to conduct the final examination of Kamisah binti Ariffin on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "Language Choice and Use in Training Sessions of Selected Malaysian Public Organisations" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

KAMISAH BINTI ARIFFIN

Date: 20 FEB 2008

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BM	Bahasa Melayu
ME	Malaysian English
CS	Code-switching / Code-mixing / Code-alternation / Code-oscillation
IT	Information Technology
OA	Organisation A
OB	Organisation B
OC	Organisation B
OA1	Training Session 1 of Organisation A
OA2	Training Session 2 of Organisation A
OB1	Training Session 1 of Organisation B
OB2	Training Session 2 of Organisation B
OC1	Training Session 1 of Organisation C
OC2	Training Session 2 of Organisation C
T	Trainer
Tr	Trainee

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Geographical boundaries have now become arbitrary with the expansion of contacts especially resulting from trade and commerce. Most countries have become more multicultural than they have been before. This created a highly culturally and linguistically diverse workforce. Thus, it is inevitable that, in a plural society, there are diversity and variation in the code selection and stylistic in speech as far as communication among people from different background is concerned. Malaysia is no exception. Much has been said and studied about the language use or choice and preference of speakers when communicating within the multilingual and multicultural milieu in Malaysia.

The language situation in Malaysia is described as multilingual, diglossic and even polyglossic (Platt & Weber, 1980; Asmah, 1982). Besides the official language, Bahasa Malaysia, there are a variety of language codes available in the speakers' repertoire to choose from when communicating. These language codes may include different languages, different regional and social dialects of these languages and perhaps even different registers of the same language. Thus, with linguistically diverse workforce in the organisations, there is no doubt that more than one language will be used in their day to day operations.

The literature on the subject of language use and choice within the Malaysian multilingual settings is quite replete (Asmah, 1982; 1988; 1995; Morais, 1994;

Anie, 1998; David, 1998; Kuang, 1999; Nair-Venugopal, 2000; Ain Nadzimah, 2005; Rafik-Galea & Fernandez, 2005). However, almost all of these studies have concentrated on language use and choice either in the personal domain or in the private workplace domain. Almost no work has been reported on language use and choice in the public workplace domain except of Asmah's (1988), Nik Safiah and Hamdan's (1992) work which examined the extent to which Bahasa Malaysia (BM henceforth) was used in the public organisations in Sarawak and Sabah respectively. The term Bahasa Malaysia here encompasses the other terms used in the literature for the national language or official language of the country – Bahasa Melayu, Malay and Malay Language.

The National Language Policy of Malaysia stipulates BM must be used for all official purposes by the public organisations. The official purposes include departmental meetings and briefings, communication between public organisations, communication with the masses and as the medium of instruction in the classroom. However, there is very little documented information on language use within organisations which can provide evidence of this policy. Little is known about the extent to which BM, or other languages, is used in the organisations. Perhaps, the policy imposed on the public workplace domain with regard to language has led to the assumption that the organisations would comply with the policy. In turn, this assumption may have led researchers to neglect this domain. Instead, researchers seem to have concentrated more on either the personal or the private workplace domain.

As an employee in a public organisation herself, the researcher has observed that BM is not the only language used in the workplace even during official purposes. This is largely due to the increasing multilingual workforce and the demand of modernisation and globalisation. Other languages emerge in most context of interaction as speakers have a variety of codes and styles to choose from their linguistic repertoire. Thus, as the researcher has observed, while BM could be the main language in official functions such as meetings, briefings or ceremonies, it may also not be the sole language used throughout – other available languages understood by the speech community may be used - although it is quite unlikely the languages are produced at a full range within one particular speech event. However, as mentioned earlier, there is very few available documentation on this issue. This study, therefore, seeks to augment the little available information on language use in the public workplace domain.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The National Language Act of 1967 made BM an official language. As the national language and official language, it is constituted that BM must be used for official purposes, that is, in official ceremonies, government administration, communication between the government and the people, and as the medium of instruction in schools and university. This imperative includes the federal and state governments, and as defined by the Constitutional Amendment of 1971 under Article 152, by all the authorities and statutory bodies. However, since the declaration of the National Language Act 1967, no assessment has been done on this imperative in the public sector (except for Asmah's (1988) and Nik Safiah and Hamdan's (1992) studies mentioned earlier). As stated earlier, the majority of