Shifting Codes and Footing in the Reading Classroom
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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore some of the reasons why teachers shift codes in an ESL classroom by using Goffman's (1981) concept of footing. In English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, especially in the rural areas in Sarawak, Malaysian pupils of different levels of proficiency in the target language – English - are placed in the same class. When this happens the ESL teacher has to shift from code to code several times within the same lesson when communicating with pupils having different levels of proficiency in English. This shift in codes helps the teacher get responses from the students. In this paper we demonstrate this change in footing by an ESL teacher during a Reading Comprehension lesson. The reading teacher shifted from English to the national language, Malay which is the medium of instruction in Malaysia and even shifted to Bidayuh (the mother tongue of most of the students) with the objective of facilitating understanding of the text. Both the teacher and the pupils in this case study are Bidayuhs. We contend that if rural pupils find it difficult to understand English then the ESL teacher MUST at times shift codes to facilitate understanding. This should be an accepted practice so as to encourage low proficiency target language speakers participate actively in the reading classroom.

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1.0 Introduction

An ESL teacher's talk in a classroom in the Bidayuh Belt (Dundon, 1989) in Sarawak, Malaysia is often influenced by other languages especially when teaching Low English Proficiency (LEP) pupils. The Bau-jagoi (a Bidayuh dialect) ESL teachers, like many other teachers in Sarawak are multilingual and are able to speak the Bau-jagoi dialect, Malay and English. In addition there are many who are able to speak Iban and Bahasa Sarawak i.e. a variety of Malay is spoken in Sarawak. When teaching ESL to minority communities like the Bidayuhs, very often knowledge of the pupils' mother tongue and even the official language, Malay, influences the language used in the classroom.

According to McLellan (1992) the minority isolects in Borneo are influenced by:
i. Standard Malay (locally known as Bahasa Melayu), the national language, which is used in the more formal domains such as education and the mass media
ii. Sarawak Malay (the lingua franca of interethnic communication in Sarawak, as distinct from the mother–tongue of the Malay peoples of Sarawak) in the more informal domains such as everyday conversation.
iii. English, especially among the increasing number of Bau-Jagoi speakers who have received post-secondary school education in both formal and informal domains.

The main aim of the reading teacher is to ensure that the pupils understand the text. In order to do this the teacher has to ensure that core lexical items or vocabulary is understood. In ethnically homogeneous rural settings such as in the Bau Jagoi area where

the majority of the pupils are exposed to English only in the English language classroom, the task of teaching ESL can be quite daunting if teachers expect all the pupils to respond only in English. Therefore, both the teacher and the pupils tend to draw upon other codes so as to make the teaching and learning effective.

2.0 Aim of the study

This research examines the language choices and the change in footing (see Goffman, 1981) of a Bidayuh ESL teacher when teaching reading comprehension to young Bidayuh pupils. Some reading comprehension lessons were recorded during one month of field work in a government primary school in Bau District, in the Malaysian state of Sarawak located in the island of Borneo.

The research argues that in a multilingual setting such changes in footing as noted in a change in codes (both language or dialect) when addressing pupils having different levels of proficiency in the target language is of the essence in order to achieve the teaching objective i.e. facilitating understanding of the text. The Bidayuh ESL teacher in this rural primary school shifted from code to code ranging from English to Malay to Bau- Jagoi.

3.0 The concept of Footing

Erving Goffman's (1981) concept of footing refers to a change in prosodic and paralinguistic features when a speaker addresses a certain hearer or hearers. In this research we have extended the meaning of footing to include a change in language used. Code switching refers to a change in codes and has been defined as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems" (Gumperz, 1982:52). Put simply, code switching may be defined as the alternative use of two languages at the word, phrase, clause or sentence level (Myers, Scotton, 1993).

4.0 The setting

This study focused on the language used by a proficient and trained TESL graduate Bidayuh teacher who was teaching reading comprehension to Year 4 (ten year olds) rural pupils in a rural primary school in the Bau-District in the Bidayuh Belt of Sarawak. The term 'Bidayuh Belt' was used by Dundon (1989) to refer to the main areas in Kuching and Samarahan Divisions where the majority of the Dayak inhabitants are Bidayuhs. The majority of the pupils and teachers in this primary school were Bidayuhs and more specifically all the pupils in the class studied were Bidayuhs. Both the teacher and the pupils had the Bau –Jagoi dialect as their mother tongue or first language. English is the third language for the pupils and Malay, the medium of instruction is their second language.

5.0 English Only Policy

The Curriculum Division of the Malaysian Education Ministry has imposed the "English Only" policy in all schools during English lessons. However, a number of studies (see Ong, 1990; David 2001; Norita Ali, 2004) have shown that ESL teachers tend to shift codes in many Malaysian ESL classrooms. However, one of the existing realities faced by the ESL teachers when teaching English especially to rural students is that these

teachers in such a setting have to use other languages in order to make the pupils understand the reading text. The language teacher faces a conflict– does he blindly obey the ruling by the Ministry at the expense of the understanding of the reading text by his pupils? What should his focus be? Facilitating understanding or following rules?

6.0 The Sample
The language used by one ESL Bau-Jagoi ESL teacher when teaching reading to 30 pupils in a rural primary school was studied. The school is located in Gumbang in Bau District in Sarawak which is next to the Kalimantan border. The Bidayuh teacher is a 48 year old male teacher and has been teaching English for 23 years in various primary schools in Sarawak.. He   has a B.ED in TESL and a Teaching certificate from Rejang Teachers Training College, in Sarawak. The teacher is proficient in 3 Bidayuh dialects, English and Malay languages.

7.0 Methodology
As no study has been made of any Bidayuh ESL teacher teaching rural Bidayuh pupils , the reasons for the language choice when changing footing during interactions were teased out from transcripts of recordings of reading comprehension lessons. In addition three semi-structured interviews with the Bidayuh teacher during school recess and after school hours were also conducted. In post-recording playback sessions and in the interview the teacher explained why and when he shifted codes and changed footing during the reading lesson. The interviews were not recorded because the teacher did not want the Headmaster to know that he was using other codes besides English in an ESL classroom.

There were 30 Bidayuh pupils in the small classroom for the lesson recorded. The classroom had concrete floor and the tables and chairs were still in good condition. However, there was no ceiling fan and some of the window panes were broken. The thirty odd pupils looked quite tidy in their blue and white uniforms and all seemed amused by the presence of one of the researchers. None of them indicated that they felt intimidated by the presence of the researcher who also spoke Bidayuh initially to them. The researcher did this so as to keep in line with Giles et al (1979) who said that closer rapport and closer solidarity can be obtained if the speaker switches to the code preferred by the recipient.

The pupils in the school were multilingual and Bidayuh is the first language learnt at home. All of these pupils came from the villages in Gumbang district. Their parents were poor farmers and Bidayuh is the only dialect spoken at home. They were only exposed to Malay and English by the mass media and school.. The journey to the school was rough and dangerous as the school was located in a hilly area surrounded by deep ravines. The school itself was on a hill and there were at least 70 steps leading to the school.

. The school followed the Malaysian National Primary School Curriculum where Malay is the medium of instruction. However since 2003, Mathematics and Science have been taught in English. Permission was obtained from the Headmaster who was also a Bidayuh

to record the lesson. There were 11 trained teachers most of whom were Bidayuhs. The Bidayuh teacher had no objections to being recorded in the classroom.

The transcripts were sequentially analyzed using methods developed by those working in the area of conversation analysis and interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Auer, 1988, 1995; Gumperz, 1982).

It is not the aim of this paper to provide a linguistic analysis of the data. Our aim is to present examples of the shift in codes performed by a teacher and pupils. We intend to relate the concept of footing to the codes used in an ESL classroom. Not all examples given in the paper can be classified as code switching which has been defined by Myers-Scotton as an alteration of two languages (codes) within a phrase. Many of the examples present whole sentences spoken in native language

8.0 Findings
Set Induction

The teacher first addressed a class referred to as Special ABC (hereafter known as SABC). The seven pupils in the Special ABC Group were remedial pupils who did not know their alphabet (in the interview that followed the lesson the teacher explained that his class was divided into two groups and one of them was the Special ABC group). He taught both groups separately in every ESL lesson. The teacher has six ESL lessons with this class in one week and one lesson lasts for half an hour. .

The teacher when he first entered the classroom spoke in English to SABC (see Extract 1). However, when he became agitated on seeing two boys sleeping during his lesson he changed footing, went to their desks and shouted in the Bidayuh Bau-Jagoi dialect i.e. the pupils' mother tongue. Slowly, the pupils woke up and blinked at the teacher. The teacher then lowered his volume and spoke in English when asking the pupils in the SABC group to take out their exercise books and copy the sentences which he had written on the blackboard. Seeing that there was no reaction from them, he raised his voice, this time in Malay asking them (***Faham Tak***?-Do you understand?). Seeing that the two sleepy pupils were still confused, he raised his voice again but this time using the Bau-Jagoi dialect and repeated his instructions. This time the two boys did what the teacher instructed them to do and hastily turned the pages of the book.

During the interview and playback session of the recording, the ESL teacher said that he changed codes when he addressed different pupils in the SABC group in order to ensure they understood him. He also used Bidayuh and raised his voice with the two pupils who were caught sleeping because that was the only way he could ensure they complied. Not only did he change codes but he also moved from a friendly to a serious tone (see Extract 1).
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Extract 1: Teacher talking to Special Group (Remedial pupils)

Role	Language Use	Translation
Teacher to	OK Special ABC	

Special ABC	You still want to sleep? What I want you to do? What was the last word I said? (*T walked to the two pupils and shouted in Bidayuh*) : **Mu siak keh?** I want you to copy the sentences,*faham*	
		Are you ready?
> all	*tak?* *Ambil buku tulis awak.*	Do you understand? Take out your exercise books
>2 pupils >all	**Mit book.** *Mana buku?* *Tulis saja.* OK (*T diverted attention to the rest of the class - The more proficient learners*). **Bold=Bidayuh code** *Italics bold=Malay*	Take the book Where is the book**?** Just write

In Extract 2 we note that the teacher then changed his footing and shifted to English when addressing the more proficient group of learners. In this extract most of the teacher talk was in English with nominal use of Malay. This time the Bidayuh dialect was not used. Thus, the teacher changed his footing and shifted to the target language when addressing the more proficient learners. The teacher tried to maintain the "English Only" policy when teaching this group of learners. The use of Malay was nominal and used mainly for directives.

Extract 2: Teacher speaking to the more proficient speakers of English

Role	Language use	Translation
Teacher > all pupils in Better Group	OK Today I'm going to tell a story. Last Saturday, I went to a very beautiful place. I walked on the sand. I swam with my friend. I enjoyed with my friend.	
Teacher> pupil	Where did I go?	
Pupil	*Pantai.*	Beach
Teacher> all	Beach .Can you see a beach? *(pointing to the picture)*	
	We are not going to talk	Beach

	about beach.	
Teacher> pupil	What can you see in the picture?	
Pupil	Boy.	
Teacher > pupil	How many boys are there?	
Pupil	Two.	
Teacher> all	What is a boat?	
	Boat**lah!** What is it?	Particle 'lah' feature of Malaysian English
	How does a boat move?	
	A bigger boat is what?	
	Ship?	
Teacher > pupil	*Kuat sikitlah*	Louder
Pupil	Ship	
Teacher> all	There were 2 boats.	
	Why?	
	Because happened in the past.	
> pupil	*Kuat sikit*	Louder
Teacher	You want to catch or become a thief?	
	Can you see it?	
Peter	Peter, *boleh nampakkah*?	Can you see?
Teacher > pupil	Yes or no?	
Pupil(Peter)	Yes.	
Teacher> Peter	Where do you think Zainal and Kiran were going?	
Peter	Beach.	
Teacher>all	Now read.	
	(Pupils read)	

In Extract 3, in talk also directed to the more proficient target language speakers the teacher used dominant English. Even the directives were in English (e.g. Pay attention, Look here, Listen). Initially the pupils responded in Malay but towards the end, they too accommodated and used the dominant code used by the teacher.

In the ensuing interview the teacher explained that the students needed to be encouraged to speak in English and he tried his best by not being accommodating when they used Malay. In many instances the students were able to respond to the teacher using English except for the word *Gua Angin* (Extract 3). When this happened, the ESL teacher did not shift to Malay to explain the term but used a literal translation strategy to explain the term by saying *Wind Cave*. At the same time he did not penalize or warn the pupils against using Malay when they responded to the questions. In fact he tolerated responses in

Malay but continued asking questions in English. The result was a non-reciprocal choice of codes between the teacher and the learner in the formal classroom domain. Such tolerance appears to have worked as we note that towards the end of the lesson the students start to answer in English.

It is clear then that the teacher observed maintained the use of the target language with the group of more proficient learners. In sharp contrast as seen in Extract 1, he accommodated a great deal to the less proficient speakers. His rationale for doing so was to encourage the less proficient speakers to speak.

Extract 3: Vocabulary and Oral Questioning: Teacher speaking to the more proficient learners

Role	Language Use	Translation
Teacher	Now I want you to read the words after me. What is "carry"?	
Pupils	*Mengangkat.*	Carry
Teacher	Carried. Why carried?	
Pupils	*Sudah jadi.*	Already happened
Teacher	What sound do you make when something is heavy?	
Pupils	*Aduh beratnya!*.	Oh heavy!
Teacher	If you live during my time you see a chest. Now you don't see a chest anymore. Look around. A dustbin has something to cover the top part. You have to close the dustbin with what?	
Pupils	*Penutup dia.*	It's cover
Teacher	Lid	
Pupils	Lid	
Teacher	Jogging is what? While jogging on the beach they saw a boat	
Pupils	*Lari*	Run
Teacher	Run but slowly	
Pupils	Run slow	
Teacher	Look over here. Where did they bring	
Pupil	the box?	
Tr	*Gua Angin.*	Wind Cave
> pupil	*Gua* is cave. Pay attention.	Cave
Pupil	Why did they go into the cave?	
Tr> pupil	See inside.	

Tr	Listen What do you do if you don't want to be caught?	
Pupil		
Pupil	Hide.	
Tr:	What did they see inside they cave?	
Pupil	Heavy box	
Tr	In your opinion why did they open the box.?	
Pupil	*Untuk tahu* They want to know what is inside the box. Treasure	

The ESL teacher again changed his footing when speaking to pupils in SABC (see Extract 4). The teacher started with simple English, using short sentences but in his desperation to get a response from the students he repeated his instruction in Malay although it was first uttered in English. He said:-

"Just name me anything you still remember.
Cakap saja apa kamu tahu"

Even when questioning them he used a mixed code so that he could be understood and hopefully he would get a response. He says, "*Apa dia* box?"

In explaining lexical items to this group of learners the teacher tends to shift to Malay. For instance he moves from English to Malay immediately without a pause when trying to explain a word. He says:"In Bau there are 2 caves." This is immediately followed by a translation of caves in Malay when he says "*Lobang.*" In his desperation to explain the term box he finally succumbs to Malay when he realizes he is not understood and shifts to Malay to explain box by using the Malay word for box- i.e. *kotak.*

He shifts to Malay when he reprimands. He says, "*Adoi tidur aah*?" (Are you sleeping?)

The difference in the teacher's use of codes when speaking to the more proficient group and the remedial pupils was obvious. The teacher was quick to change his footing by using a mixed code when addressing the SABC as compared to the better group where the 'English Only' policy was maintained as much as possible. Gumperz (1982) describes this as situational code switching where the change in language used is due to certain situations. Since it was difficult for the ESL teacher to get his message across to the remedial pupils, the teacher had to change his footing by addressing them using a mixed code. Such accommodation judiciously used is acceptable but overuse can lead to constant accommodation on the part of the teacher. This will result in minimal use of the target language. In Extract 4 the teacher appears to be overextending his accommodation to the less proficient students as he not only slips into more and more Malay when he repeats utterances both in English and Malay (What the 2 men carried? *Mereka bawa*

apa?) but also moves to a simplified English variety bordering on improper and wrong use of the language . This is seen in the following:-

What is box? (missing article)
You put book into the box (missing article)

Extract 4: Vocabulary and Oral Questioning: Teacher speaking to SABC

Role	Language Use	Translation
Tr > all	Are you ready? Have you written all the six sentences?	
Pupils	No	
Tr:	No six sentences.	
>Pupil **>pupil** **Tr**	***Takkan satu pun tidak tahu.*** ***Sebut mana-mana yang kamu tahu.*** Open the box. *Apa dia* box? You put book into the box. *Apa?* *Adoi* *tidur aah*? Box *ialah .*	It can't be that you don't know at least one. Mention the ones which you know What is "box"? What? Adoi (BM particle: Sleeping?) 'Box" is…….
Pupils	*Meja*	Table
Tr	Wrong You can sleep inside the box. What is box?	
Pupil	Hotel	
Tr	*Kotak !* Next, they saw two men	Box
Pupils	They saw two men.	
Tr> pupil	Big men or small men?	
Pupil	Big	
Tr	They carried a big box.	
Tr	They carried a big box. Carried *Ikut saya.*	
Pupils	Carried	Follow me
Tr	In Bau there are 2 caves. *Lobang* Name two caves in Bau.	Hole
Pupils	*: Gua Angin*	
Tr	What is *Angin?*	Wind cave
Pupil	Wind	What does 'wind mean?
Tr	What is *kotak?*	What does 'box' stand for?
Pupil	Box	
Tr	Just name me anything you still	

	remember.	
Pupils	***Cakap saja apa kamu tahu.*** ***Basikal***, book, playing, ***kotak,*** men, two men.	Say anything that you remember
Tr	What the 2 men carried?	
	Mereka bawa apa?	What were they carrying?
Pupil	*lori*	
Tr	Wa Wa Wa Wa Is there any lorry here?	
Pupil	*Kotak!*	Box
Tr	***Apa itu kotak?***	What does "kotak" mean?
Pupil	Box.	

In the interview session, the teacher explained that it would be time consuming if he spoke using only English to the SABC group. In fact, apart from code selection the teacher initiated a prosodic change involving the tone of voice when communicating with the SABC. This change in the teacher's footing was also largely because he felt that he had to speak louder in order to make the Special ABC pay attention when he was speaking.

In the concluding part of the lesson when both SABC and the more proficient group were combined the ESL teacher again changed his footing (Extract 5). The teacher played a language game with the pupils. They were asked to make a sentence or remember a word about the story before climbing a step. It was observed that the teacher spoke in Malay to the SABC initially as compared to the more proficient learners to whom he spoke in English. However, towards the end of the lesson the teacher used more English when addressing the SABC as the more proficient group was helping the SABC. At the end of the lesson when both the groups were combined, the teacher spoke to Special ABC in either English or Malay and no Bidayuh was used. The teacher eventually spoke more English to all the pupils who helped each other to complete the activity. Peer influence resulted in more English being used as the more proficient students used more English when communicating with SABC.

Extract 5:   Conclusion: Teacher speaking to all the pupils as a group.

Role		Language Use	Translation
Tr	> Better Group	Have you finished? Go back to your seat. Don't move around.	
	> Special ABC	***Sudah habis?***	Have you finished?
	> Special ABC	Sit down nicely.	
	> All	I want you to tell the ***cerita semula.***	I want you to tell the story again
	>Special ABC	***Apa yang kamu ingat?***	What do you remember?
	>better pupil	How does the story begin?	
	>Special ABC	Are you with me or not?	

>Special ABC	*Macam mana cerita bermula*?	How does the story begin?
> all	Are you ready?	
> all	Everyone is coming up to tell the story.	
> all		
> Special ABC	Climb, say one word.	
> Better pupil	You go down.	
> Special ABC	You *sambung.*	You continue
> Special ABC	Don't look at the words there.	
> Special ABC	Don't start shaking your head.	
> Special ABC	Don't start looking.	
> Special ABC	One word only.	
> Special ABC	*Mulalah bermain*.	Start playing
> Special ABC	*Sumbang* one word	Contribute one word
> Special ABC	*Siapa salah kutok*	Those who make mistakes
> Special ABC	*Satu perkataan pun tidak ingat?*	will be punished. At least one word you must remember?.
Special ABC	Football Good	
> Special ABC	What happen next?	
Tr	They saw a big boat.	
> better pupil		
Better pupil> Tr	Listen to the word the next person says	
Teacher> all	*Eh… satu perkataan saja. Tidak pandai*	One word only Don't know
.> Special ABC Special ABC Tr> Special ABC	*Siapa selalu kata tidak panda, memang malas.* They carry a big box	Those who always say that they don't know are the ones who are lazy
Better pupil> Special ABC ABC> Tr Tr> all	Box Contribute one word only. Any *bahagian* you like. Jogging on the beach.	Any part will do.
Better pupil> Special ABC Special ABC> Tr Tr:	Jogging Good	

Conclusion

It is clear that pragmatic concerns and teaching objectives will determine the code used in a reading class. The teacher shifts footing from code to code depending on the level of proficiency of the two sets of learners in his classroom. When teaching better pupils the ESL teacher would use English whereas when teaching the weaker pupils, he would shift more to Malay. Bidayuh was also used although minimally with the weaker pupils. The code served certain speech acts, for instance directives were at times in the mother tongue. In short the "English Only" policy should be relaxed when teaching a mixed group with varying levels of proficiency. Situational, pragmatic and disciplinary reasons to use the native language in class room, as it seems, obviously dominate and prevail communicative intentions that cause the shift in codes in the bilingual talk that occurs.

A teacher's shift to the native languages or dialects of pupils in a class room can be seen in the context of the footing of two types: (1) disciplinary ones, i.e., to keep a class in order and (2) explanatory ones, i.e., to make a proper explanation of either grammar mistakes or meaning of words. It is obvious that a native language at a lesson of a foreign language can be used due to a certain necessity.

CAVEAT: As the objective is to teach the target language there must be over time some weaning away from the use of the other codes whatever the speech aim or underlying objective of the teacher. An overdependence on other codes might result in very little of the target language being heard especially in a setting where exposure to the target language is only in the language classroom.

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Biodata

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