

## CODE-MIXING AS A SOCIOLINGUISTIC FEATURE IN 'FROM SAGA WITH LOVE'

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**Abstract.** Languages develop and the absorption of English into other languages is a noticeable tendency. This research looks at Pieter Musyken taxonomy of code-mixing kinds in the Malaysian online television series 'From Saga With Love.' Given the global importance of English as a lingua franca, its growing entanglement with other languages is explored. The difficulty emerges when the use of code-mixing is not adapted or assimilated as intended by the audience due to a lack of knowledge of the language strategy utilised in the media. The study uses a qualitative approach, combining descriptive and content analysis, to investigate and categorise instances of code-mixing in the series using Musyken's framework (insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization) and Hoffman's theory on factors of code-mixing (language input, linguistics development and general cognitive development). The findings are intended to add useful insights to the limited existing study on code-mixing in Malaysian internet-based television programmes, shedding light on the changing dynamics of language interaction in this medium.

**Keywords:** *code-mixing, Pieter Musyken, Charlotte Hoffman, Malaysian web television series, language mixing, sociolinguistics*

### Introduction

Languages evolve over time, and one notable pattern is the assimilation of the English language with others (Khamzaev, 2024). English, which is taught as a secondary language in many educational institutions worldwide and is recognised as a lingua franca, is starting to become more entangled with other languages when it involves in bilingual education (Rodriguez-Mendoza, 2023). Han et al. (2022) discusses that language switching through cognitive control can result in individuals experiencing confusions due to the constant interchange of languages that is referred to as the 'competitive mode' in everyday communication, resulting in occasional forgetfulness of terms in their original language while recalling their English equivalents. As a result, people frequently mix both languages to effectively convey their intended message that is known as code-mixing (Raza et al., 2022). The emergence of language fusion has led to code-mixing among individuals. According to Byers-Heinlein et al. (2022), code-mixing involves complex cognitive and social skills. The study highlights how people use their range of language knowledge to communicate in order to express detailed meanings more precisely. The researchers mentioned that this ability requires a high level of mental control and social language familiarity for it to be comprehensible. The phenomenon has motivated many modern television shows to incorporate instances of code-mixing and commonly used words into their scripts. This method seeks to portray characters more realistically, making the series appear compelling for viewers. Therefore, code-mixing is included in modern storytelling to appeal to the crowd.

Web-based television series have witnessed a surge in their mass appeal across the internet on various streaming services, and this phenomenon is hardly surprising (Che

Hassan, 2021). The format is both easily digestible and readily accessible at one's fingertips. As a result of this widespread accessibility, there is a rising need for television programmes to combine cross-cultural features (Kopaneva and Pervil, 2021), while maintaining their primary language, leading to the use of code-mixing. The problem arises when the use of code-mixing is not adapted or absorbed as intended by the audience due to the lack of understanding of the linguistic technique used in the media. According to a research done by Kekana (2024), code-mixing may harm academic progress by confusing, making it difficult to understand course content, and posing difficulties in properly conveying complicated concepts. The study revealed that university students had different views on code-mixing: some see it as a creative and natural language exercise, while others see it as a barrier to learning or an indicator of poor language skills. Furthermore, Kremin (2022) stated that mixed-language input could cause difficulties for young bilingual children, particularly in sustaining fluency and lexical accuracy. Merging two languages in a conversation can make it difficult to master equivalent terminology in both their originating language and the target language. Although using this helps to communicate messages better, it also can hinder the learning process.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse the use of code-mixing in the Malaysian web television series 'From Saga With Love' and assess how these instances influence the content within the series. The research objectives are include: (1) to identify the types of code-mixing used in the web TV series; and (2) to examine sociolinguistic factors that influence the use of code-mixing in the web TV Series. The research questions are include: (1) What are the types of code-mixing used in the web TV series? (2) How do sociolinguistic factors influence the use of code-mixing in the web TV series?

### *Literature review*

Historically, research on code-mixing in media has been centred on conventional mediums like cinema and Television. Fort et al., (2024) investigates code-mixing in multicultural film contexts, offering an understanding of its importance in depicting language variety in narrative storytelling. They addressed code-mixing in television programming, highlighting its importance as a linguistic resource for depicting realistic and diverse language repertoires. However, with the development of digital platforms, the landscape of code-mixing in media is altering, prompting a modern look at its practices within online television programmes. Web television series have grown into versatile platforms for cultural representation and language expression. In keeping with the global nature of the internet, these series frequently contain people from varied language origins, reflecting today's multicultural and multilingual realities. Mahapatra and Anderson (2023) stress the necessity of analysing code-mixing in media as a reflection of other cultures, as well as the need to broaden this approach to web-based content. Exploring how code-mixing is used in online television programmes helps contribute not only to our understanding of language dynamics but also to the larger discussion of cultural representation in the digital age.

Several theoretical frameworks raise understanding towards code-mixing in media settings. Poplack Model of Code-Switching (1988) highlights the constraints of language mixing, emphasising the linguistic factors that influence code selection. Poplack's research sheds light on the analysis of code-mixing, particularly within a linguistic context. Auer and Eastman Model of Intrasentential Code-Mixing (2010) investigates the structural and grammatical elements of code-mixing within a sentence,

providing an explanation for the patterns and mechanisms involved. A fundamental foundation for understanding the complex dynamics of linguistic blending. This typology provides an overview of the many forms of mixing, taking into account crucial variables such as grammatical integration and the unique linguistic functions performed by the participating languages. Muvskens' framework serves as the major lens through which this study aims to unravel and examine code-mixing phenomena in its chosen context. Hence, Musyken's theory in code-mixing would be the focus framework used in the findings of this study. Therefore, this framework was chosen to be the foundation to assist in analysing the second research question of this study. Incorporating past framework study from a linguist helps to create a guideline that could be used in investigating the factors that associate with the usage of language mixing and ensures the reliability of the information.

A study by Nordin (2023) analysed code-switching and code-mixing among users of social media. The study discovered that code-switching and code-mixing was viewed as an extension of communicative behaviour in daily life, and was utilised to express identity and language attitude within online communities. It demonstrates that the inclusion of various language patterns, motivations and implications goes beyond linguistic needs and depicts the profound impact digital platforms have on the characters' attitudes towards language usage. Language mixing is commonly used to overcome vocabulary limitations in communication, acting as a practical approach for bridging language barriers. Hence, the study highlights how social media is used to navigate and negotiate language choices during real-time conversations. Furthermore, the television series 'Oh My English!' is one example of utilising several code-switching techniques to effortlessly convey between English and Malay. According to Anjarsari (2024), the intended use of code-switching ensures that viewers comprehend the show's aimed themes and substance. The researchers stated in their paper that the purpose of implementing code-switching was to help English learners better understand the correct use of those words and create a gap for which they would explain the function with an explanation in the series. In summary, the collective findings from these studies help to provide a comprehensive understanding of code-switching and code-mixing in web television series. Code-switching is portrayed as a common and multifaceted phenomenon, serving purposes such as establishing social identity, preconceptions, and English acquisition. Therefore, the existing research gap lies in the limited exploration of code-mixing, as opposed to code-switching, within television series, leading to a scarcity of relevant article references. This study aims to address this gap by specifically investigating the utilisation of code-mixing in web television series.

## Materials and Methods

The research employed a qualitative research design to collect data, with a content analysis approach. The process entailed a thorough evaluation of pre-existing materials available on the internet, which served as significant references for the study. This qualitative technique aims to delve into the intricacies of the subject matter by conducting a detailed and informative examination of the obtained data using content analysis. Qualitative research dives into real-world situations, providing deep insights that do not rely on numerical data. The research focused on the analysis of the first episode from the Malaysian web television series *From Saga With Love*, accessible on the Viu streaming platform and directed by Umi Salwana Omar. The choice of a web

television series for this study was motivated by its continued relevance as a form of entertainment in contemporary society, despite the rise of alternative content formats, particularly short clips on social media. This specific series was chosen for its contextual richness, depicting multicultural interactions through the use of Malay, English, and Japanese languages within the narrative. Additionally, the recent release of the series adds value to the research, providing insights into the evolving dynamics of language mixing in the modern era. This research has employed purposive sampling, a non-random technique, to select participants. This method aligns with the research objectives, which demand specific criteria from a particular subset. The focus was on participants who demonstrated the use of code-mixing in their discourse. Therefore, the web television series 'From Saga With Love' was chosen as it aligns with the research objectives, given that the characters in this series incorporated code-mixing in their dialogue.

The study used content analysis to investigate occurrences of code-mixing in the first episode from the Malaysian web television series 'From Saga With Love'. A thorough evaluation of the literature was undertaken to choose appropriate research objectives. Following evaluation, code-mixing was identified as the focal point of this investigation. Previous research papers were reviewed as potential samples to accommodate the data. The modern Malaysian web television series 'From Saga With Love' was selected as the primary data source. The first episode from the series (10 episodes) was examined to detect instances of code-mixing. The researcher watched the episode, noting any instances of code-mixing that occur. The acquired data was organised into categories, such as timestamps, types of code-mixing, and factors of code-mixing. The collected data was organised, ensuring that instances of code-mixing are accurately recorded with corresponding timestamps, and contextual relevance. Conducted a preliminary examination of the data to identify commonalities, patterns, or recurring themes related to code-mixing. This step involved an initial immersion in the content. The code-mixing identified were categorised into the three types of code-mixing according to Musyken's classification types of code-mixing framework and Hoffman's theory on the factors of code-mixing. The thematic analysis was done based on the frequency of types and factors of code-mixing that occurred within the one episode. The data was reviewed and studied a few times to identify common themes that were significant to the analysis. The analysis conducted was linked to past studies and frameworks to investigate the reasons behind the use of the utterances and how they complimented the scene in the episode.

## **Results and Discussion**

Findings revealed that the instances of code-mixing found in the first episode of 'From Saga With Love' sum up to a total of 70 instances altogether. The findings have also revealed that several words in the series are found repetitively. This includes the use of I, You, Sorry, Personal Assistant (PA), Shoot/shooting and Translate/translation to be apparent in the pilot episode. The relevant use of I and You is in the way they address first person and second-person pronouns. This is influenced by their bilingual tongue, the characters often address themselves using English pronouns throughout the episode. Secondly, the word Sorry is also commonly used in their sentences when apologising. This can be from a sense of habit. It is observed that the characters often mix between English and Malay for the equivalent meaning of a word when conversing.

For instance, Terima Kasih: Thanks/Thank you and Maaf: Sorry. Thirdly, the word 'PA' which stands for Personal Assistance is repeatedly mentioned in the series due to the reason that the role of the main female lead is working as a personal assistant in the drama. They tend to use the abbreviation when mentioning her position in the scenes when addressing her. Finally, the root word Shoot and its other form were occasionally uttered by the character. This is because the main plotline and sole reason for their journey to Osaka Japan was to shoot a travel log which sums up most of the main plotline of the series. Similarly, this is the same case with the root word Translate and its other form where it is connected to the reasoning of the main character (Karma) who works as a Japanese translator for Bianca.

One of the types of code-mixing found is insertion simplifying to borrowed terms that are apparent multiple times in the first episode. The insertion of English words in their conversations is a common occurrence among the characters since they often speak in a mixture of Malay and English. The whole scene from the minute (23:31-27:19) took place at the main character's house, where the main character (Karma) was trying to make it in time for her scheduled flight to Osaka, Japan. However, it is also detected that a few occurrences in their sentences contain a mixture of insertion with either alternation or congruent lexicalisation. As stated by Muysken (2000), code-mixing typology emphasises the complexity and flexibility of bilingual speech, lending weight to the fact that various types of code-mixing can occur simultaneously. This proves that code-mixing can coexist with more than 1 type of code-mixing in a sentence.

Next, alternation could also be seen happening multiple times in the episode. The scene occurred during the day of Karma's sister's wedding ceremony. "Make sure sempat!" and "Dia mana pernah nak on time" contain two phrases that are frequently used in the English language which are 'make sure' and 'on time.' This is prominent especially to new learners of the English language since some might switch languages alternately to convey their intended message. Mixing between the Malay language and English language has become a habitual response among Malaysians when speaking such as combining Malay suffixes (lah, kan) with an English word. This is evident where the utterances "orang gossipkan you" and "Confirmkan, betul ke " were spoken in the minute (8:27) and (12:30). This type of alternation occurred when the speaker deliberately combined an English term 'gossip' with a Malay suffix 'kan', similarly, the English term 'confirm' with a Malay suffix 'kan'. This phenomenon can be associated with Myers-Scotton (1994) Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model discusses that language mixing exists because one language provides the grammatical structure (the dominant language also known as the matrix language), while the other supplies lexical items (the second language). Hence, in these sentences "orang gossipkan you" and "Confirmkan, betul ke," Malay is the dominant language that serves as the grammatical structure, while the English words 'gossip' and 'confirm' are the second language elements inserted into this structure. Congruent lexicalisation is observed when the characters used sentences that contain a word that could apply multiple meanings outside of context. One of the examples detected is from "Tapi sebenarnya I nak shooting". Shooting carries different meanings when used in a sentence, such as the act of firing a gun, the act of recording video, and the act of sending a ball in an attempt to score a goal. In this particular context, the episode introduces to the audience the occupation of one of the male characters (Bob) who works as a photographer/videographer for Bianca, the female celebrity in the series.

Findings showed that language input is one of the factors of code-mixing that is observed to be apparent multiple times in the episode. It is mainly shown how the speaker incorporates an English word into a Malay sentence in a conversational setting. Having a bilingual tongue is affected by language input due to the exposure of the language and the learning process of the speaker. As a result, mixing Malay and English in a sentence is practised in their daily conversations. Therefore, the usage of words like 'famous' and 'familiar' by the characters is highly influenced by the frequency they encountered these terms in English through media, communication and education. Secondly, linguistic development is also a factor for code-mixing. This factor focuses on the speaker's proficiency in the languages they learnt and how they used that knowledge to incorporate them into their utterances. It is a more complex understanding when language changes with time and produces a lot of new words, slang, lingo and vocabulary. This factor allows the speaker to grow and adapt to the environment and current terms to provide a better connection. This is illustrated in the usage of 'producer', 'TV station' and 'production company' are all related under the same branch. This reveals that the speaker in the scene (Bianca) is proficient in English terminology related to the media industry which paints perfectly her character who works as an actor in the series.

Furthermore, the final factor from Hoffman's theory is general cognitive development. This is related to one's core memory and attention towards the language that they know. General cognitive development arises when the speaker utters a phrase such as 'drive-thru' and 'pick up' which is a commonly spoken phrase among Malaysian speakers when engaging in a spoken discourse related to food delivery. This demonstrates that the speaker utters it out of habit and familiarity due to their memory of collections of frequently spoken phrases and utilises it in their conversations. This habitual use of specific phrases can be explained by the cognitive process of memory retention and retrieval. Over time, regularly used phrases get embedded in the speaker's memory, making them easy to recall during conversations. Based on the findings shown, it is evident that code-mixing has become second nature for the characters influenced by their social backgrounds. Individuals who grew up in a city are more prone to expose themselves to using Malay and English interchangeably. Hence, this constant exposure to a diverse language environment drives them to practise code-mixing as a part of their communication behaviour. Urban residents are more inclined to engage in code-mixing due to their regular exposure to multiple languages in everyday interactions (Che Hassan, 2021). This constant exposure encourages them to mix between languages in order to communicate and create social belonging. Similarly, a study by Kekana (2024) underlines that code-switching becomes a habitual and practical upholds the same perspective, noting that code-switching is a common phenomenon in big cities. It highlights that due to the wide dynamic nature of the urban settings, using a combination of languages in a sentence illustrates one's identity. Contrarily, people in rural areas are often stuck in their small communities that adopt 1 language having fewer opportunities to exhibit code-mixing in their discourse. According to Fort et al. (2024), the less diverse social interactions in these areas contribute to lower usage of language mixing. Hence, the series highlights the differences in the frequency of the main character's (Karma) utterances when she is at work compared to her family members. It is noted that because Karma works as a personal assistant to a famous actor (Bianca) who is involved in the film industry, the

exposure to a diverse linguistic environment is a considerably high way of communication that derives from urban settings with diverse linguistic exposure.

## Conclusion

Code-mixing has become a pervasive element in the film industry, often overlooked until explicitly pointed out. This study provides a visualisation of how frequently code-mixing is used in conversation in the context of a web series. It provides an insight into the aspect of factors that contribute to language mixing among the characters. This includes exploring how language input, linguistics development and general cognitive development influence daily discourse. Therefore, comprehending these factors allows a better understanding of language behaviours in media representation that would simultaneously affect modern storytelling. Consequently, this allows for better understanding when students observe daily conversations that contain a mixture of the languages they are learning.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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