

Bridging Cultures: Patterns of Code-Mixing and Cultural Identity in Malaysian-Singaporean Series the Bridge (2018)

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ABSTRACT

Code-mixing is a prevalent linguistic phenomenon in multicultural nations with multilingual populations, such as Malaysia and Singapore. Within this context, the current study explores the patterns and functions of code-mixing in the Malaysian Singaporean crime drama series, *The Bridge* (2018), where Bahasa Melayu (Malay language) and English are frequently interwoven to reflect complex social dynamics and shared cultural identities. Employing a qualitative content analysis approach, this research examines selected dialogues using Muysken's (2000) framework. The occurrences of code-mixing are categorised into three distinct types: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization, to ascertain their functional roles across various narrative contexts. The analysis of the findings revealed insertion as the most frequent type of code-mixing used 61.5% of the time, followed by alternation, 23.1%, and congruent lexicalization, 15.4%. These outcomes reveal how insertion regularly functions to ensure lexical efficiency, clarification, and local cultural familiarity, whereas alternation serves primarily to signal shifts in emphasis, stance, or emotional tone. Meanwhile, congruent lexicalization illustrates the fluid, hybrid discourse practices of highly competent bilinguals communicating within a unified syntactic framework. It demonstrates the active use of code-mixing by the characters in *The Bridge* (2018) revealing how bilingual individuals navigate language choices in everyday communication. It underscores the media's vital role in accurately depicting Malaysian and Singaporean linguistic trends. Ultimately, this research enhances our understanding of regional multilingualism, demonstrating how code-mixing shapes cultural identity, facilitates cross-cultural exchange, and highlights the shared linguistic heritage between Malaysia and Singapore.

Keywords: Code-mixing, multilingualism, communication, cultural identity, media discourse

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Sociolinguistic Context of Malaysia and Singapore

In multicultural and multilingual societies like Malaysia and Singapore, code-mixing between Bahasa Melayu (the Malay Language) and English is a prevalent linguistic phenomenon and a natural feature of everyday discourse. Both nations share diverse ethnic compositions which comprises Malay, Chinese, Indian, and

indigenous communities, consequently fostering a unique linguistic landscape. To bridge communication across these distinct groups, English frequently serves as the primary lingua franca, with the two nations functioning with subtle, distinct differences. In Malaysia, Bahasa Melayu remains universally understood across ethnicities alongside English. Conversely, Singapore predominantly uses English in public and professional life, maintaining languages like Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Tamil primarily as heritage languages (Maezawa, 2023, as cited in Ningsih & Setiawan, 2021). Despite these nuanced differences, bilingual speakers in both nations consistently navigate between English and Bahasa Melayu, subconsciously blending the languages to adapt to their listeners, express cultural nuances, and enhance clarity (Anuar et al., 2020). This everyday practice highlights a shared reliance on multilingualism to facilitate inter-ethnic communication and reflects the region's complex, intertwined social identities.

Media as a Reflection of Linguistic Reality

Television and media both reflect and play a crucial role in constructing perceptions of everyday language use. The Malaysian-Singaporean crime series *The Bridge* (2018) provides a useful site for examining code-mixing because its narrative centres on cross-border cooperation between Malaysian and Singaporean law-enforcement personnel. The series is set against the backdrop of joint investigation into cross-border crimes, including murder and organised criminal activities, that test the cooperation between the law enforcement agencies of both countries. Throughout their interactions, some of the dialogues identified features code-mixing, illustrating how the characters seamlessly alternate between Bahasa Melayu and English to communicate across cultural lines, reflecting the authentic conversational conventions of both societies. These occurrences fit well with Muysken's (2000) definition of code-mixing, which refers to the embedding of linguistic units such as words, phrases, and morphemes from one language into an utterance of another language. Within this narrative, code-mixing is not merely a conversational habit; it functions as a vital communicative tool to establish identity, negotiate social hierarchy, and bridge cultural differences in real-life interactions (Tan, 2020).

To grasp a better understanding of these linguistic mechanics, this study seeks to analyse the specific patterns and communicative functions of code-mixing in dialogues selected from episodes of *The Bridge* (2018). Thus, by exploring how these linguistic choices mirror everyday practices in Malaysia and Singapore, the study focuses on answering the following research questions:

1. What are the specific types of code mixing used by the characters in the crime series "*The Bridge*"?
2. How does code mix function as a communicative and social tool within the narrative of the crime series of "*The Bridge*"?

By focusing on a Malaysian-Singaporean television production, this study extends existing research on code-mixing in regional media and contributes to discussions of Southeast Asian bilingualism. It also highlights how scripted multilingual dialogue can be used to represent hybrid identities and cross-cultural interaction. The study does not assume that media dialogue reproduces natural speech exactly; rather, it examines how multilingualism is linguistically and narratively represented for audiences familiar with the region's diverse language practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-Mixing and Code-Switching

Code-switching and code-mixing are as old as bilingualism and multilingualism, typically studied as dynamic elements of spoken language phenomena. To understand these practices, scholars have first sought to define what constitutes as a "code." Wardhaugh (1986) conceptualises a code as a systematic communication tool utilised by two or more parties on any given occasion, whereas Verschueren (2003) defines it as any distinguishable linguistic variant tied to a specific geographical region, social class, function, or context of use. Sociolinguistics, as an interdisciplinary field, systematically explores these codes in relation to the societies that

use them, recognising that language and society are deeply interdependent (Mbangi, 2017, as cited in Ningsih & Setiawan, 2021; Prima, 2019). Code-mixing specifically refers to the simultaneous use of two or more codes within a single utterance without a shift in the overarching topic. It involves the integration of foreign elements across various linguistic levels—including phonology, morphology, grammatical structures, and lexical items—during casual speech (Ningsih & Setiawan, 2021).

While early sociolinguistic perspectives sometimes viewed code-mixing as a sign of linguistic deficiency, contemporary scholars argue that it represents a sophisticated level of bilingual competence. Wardhaugh (1998) posits that speakers mix codes not only to navigate lexical gaps but also to draw upon the rich expressive resources of multiple languages. This linguistic behaviour is highly socially motivated, serving as a tool to signal identity, build solidarity, and align with cultural norms (Wardhaugh, 1998). In multicultural nations like Malaysia and Singapore, where English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil regularly intersect, analysing code-mixing provides crucial insights into how speakers negotiate complex social and cultural dynamics.

To categorise these practices, several theoretical frameworks have been developed. Suwito (1983, as cited in Ningsih & Setiawan, 2021) proposed a structural and sociolinguistic framework that divides code-mixing into "inner" code-mixing (blending languages from the same family) and "outer" code-mixing (blending unrelated languages, such as Bahasa Melayu and English). Structurally, Suwito (1983, as cited in Ningsih & Setiawan, 2021) outlines five distinct levels of insertion: word, phrase, hybrid, repetition, and idiom insertion, which speakers utilise to achieve artistic effects, emphasize points, or clarify meaning. For the purpose of analysing the Malaysian-Singaporean series *The Bridge* (2018), this study adopts Muysken's (2000) typology as its primary theoretical framework. Muysken (2000) offers a comprehensive, structurally detailed model that categorises code-mixing into three distinct mechanisms: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. Insertion involves the embedding of material from one language into the grammatical structure of another. Alternation occurs when speakers shift between relatively distinct grammatical structures, often at clause or sentence boundaries and congruent lexicalization refers to the interchangeable use of vocabulary from different lexicons within a shared, compatible grammatical frame. Unlike alternative frameworks, Muysken's typology is exceptionally well-suited for naturalistic, casual conversation in highly bilingual environments, providing a systematic approach to analysing how speakers fluidly integrate Bahasa Melayu and English in daily discourse.

Past Studies

The deliberate use of code-mixing to bolster cultural resonance, characterisation and audience relatability has been extensively documented within regional media and cinematic works. By dissecting these linguistic preferences, researchers can uncover how creators establish connections with local viewers while mirroring contemporary social behaviors. For instance, in an early investigation utilising Suwito's framework, Mustamir (2012) illustrated that filmmakers utilise code-mixing to portray authentic societal realities, demonstrating that while "inner" code-mixing maintains regional dialectal integrity, "outer" code-mixing with English signifies the expanding reach of globalism and academic advancement. Mustamir (2012) further observed that word-level insertion is common in informal discourse and that mixing with English may index wider processes of globalisation and education. Such findings are relevant to media texts in which writers use multilingual dialogue to evoke recognisable social settings and identities.

Other studies emphasise the functional and narrative roles of language alternation in film and television. Ningsih and Setiawan (2021) investigated the Indonesian production *Yowis Ben*, discover that code-mixing represents a badge of modernity and social standing in casual settings, whereas code-switching is strategically implemented to transmit cultural themes to an expanded audience. In a similar vein, Fauzana et al. (2022) examined *Murder on the Orient Express* through the lenses of Wardhaugh and Suwito, identifying both situational and metaphorical code-switching alongside significant rates of outer code-mixing, accounting for 88% of instances. These studies suggest that code-mixing in screen media may perform both structural and social functions.

The study of code-mixing

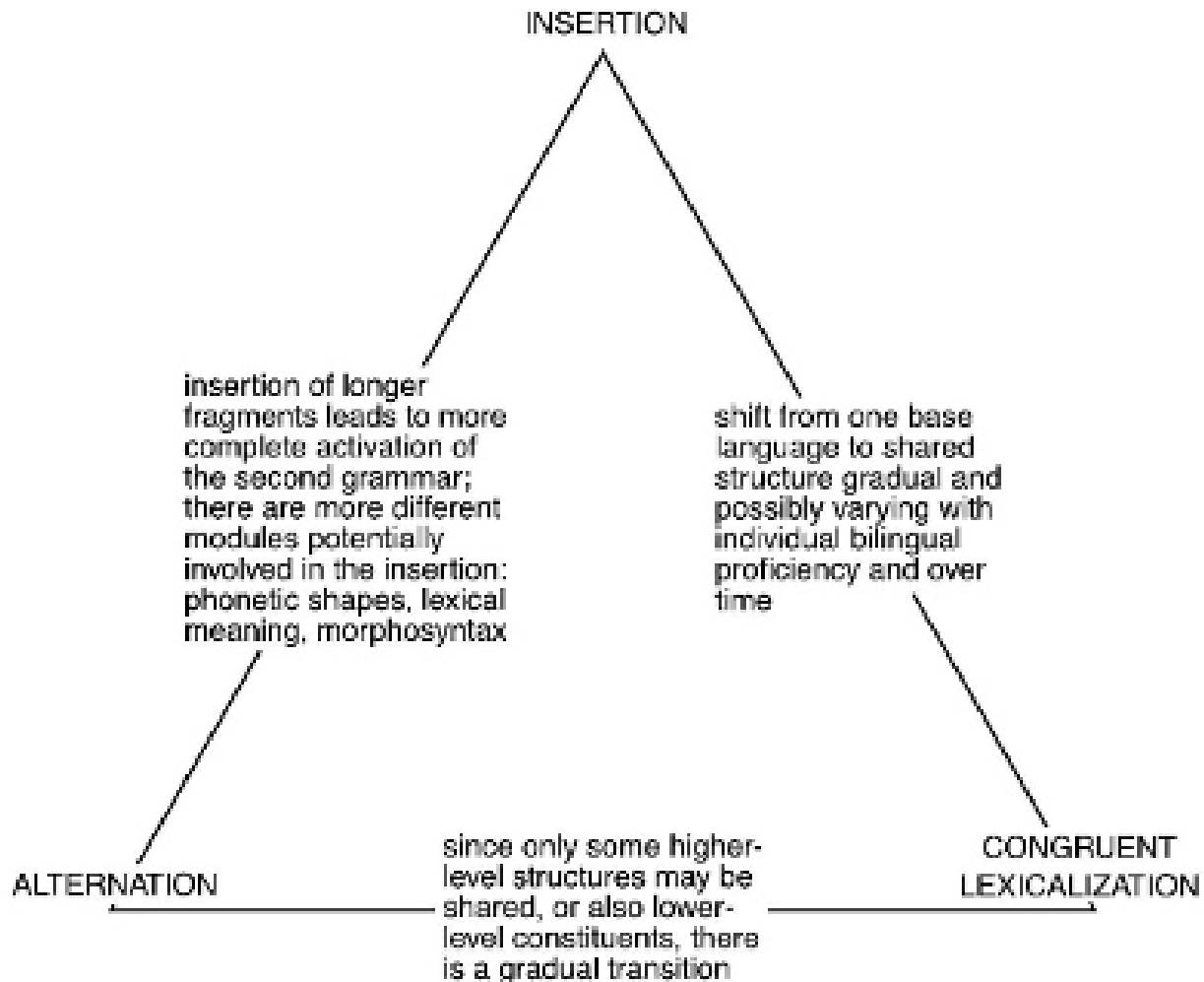


Figure 1: Muysken's (2000) Framework of Code-Mixing

Muysken's (2000) framework, as shown in Figure 1 above, has also seen widespread application in the study of code-mixing within television and film, consistently highlighting insertion as the dominant mechanism. Rohmaten and Maysafira (2022) studied the Indonesian film *Love in Game* and noted that while congruent lexicalization and alternation were present, lexical insertion was the primary method used to project a contemporary, relaxed identity. This pattern was echoed in an analysis of the Indonesian series *Layangan Putus* by Mutmainah et al. (2022), which documented 113 cases of insertion, 108 of alternation, and 9 of congruent lexicalization. This research underlined that central characters strategically employed English insertions to accommodate their listeners and exert professional influence. Recent cinematic studies continue to validate the prominence of insertion as a socio-stylistic instrument. Yudita (2025) researched the film *Dignitate*, determining that frequent lexical insertions mirror character attempts to align with urbanized lifestyles. Similar patterns are reported by Agustina et al. (2022) regarding the film *Imperfect*, where insertion was identified as the leading type with 79 occurrences, highlighting its role in natural speech. Conversely, Adrean et al. (2019) reviewed *Cek Toko Sebelah* and noted a profile of 63% insertion and 37% alternation, with congruent lexicalization being entirely absent, suggesting a focus on structurally less complex bilingual integration. Finally, in an analysis of the animation *Coco*, Abdullah and Budianto (2025) verified that word-level mixing was the most frequent level, shaped significantly by comedic intent and cultural setting. Beyond film, Marzona (2017) analysed print media, illustrating how English insertions in Indonesian magazine advertisements like *GADIS* serve commercial and rhetorical goals, confirming the broad reach of global English across media platforms. These studies indicate that insertion is often a productive strategy in scripted bilingual dialogue, but they also demonstrate that patterns vary according to genre, character, setting, and communicative purpose. This provides a useful comparative basis for examining *The Bridge* (2018).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the specific patterns and communicative function of code mixing in Malaysian-Singaporean crime series *The Bridge* (2018). Qualitative research method, specifically content analysis, provides a more in-depth interpretation of human behaviour and social interaction in particular contexts by addressing the “how” and “why” of a subject (Tenny et al., 2022), proving it as the ideal method for systematically examining dialogues. The series, which centres on a joint cross-border investigation led by Malaysian detective Megat Jamil and Singaporean detective Serena Teoh, serves as the primary data source. The show authentically captures the region's linguistic diversity, showcasing characters who fluidly transition between Bahasa Melayu, English, and localised dialects (such as Singlish and Manglish) depending on the formality and context of their interpersonal interactions.

The data collection process involved the purposive selection and repeated viewing of specific episodes to identify instances where characters engage in code-mixing. Thus, only episodes featuring code-mixing in the dialogues of the characters were selected for data collection. Each identified bilingual exchange was transcribed and annotated with critical contextual information, including the speaker's role, the situational setting, and the narrative purpose. This annotation is essential for understanding the sociocultural motivations underlying the characters' linguistic choices (Holmes, 2013). The transcribed dialogues were then systematically coded and analysed using Muysken's (2000) structural framework, which classifies code-mixing into three primary typologies: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. After structural classification, each instance was interpreted contextually to identify likely communicative functions, including clarification, emphasis, stance, interpersonal positioning, identity marking, and professional or technical precision.

Several methods were implemented throughout the research process to ensure the accuracy of the data and the credibility of the findings. An audit trail was maintained to meticulously document every stage of data selection, coding, and interpretation, thereby ensuring transparency and enabling future methodological replication. Furthermore, the coding process was subjected to peer and supervisor review to mitigate bias, detect potential errors, and ensure adherence to academic standards. Finally, Cohen's Kappa was employed as a statistical measure to confirm the consistency and inter-rater reliability of the dialogue classifications (McHugh, 2012), ensuring that the interpretations of the code-mixing instances were valid and dependable.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the crime series, *The Bridge* (2018) reveals that code mixing between Bahasa Melayu and English plays a significant communicative tool. The analysis identified all three code-mixing patterns proposed by Muysken (2000): insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalisation. Across the 26 coded instances, insertion was the dominant pattern, while alternation and congruent lexicalisation occurred less frequently. The patterns were not interpreted as random switches between languages; rather, they were examined in relation to the local discourse context and the social or narrative work performed by each utterance.

General Findings

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Code-Mixing Types in *The Bridge* (2018)

Types of Code Mixing (Musyken, 2000)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Insertion	16	61.5
Alternation	6	23.1
Congruent Lexicalization	4	15.4

Table1 indicates the statistical distribution of code-mixing types found in *The Bridge* (2018). The overall findings reveal that the majority of code-mixing types found in the series falls under insertion whereby words from Bahasa Melayu and phrases are embedded within English syntactic structure. The overwhelming

prevalence of insertion (61.5%, n=16), occurs far more frequently than alternation (23.1%) and congruent lexicalization (15.4%). The predominance of insertion indicates that the characters most often maintain a primary grammatical frame while embedding lexical or phrasal material from another language. In the dataset, many inserted items are everyday English nouns or phrases used within Bahasa Melayu structures, especially in professional, technical, interpersonal, and informal contexts. This pattern is consistent with previous studies that identify insertion as a common form of bilingual language mixing in regional media (Mutmainah et al., 2022; Agustina et al., 2022). In a crime drama setting, characters may naturally insert English legal or procedural terms into Bahasa Melayu sentences, or vice versa, to reflect professional authority while maintaining cultural rapport. Consequently, the high frequency of insertion not only illustrates the practical mechanics of how these bilingual individuals manage language, but it also authenticates the media's portrayal of the unique, intertwined linguistic identity shared by Malaysia and Singapore.

Insertion

Table 2.1: Code-Mixing Types in *The Bridge* (2018) - Insertion

No.	Dialogue	Inserted Item(s)	Analysis
1	"You said Kemala, who is Kemala? Was Kemala the one who did this to you? Dengar saya tak? Can you hear me?"	Dengar saya tak?	The utterance is largely structured in English, with the short Malay clause "Dengar saya tak?" meaning "Can you hear me?" inserted between two full English clauses. This reflects Muysken's (2000) insertion, where a lexical or phrasal element from a second language (Bahasa Melayu) is embedded into a dominant language structure (English).
2	"Tuan, masih ingat Kai? Yang sediakan lori untuk container tu?"	container	The English noun "container" is embedded within a Bahasa Melayu clause ("untuk container tu") without changing the surrounding Malay grammatical structure. This is a clear example of lexical insertion.
3	"Tapi bisa dia lagi teruk dari gangster paling ganas kau pernah jumpa."	gangster	This Bahasa Melayu constructed utterance made use of the English noun "gangster" in place of its equivalent "penjenayah" or "samseng". The noun is used within the Bahasa Melayu grammatical framework and does not disrupt the sentence structure.
4	"Sebab esok birthday Imran".	birthday	The English noun "birthday" inserted (code mixed) in the sentence reflects the speakers' fluency in the languages as they can use the English noun inserted in their daily conversation seamlessly.
5	"My Lǎobǎn is a nice guy".	Lǎobǎn (Mandarin)	A Mandarin noun "Lǎobǎn" ("boss") is inserted into an English sentence. The word is inserted lexically as a direct replacement for an English equivalent. Although the study focuses mainly on Bahasa Melayu-English mixing, this item is retained as an isolated multilingual insertion that reflects the wider linguistic setting of the series.
6	"Mana ada complain, lagipun siapa lagi nak jadi, the best sister to the two boys. Boleh?"	the best sister to the two boys	The English noun phrase "the best sister to the two boys" is inserted into the Bahasa Melayu utterance. Its multi-word form shows that insertion can involve phrases, not only single lexical items.
7	"Budak-budak ni macam dikurung dalam bangunan kosong tapi susah nak tahu lokasi mereka dari footage ni."	footage	The word "footage" is an English noun inserted within a Bahasa Melayu sentence. The use of "footage" rather than "rakaman", the Bahasa Melayu equivalent, suggests the influence of English in technical or media contexts.
8	"Okey bila dia sampai saya nak jumpa, both of you."	both of you	The phrase "both of you" is directly inserted into the Bahasa Melayu sentence. It functions as a concise referential phrase and is treated here as phrasal insertion.

9	"Mia tak sengaja, lagipun kan Mia dah said sorry."	said sorry	"Said sorry" is an English phrase inserted as a unit into the Bahasa Melayu sentence. The insertion of a verb phrase fits Muysken's (2000) concept of lexical insertion where fixed phrases are borrowed for the ease of expression reflecting bilingual fluency.
10	"Aunty dah fedup dengan Mia dan papa Mia."	Fedup	"Fedup" is an English adjective (fed up), inserted as part of the predicate. This English adjective is used due to its emotive strength, offering more expressive emotion than a direct Bahasa Melayu equivalent.
11	"Sekarang officer Teo kat bawah, datang dinner dengan kita."	Officer, dinner	"Office" and "dinner" are inserted English nouns, representing professional and social contexts, commonly borrowed due to domain-specific lexical gaps in Bahasa Melayu.
12	"Anak dia ada bagi laptop Jamal kepada kita siap dengan password semua."	Laptop, password	"Laptop" and "password" are English nouns inserted into Bahasa Melayu syntax. Their use is consistent with the prominence of English terminology in digital and technological domains.
13	"Dia ada satu office kat Singapore dan bila saya check dia punya agreement rental ada dua nama."	Office, check, agreement rental	"Office," "check," and "agreement rental" are multiple English lexical items embedded in Bahasa Melayu grammatical structure, demonstrating the deep integration of English vocabulary in formal and administrative contexts.
14	"Lunch esok okey, I boleh cari orang jaga anak-anak I."	Lunch, I	"Lunch" and the pronoun "I" are inserted into Bahasa Melayu base. Personal pronouns and common nouns in English are inserted, demonstrating casual bilingual identity of the speaker.
15	"Yusof, engkau boleh pinpoint exact location tak?"	pinpoint exact location	The phrase "pinpoint exact location" is inserted into the Bahasa Melayu sentence as a technical phrase.
16	"Kau pergi straight je depan."	straight	The English directional adverb "straight" is inserted into the Bahasa Melayu sentence, integrated smoothly into the surrounding structure and reflects a familiar bilingual directional expression.

The analysis presented in Table 2.1 illustrates insertion as the most prevalent type of code mixing throughout *The Bridge (2018)*, serving as a sophisticated linguistic strategy rather than being a random conversational occurrence. Most examples involve English lexical items or short phrases embedded within Bahasa Melayu syntax, although one example contains the Mandarin noun "Lǎobǎn" within an English clause. Structurally, these examples fit the insertion mechanism because the embedded item does not require a full shift to a different grammatical frame. Functionally, the examples suggest several recurring roles: communicative clarification, lexical efficiency, emotional emphasis, professional or technical precision, and the indexing of culturally familiar multilingual identities.

First, in emotionally urgent contexts, insertion serves as a vital strategy for clarification and emphasis. For example, in the utterance "...*Dengar saya tak? Can you hear me?*", the speaker incorporates the Malay clause "*Dengar saya tak?*" (Can you hear me?) into an English structure. This switch occurs when the interlocutor struggles to comprehend English, demonstrating an effort to bridge the communication gap under stress. Rather than treating this simply as a structural insertion, the surrounding scene suggests a pragmatic function of reinforcing meaning under pressure. Similarly, expressions such as "said sorry" and "fed up" contribute affective force and a conversational tone. These interpretations are consistent with studies that link bilingual language choice to emphasis, accessibility, and emotional expression (Herlina et al., 2020; Nur Khairunnisha Azahari & Nur, 2023).

Next, code-mixing also helps mark social roles and identity, signaling social hierarchy and professional respect. Terms such as "Tuan," an honorific in Bahasa Melayu for a superior, or the English job title "officer" in the sentence "*Sekarang officer Teo kat bawah, datang dinner dengan kita,*" reflect professional status. These linguistic choices highlight the role of code-mixing in acknowledging professional hierarchies and maintaining social politeness, a practice supported by the findings of Al Ma'aytah et al. (2024). Furthermore, insertion

signifies identity and cultural authenticity, particularly in the multicultural urban landscapes of Malaysia and Singapore. The incorporation of words like “gangster” or the Mandarin noun “*Lǎobǎn*” (boss) illustrates how speakers align their speech with the pluralistic social environment. The Mandarin example is important methodologically because it shows that the dataset is not exclusively Malay-English. It is therefore best treated as an isolated multilingual insertion within a study that otherwise focuses predominantly on Bahasa Melayu-English mixing, rather than as evidence of a broader Mandarin-English pattern. This usage reflects what Abdullah and Hussin (2021) describe as identity reinforcement where linguistic diversity is an active daily practice.

The use of insertion is also frequently motivated by lexical efficiency and familiarity. High-frequency terms such as “birthday” or “footage” are often preferred over the Bahasa Melayu equivalents like “*hari jadi*” or “*rakaman*.” This borrowing suggests a preference for terms commonly used in daily life, as established by Anuar et al. (2020), who argue that lexical items are incorporated from one language to another to facilitate ease of expression. Finally, insertion plays a crucial role in maintaining accuracy and professional tone within technical contexts. The integration of English terms like “laptop,” “password,” “office,” “agreement rental,” “pinpoint exact location,” and “straight” into the Bahasa Melayu syntactic structures facilitates immediate clarity in professional instructions. As Wan Rusli and Shaari (2022) suggest, English insertions in Bahasa Melayu discourse may fill lexical gaps and enhance effectiveness in workplace settings, particularly where cross-border cooperation necessitates unambiguous communication. This pragmatic utility is further extended when insertion serves as a cohesive device, such as utilising “both of you” to signal a firm command, thereby signalling a shift in the speaker’s role within the discourse.

Alternation

Alternation in *The Bridge* (2018) occurs in six instances (23.1%) and generally involves a clearer shift between Bahasa Melayu and English at clause or sentence boundaries. Compared with insertion, the linguistic boundaries are more distinct, allowing speakers to move between complete or relatively independent structures. In the data set, these shifts often coincide with changes in emphasis, stance, emotional tone, or informational focus. It shows how well speakers can switch between languages according to the objectives of a conversation. It serves as a key sociolinguistic mechanism where characters transition between Bahasa Melayu and English.

Table 2.2: Code-Mixing Types in *The Bridge* (2018) - Alternation

No.	Dialogue	Analysis
1	“Come, jom pegi tidur, come on.”	The utterance exhibits clear alternation between English and Bahasa Melayu where each segment is syntactically independent and maintains the grammatical rules of its respective language. “Come” and “come on” are imperative forms in English, while “jom pegi tidur” is a complete Bahasa Melayu clause.
2	“Asid sulfurik yang pekat telah menyebabkan tahap kebakaran yang ketiga, the symptoms of sulfuric acid are not very clear.”	The utterance shifts from a complete Bahasa Melayu clause to a complete English clause. Both clauses maintain separate grammatical vocabulary where the alternation happens because of the switching between two different languages in a full phrase.
3	“I love you sayang, nanti dinner kita borak.”	The first clause is an English sentence expressing affection, while the second is a sentence in Bahasa Melayu that includes the English noun “dinner”. Alternation occurs when the switch is made between two phrases and each phrase stands independently with different grammatical structures. Though “sayang” in Bahasa Melayu is commonly used in Malaysian English as an affectionate term, while “nanti dinner kita borak” is a Bahasa Melayu syntax with a borrowed noun.

4	“Masalah awak jadi perhatian semua and your Singaporean partner, ada kat sini?”	The utterance shifts from a Bahasa Melayu clause to the English phrase “and your Singaporean partner” before returning to Malay. The English segment foregrounds a specific referent and is treated as alternation in the present analysis.
5	“Takpela, masih awal lagi, beside a few more hours won't kill me, kamu balik la dulu.”	A complete English clause (“beside a few more hours won't kill me”) is placed between Bahasa Melayu clauses. The clear grammatical boundaries support classification as alternation and contribute to a casual, humorous tone.
6	“Boleh tahan mulut dia, pedas, I like it.”	The utterance ends with a full English sentence “I like it” after the Bahasa Melayu clause. The English words express a strong personal sentiment, a hallmark of emotional or emphatic alternation.

The findings and examples in Table 2.2 illustrate alternation between structurally distinct segments. A prime example is observed in the dialogue, “*Come, jom pegi tidur, come on,*” where the English imperatives “*Come*” and “*come on*” frame the Bahasa Melayu clause “*jom pegi tidur*” (let's go to sleep) without structural disruption. This clear differentiation of language boundaries allows characters to organize their spoken discourse systematically while preserving the syntactic rules of both codes. Beyond structural organisation, alternation also functions as an informational shift, particularly when speakers transition between technical descriptions and personal clarifications. This is evident in the utterance, “*Asid sulfurik yang pekat telah menyebabkan tahap kebakaran yang ketiga, the symptoms of sulfuric acid are not very clear.*” The character shifts smoothly from a precise Bahasa Melayu scientific explanation to an English elaboration. As Ninda (2024) notes, alternation frequently marks a topic change or introduces supplementary information to provide emphasis or elaboration, especially when navigating specialised, domain-specific content.

Furthermore, characters utilise alternation as an effective tool to express intimacy, warmth, and strong personal sentiments. In the casual exchange, “*I love you sayang, nanti dinner kita borak,*” the switch from the English expression of affection (“*I love you*”) to the Bahasa Melayu-structured clause “*nanti dinner kita borak*” (we'll chat during dinner later) conveys warmth and a close personal connection. According to Fatima et al. (2024), bilingual speakers often alternate codes to project intimacy and emotional emphasis when communicating with loved ones. Similarly, in the dialogue, “*Boleh tahan mulut dia, pedas, I like it,*” the transition from a Bahasa Melayu observation to the full English clause “*I like it*” serves to accentuate the speaker's personal preference, utilising the English switch to give the emotional reaction a distinct stylistic prominence. Accordingly, these instances demonstrate that alternation serves as an effective mechanism for speakers to articulate intimacy, establish evaluative stance, and signal interpersonal alignment.

Lastly, alternation functions as a referential and narrative device to capture attention or deliver internal commentary. In the question, “*Masalah awak jadi perhatian semua and your Singaporean partner, ada kat sini?*”, the speaker switches to English to highlight a specific individual (“*your Singaporean partner*”), serving as an attention-grabbing mechanism that flags national differences. Al Afnan (2025) observes that identity and reference marking are highly prevalent in Malaysian bilingual discourse to direct focus and denote affiliations. Additionally, alternation can convey internal commentary or self-reflection, as seen in, “*Takpela, masih awal lagi, beside a few more hours won't kill me, kamu balik la dulu.*” By embedding the English clause “*beside a few more hours won't kill me*” into the Bahasa Melayu sentence, the character adopts their narrative voice to project a more casual and relaxed tone. This pattern reinforces Al Afnan's (2025) assertion that conversational alternation is commonly deployed for stylistic and humorous effects, allowing bilingual speakers to seamlessly shift their tone to make the interaction more engaging.

Congruent Lexicalization

Congruent lexicalisation is the least frequent category, with four instances (15.4%). In these examples, Bahasa Melayu and English lexical items are distributed throughout a shared discourse frame rather than being organised as a single embedded item or as clearly separated clauses. This creates a fluid bilingual pattern in which pronouns, verbs, discourse markers, and content words from both languages occur within the same utterance.

Table 2.3: Code-Mixing Types in *The Bridge* (2018) - Congruent Lexicalization

No.	Dialogue	Analysis
1	"Number two, tak nampak? really?"	The character uses words and short phrases from both languages (mixing of English & Bahasa Melayu) within the same syntactic unit, and the grammar remains consistent. The mixed lexical pattern is treated as congruent lexicalization because no single embedded item or clean clause-level switch dominates the structure.
2	"Sorry okey sayang, nanti balik I cakap dengan dia."	The utterance interweaves English discourse markers and pronouns ("Sorry", "okey", "I") with Bahasa Melayu relational and verbal material ("sayang", "nanti balik", "cakap dengan dia"). This dense blending supports classification as congruent lexicalization, where both languages are used within the same sentence-level syntax.
3	"I tau you marahkan I, tapi nanti kita bincang okey, please call me back."	Bahasa Melayu and English pronouns, verbs, and discourse markers occur throughout the utterance in a fluid mixed frame.
4	"I dah terfikir tentang project baru you, the luxury hotel, I rasa you know I would love to be part of that."	The sentence demonstrates a fluent blending of both languages with shared syntactic features and alternated lexical items. High-frequency lexical switches in a single sentence showcase simultaneous activation of both language grammars and vocabularies.

In the analysis described in Table 2.3, Congruent Lexicalization emerges as a marker of high bilingual proficiency, characterized by the seamless integration of Bahasa Melayu and English lexical items within a shared grammatical structure. Although congruent lexicalization is the least frequent pattern in the series, it is highly significant as it reveals the characters' advanced bilingual proficiency and syntactic flexibility. This process is frequently observed in the series, such as in the utterances stated in the table above, where English phrases and Bahasa Melayu segments coexist within a unified sentence structure. Such occurrences underscore a sophisticated degree of bilingual proficiency, illustrating the characters' remarkable adaptability in navigating language choices within a pluralistic social environment. For instance, in the utterance, "*Sorry okey sayang, nanti balik I cakap ngan dia,*" the English subject pronoun "I" integrates seamlessly into Bahasa Melayu verb phrase, illustrating a hybrid syntactic fluidity. Similarly, in the dialogue, "*I dah terfikir tentang project baru you, the luxury hotel, I rasa you know I would love to be part of that,*" the character exhibits high bilingual competence by mixing lexical items across nearly every word. This sophisticated level of code-mixing is particularly common among speakers who navigate multicultural environments, allowing them to communicate in a manner that is both natural and highly relatable.

Beyond grammatical compatibility, congruent lexicalization functions as a strategic communicative tool to enhance emotional tone and conversational ease. As suggested by Fatima et al. (2024), bilingual speakers utilise this form of mixing to heighten familiarity and relational intimacy. English discourse markers such as "sorry" or "okey" are often selected for their emotional precision or social appropriateness, while terms like "sayang" are retained to preserve cultural intimacy. This blending is well-illustrated in the example, "*I tau you marahkan I, tapi nanti kita bincang okey, please call me back,*" where the character switches between pronouns, verbs, and discourse particles with ease. By blending these elements into a single syntactic frame, speakers not only navigate the most accessible vocabulary but also forge a shared identity. Asrifan et al. (2021) observe that this practice serves to strengthen interpersonal relationships, using the flexibility of congruent lexicalization to tailor the emotional appropriateness and persuasive intent of their discourse.

Ultimately, the linguistic patterns observed in *The Bridge* (2018) mirror the authentic sociolinguistic landscape of Malaysian and Singaporean societies, where multilingualism is deeply embedded in daily life. The characters' language choices are highly context-dependent, showing that insertion is primarily driven by convenience and clarity, alternation by emotional shifts and thematic emphasis, and congruent lexicalization by stylistic fluency and shared identity marking. This functional distribution reinforces Muysken's (2000) assertion that different

types of code-mixing are strategic resources used by speakers to manage multiple linguistic systems for social and communicative goals. By showcasing these fluent transitions, the series highlights how shared linguistic heritages and hybrid communication can bridge cultural divides, laying a firm foundation for cross-border cooperation and mutual understanding.

CONCLUSION

This study employed a qualitative content analysis to systematically examine code-mixing in the Malaysian-Singaporean crime drama series *The Bridge* (2018). Adopting Muysken's (2000) typology, bilingual dialogues were identified and analysed in context to determine how code-mixing functions alongside character expression, situational dynamics, and emotional tone. The findings demonstrate that code-mixing in the series is a highly strategic, context-dependent communicative tool rather than an arbitrary conversational habit. Insertion as the most prevalent typology, is characterised by the embedding of English nouns, adjectives, or verb phrases within the dominant Bahasa Melayu syntactic framework. This high frequency reflects the daily linguistic realities of bilingual speakers in Malaysia and Singapore, where inserting and borrowing words is a common and natural practice. Alternation, which occurs at clause or sentence boundaries, served as a deliberate device for emotional expression and shifting between formal and informal tones, highlighting the characters' balanced bilingual competence. Lastly, congruent lexicalization was observed less frequently but remains highly significant, representing moments of fluent, rapid discourse where vocabulary from both languages was used interchangeably within a shared syntactic frame. Ultimately, these code-mixing patterns serve to negotiate social relationships and illustrate the hybrid, pluralistic identities of the characters, directly resonating with the region's multilingual audiences (David & McLellan, 2020).

The outcomes of this study offer key implications for sociolinguistics and media communication. This research confirms that code-mixing is a highly meaningful, shared social practice among bilingual communities in Malaysia and Singapore. This is particularly evident when characters converse with others from the same country, where blending languages functions as a natural, subconscious communicative behaviour. The characters in the series seamlessly integrate English terms into Bahasa Melayu phrases without any disruption in flow. As for the media and entertainment industry, the organic execution of code-mixing demonstrates how natural language choice adds authenticity to characters and realistic dialogue. To maximise realism and audience connection, screenwriters and producers are encouraged to utilise code-mixing intentionally, while ensuring that translation subtitles remain accurate and clear for wider, international audiences.

The predominance of insertion in *The Bridge* (2018) may reflect the linguistic practices commonly associated with common Malaysian and Singaporean multilingual communities, where speakers often maintain a primary grammatical structure while incorporating words or phrases from another language. In daily interactions, English lexical items related to technology, education, professional life, and popular culture are frequently embedded within Bahasa Melayu discourse because they are widely recognised and socially accessible. This allows speakers to communicate efficiently without fully shifting to another language. In contrast, alternation and congruent lexicalisation require more extensive movement between linguistic systems and therefore occur less frequently. The dominance of insertion suggests that cultural identity in the series is represented as bilingual yet locally grounded, where global linguistic influences are integrated into everyday Malaysian and Singaporean ways of speaking rather than replacing them.

Even with a comprehensive analysis of Bahasa Melayu-English code-mixing in *The Bridge* (2018) using Muysken's (2000) framework, this study may still provide several avenues that remain open for further exploration. Based on several limitations of the current study, the sample is small and purposively selected, thus, future studies could analyse all episodes systematically and report episode-level sampling procedures. Future studies should also expand the linguistic scope to encompass other prominent languages and localised dialects spoken in Southeast Asian urban centres, such as Mandarin, Tamil, Manglish, and Singlish. Investigating these multilingual interactions would provide a more holistic representation of regional linguistic diversity. Next, a comparative analysis across different digital media platforms and genres, such as films, news broadcasts, YouTube vlogs, and TikTok videos, can also be done to reveal how code-mixing patterns and functions adapt to

varying audiences, platforms, and formatting constraints in the digital era. Such research would contribute significantly to the broader academic discourse and the cultural norms of multilingual societies.

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