

## CODE-MIXING IN AIR FORCE THE MOVIE 'SELAGI BERNYAWA': A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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**Abstract.** This research explores the occurrences of code-mixing in the Malaysian war film *Air Force The Movie: Selagi Bernyawa*, using Muyskens and Hoffman frameworks to categorise and analyse its usage. The research identifies three primary types of code-mixing: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalisation, and explores factors influencing code-mixing, such as language input, linguistic development, and general cognitive development. Through qualitative content analysis and transcription of the film, the study highlights how characters blend Malay and English, reflecting their bilingual proficiency and enhancing narrative authenticity. The findings emphasise the role of code-mixing in bridging linguistic gaps and enriching the portrayal of bilingual environments in cinematic contexts. This research contributes valuable insights to the fields of linguistics, cultural studies, and film analysis, offering practical implications for filmmakers, educators, and linguists. Recognising the significance of bilingualism, the study underscores its importance in media and educational settings. Future research is encouraged to explore code-mixing in different genres and cultural contexts to further understand its impact on language use and cultural representation.

**Keywords:** *code-mixing, language input, linguistic development, war films*

### Introduction

In a globalised world, the ability to navigate diverse linguistic environments has become increasingly valuable. This skill, classified as bilingualism (proficiency in two languages) or multilingualism (proficiency in three or more languages), is influenced by factors such as the environment, family dynamics, and educational experiences. Bilinguals and multilinguals often showcase this proficiency in contexts enriched by code-switching and code-mixing, where the former involves transitioning between language varieties, and the latter integrates elements from multiple languages within a single sentence without altering the overall meaning (Novianti and Said, 2021). This study specifically focuses on code-mixing, aiming to understand how individuals navigate language boundaries within shorter linguistic units. Code-mixing is not limited to everyday communication (Khattak et al., 2022); it is prevalent in various professional industries like tourism, business, and entertainment. Khattak et al. (2022) highlighted its transformative potential in business settings, enhancing adaptability, and refining negotiation skills. Most importantly, code-mixing is also prominent in the vast expanse of the entertainment industry, particularly within the captivating realm of film (Arrizki et al., 2020). Although extensive research has investigated code-mixing occurrences, a predominant focus among language scholars has been on in-person interactions, with a minimal exploration of its portrayal in fictional contexts such as films (Kim and Lee, 2023). Mustafa (2022) noted that war films, known for depicting intense and emotionally charged scenarios, remain largely unexplored in terms of dialogues. Moreover, war films also often present diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, mirroring the multilingual realities of military operations (Mustafa, 2022). Regarding

culture, Kiran (2020) highlighted the need for additional research on the linguistic aspects of multilingualism to facilitate accurate translations of cultural elements. Hence, understanding the role of code-mixing in storytelling can enrich audiences' comprehension of a film's overall impact (Kim and Lee, 2023), influencing factors like empathy, realism, and cultural authenticity. Despite an abundance of research on code-mixing in Malay films, particularly in genres like romance, drama, family, or comedy, Hisham (2019) argued for more exploration of the linguistic aspect across various Malaysian film genres to promote its culture globally. Therefore, this paper addresses this gap by closely examining the types of code-mixing and understanding the factors behind these linguistic choices in the context of a Malaysian war film titled *Air Force The Movie: Selagi Bernyawa*.

### ***Literature review***

This study categorise the various types of code-mixing utilised. This framework was chosen due to its detailed and structured approach to understanding the complexities of bilingual language use (Senft, 2020), making it particularly suitable for analysing the linguistic phenomena of code-mixing in *Air Force The Movie: Selagi Bernyawa*. In his work "Bilingual Speech: A Typology of Code-Mixing" (2000), Pieter Muysken presents a comprehensive framework that aids in understanding code-mixing, a linguistic phenomenon where speakers integrate elements from two or more languages within their discourse. According to Arrizki et al. (2020), the typology classifies code-mixing into different types, offering insights into the diverse ways in which bilingual and multilingual individuals merge languages. However, individuals proficient in two or more languages have various motives for interchanging or blending their linguistic expressions. According to Pharamita et al. (2021), these elements encompass factors such as language input, linguistic development, and general cognitive development. Language input refers to the exposure and access an individual has to different languages from family, peers, media, and other sources, which shapes their bilingual or multilingual communication practices. Next, linguistic development involves acquiring proficiency in the grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatics of each language, allowing effective language mixing for communicative efficiency and expressiveness. Lastly, general cognitive development includes memory and attention which supports bilinguals' ability to switch between languages easily, reflecting their cognitive flexibility. These elements highlight the environmental exposure, linguistic proficiency, and cognitive capabilities that one has in shaping multilingual communication practices.

Malaysia's rich linguistic diversity, including Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil, provides a compelling avenue to explore the cultural implications of code-mixing. Scholars like Nor and Shangeetha (2023) noted the role of code-mixing as a reflection of Malaysia's multicultural identity, evident in works like Yasmin Ahmad's "Sepet" in 2004 and Dain Said's "Bunohan" in 2011. For instance, the Malaysian Education Comedy Series "Oh My English!" (2012-2017), analysed by Subkhi and Shaari (2021), demonstrates the educational benefits of code-mixing between English and Malay, showcasing how code-mixing extends beyond linguistic boundaries to encapsulate the essence of a pluralistic society and its educational advantages. Nevertheless, the combination of language and culture becomes particularly intriguing when considering biographical war films, which are pivotal for understanding the larger narrative and the depiction of communication complexities during wartime. In the realm of classical Cantonese cinema during the 1930s and 1950s, Fan (2023) observed that the utilisation

of code-mixing and code-switching traces its origins to theatrical influences. These practices functioned as narrative tools conveying distinctions in social classes, drawing inspiration from Cantonese literature in the 1940s, and demonstrating how linguistic phenomena were employed to navigate socio political conflicts in Hong Kong. In the case of the diasporic Korean historical post-war film "Pachinko" in 2022, Kim and Lee (2023) underscored the intricate micropolitics at play through code-switching and code-mixing. Additionally, Choi et al. (2022) assert that code-switching and code-mixing in colonial films highlight conflict structures, fostering audience empathy for the characters. In contrast, Kiran (2020) findings on the intentional absence of code-mixing in a documentary about the Crimean War diverge from the typical use of code-mixing during wartime. This choice emphasises intentional power dynamics, deviating from the usual practice where code-mixing fosters equality among soldiers of varying ranks.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Research design***

The research employed a qualitative design incorporating content analysis. As defined by Bhandari (2025), qualitative research refers to the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to comprehend concepts, opinions, or experiences. According to Kleinheksel et al. (2020), a qualitative content analysis systematically scrutinises the content of communication to uncover patterns and themes. Additionally, Kleinheksel et al. (2020) categorised content analysis into two types: manifest (observable data without the need to discern intent) and latent (data where hidden deep meaning is interpreted). Given that the unique data for this study was derived from a movie source, the qualitative content analysis of the manifest category was employed to systematically examine language use and patterns within the cinematic context. This approach was chosen as it offered researchers valuable insights into communication patterns (Kleinheksel et al., 2020) portrayed by characters in a movie.

### ***Sample***

The research concentrated specifically on the Malaysian film *Air Force The Movie: Selagi Bernyawa* as the primary setting. Directed by Zulkarnain Azhar and Frank See, the film boasted a strong cast and was released in August 2022, running for a duration of 103 minutes. Initially premiered at the Golden Screen Cinemas and later on Astro, it was available for viewing on the online streaming platform Netflix. For the sampling in this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed, representing a specific military context. As outlined by Nikolopoulou (2022), purposive sampling entails intentionally selecting specific elements deemed crucial for the research objectives. The selection was geared towards providing an in-depth understanding of code-mixing phenomena within the Malaysian Air Force, as portrayed in the selected scenes from the film.

### ***Data collection and data analysis procedure***

The process of gathering data involved streaming the film on Netflix using one device, while Shownotes.io on another device automatically transcribed the audio. The transcription was then converted into a PDF file for reference. Next, a thorough scene-by-scene analysis of *Air Force The Movie: Selagi Bernyawa* on Netflix was conducted

by carefully reading the subtitles. The findings obtained from the subtitles were cross-referenced with the transcription to identify any discrepancies or errors. If there were errors found, corrections were made accordingly. Moving on, instances of code-mixing in the film were extracted and documented in a Word document. These instances then underwent analysis using Muysken (2008) theory on the types of code-mixing while the contextual factors for each occurrence were documented and analysed based on Hoffman (1991) theory. This comprehensive analysis was repeated multiple times for each instance to ensure consistency and reliability. The collected data from the selected film underwent a comprehensive qualitative content analysis to discern recurring patterns and themes related to code-mixing. This analytical process involved categorising instances and establishing connections between language choices and contextual elements portrayed in the film. In the initial phase of this study, various forms of code-mixing were meticulously extracted and documented. Through the categorisation of these observed instances in the selected film, the occurrences of code-mixing were organised into relevant categories, accompanied by detailed explanations. Furthermore, a thorough examination of the reasons behind code-mixing was conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic phenomena depicted in the movie.

## Results and Discussion

The analysis of Air Force the Movie: Selagi Bernyawa identified three primary types of code-mixing: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalisation. The first type of code-mixing as defined by Muysken is insertion which involves embedding a word from one language into another without altering the grammatical structure. In the film, this type of code-mixing is prominently featured during scenes involving military communication. This type of code-mixing is exemplified by the integration of English terms like "rescue," "mission plan," "data pack," "satellite feed," "signal," "suit-up," "surface-to-air missiles," "flight plan," and "secure perimeter." These instances enhance clarity, particularly in technical contexts where precise terminology is crucial. Also, the use of insertion in code-mixing goes beyond military jargon, encompassing terms from various fields such as videography, medicine, and everyday conversation. For example, in videography, terms like "pause," "footage," "rewind," and "blu-ray" are commonly used. In medical contexts, terms such as "wound" are also integrated. Additionally, casual conversation includes a variety of inserted terms like "handle," "plan," "clear," "okay," "burger," and "game." The use of insertion aligns with Hoffman's clarity factor, which posits that bilingual speakers use code-mixing for quick expression of concepts.

The second type of code-mixing identified as defined by Muysken is alternation where languages are interchanged within a single sentence or conversation (Novianti and Said, 2021). This linguistic aspect, not only enhances the authenticity of interactions but also mirrors real-world multilingual communication dynamics (Zainuddin et al., 2019). By incorporating different languages, such as Malay and English, characters can effectively convey technical details and strategic information, thereby creating a more realistic portrayal of bilingual environments (Zainuddin et al., 2019). For instance, characters switch from Malay phrases to English phrases within a sentence like "*kita kena revise our weapon configuration,*" "*Kita kena terbang dengan rendah, Tuan; we fly low,*" "*Awak dah melanggar SOP dengan unauthorised low flight. Kita akan terbang untuk standard check,*" to convey technical details and strategic

information effectively. These instances enhance the portrayal of bilingual settings in the film, mirroring the linguistic dynamics of actual military interactions.

The third type of code-mixing is congruent lexicalisation which integrates specific words or expressions from one language into another while maintaining grammatical consistency (Khadijah and Sudarwati, 2022). This type of code-mixing is showcased in one dialogue of the film, where a term "fly" is used in contexts that align with their English counterpart, which according to Syafaat and Setiawan (2019), is to showcase a smooth blending of languages to convey precise actions and intentions. Phrases like "*Pukul berapa nak fly ni adib? Orang lain semua dah fly dah. Tinggal kita je,*" exemplify how congruent lexicalisation enhances character interactions, fostering a sense of casualness and closeness between the pilots. By eschewing direct translations and opting for congruent lexicalisation, the film bridges linguistic gaps and imbues the narrative with authenticity and depth.

Each occurrence of code-mixing is inevitably influenced by specific factors. The factors influencing code-mixing in *Air Force the Movie: Selagi Bernyawa* are examined through the lenses of language input, linguistic development, and general cognitive development. The first factor which is language input can be defined as exposure to diverse linguistic stimuli, which significantly shapes code-mixing behaviours (Ruan et al., 2023). This input includes spoken language, gestures, and non-verbal cues that individuals absorb, influencing their language acquisition and development (Ruan et al., 2023). The film incorporates words such as "*plan,*" "*movement,*" "*you guys do the rest, understood?,*" "*get ready,*" and "*data pack*" into dialogue, reflecting characters' immersion in technical jargon which, according to Yupei and Renfen (2021), are essential for effective communication. This exposure enhances communicative flexibility, enabling characters to convey precise meanings in conversations (Davistasya, 2019).

The second factor of code-mixing is linguistic development which influences individuals' proficiency in using domain-specific terminology (Syafaat and Setiawan, 2019). This development is shaped by enhancing their language acquisition and development (Niu, 2024). Characters in this war film demonstrate linguistic competence through the adept use of technical jargon like "*unauthorised low flight,*" "*standard check,*" "*airbase,*" "*rescue,*" "*our weapon configuration,*" "*detection,*" "*satellite feed,*" "*surface two-air missiles,*" "*we fly low,*" and "*secure perimeter,*" showcasing their ability to navigate the complex linguistic landscapes of military operations. Through the skillful integration of these terms, the film effectively portrays the characters' ability to navigate the variety linguistic aspects of military operations, showcasing their proficiency in professional language use and adherence to established protocols (Jose et al., 2020). The third factor of code-mixing is general cognitive development that enhances individuals' cognitive flexibility and linguistic adaptability (Syafaat and Setiawan, 2019), which are crucial in dynamic environments like war scenarios. Characters in the film demonstrate cognitive agility through the effortless blending of languages, effectively switching between English and Malay to convey critical information and emotional subtleties. The natural integration of simple English words like "stop," "pilot," "please," "dating," "handle," "proceed," "signal," "clear," "update," "contact," "expose," "okay," "check," "burger," and "habit" into Malay sentences reflect their cognitive ability, enhancing communication clarity and narrative depth.

The study by Fitriani and Ramadhani (2022) emphasises the significance of code-mixing in enhancing communication effectiveness, especially in conveying technical information within cinematic narratives. The incorporation of English terms into Malay dialogue in the film not only aids in maintaining clarity but also serves to bridge linguistic gaps, catering to a diverse audience. Siahaan and Johan (2020) further support this notion by highlighting how code-mixing can facilitate the expression of complex ideas and specialised terminology in bilingual contexts. Hence, the use of the 'Insertion' type of code-mixing in the film can certainly generate a wider range of audiences that are familiar with the English terms. In bilingual settings, alternation enables speakers to engage in code-mixing without the constraints of adhering strictly to the grammatical rules of either language involved (Poplack et al., 2020). This correlates with the significance of the first type of code-mixing which is 'Insertion' for swiftly delivering information, particularly crucial in military contexts. Moreover, the ability to communicate in fluent code-mixing, including alternation, is considered a hallmark of linguistic flexibility and creativity among bilingual speakers (Beatty-Martínez et al., 2020). Therefore, by incorporating code-mixing techniques like alternation, filmmakers strive to capture the complexities of bilingual interactions and reflect the linguistic flexibility present in real-world communication.

By examining the types of code-switching and code-mixing employed in the film, researchers have revealed how language choices enhance character authenticity and deepen narrative complexity in film dialogues. This investigation enriches our comprehension of how linguistic elements contribute to storytelling and character portrayal on screen, highlighting the importance of linguistic diversity in cinematic depictions. This portrayal underscores the Malaysian community's adeptness in employing congruent lexicalisation to convey familiarity and intimacy between characters, aligning with the creators' intentions to illustrate the close bond and casual interactions between the two pilots. Most research investigating the impact of code-switching and code-mixing on bilingual children's word recognition offers valuable insights into how language mixing affects language processing and comprehension (Chakravarthi et al., 2020). Understanding how code-switching influences word recognition showcases the cognitive processes of bilingual individuals. Similarly, in the film, soldiers engage in code-mixing influenced by their exposure to diverse language inputs, such as everyday conversational contexts. This factor plays a crucial role in shaping their communication strategies, illustrating how language input contributes to code-mixing practices among characters in cinematic narratives. Additionally, examining semantic shifts in language, such as meaning specialization, highlights how language evolves to convey precise meanings (Ossokina and Murzalina, 2021). This understanding enhances our insight into how language input shapes communication practices and development across various contexts. Ultimately, this analysis illuminates how characters in the film effectively communicate through nuanced language use.

Studies have delved into the conceptual metaphors underlying war discourse, revealing how language shapes our understanding of conflict and warfare (Lahlou and Rahim, 2022). Additionally, the impact of war on media narratives has been examined, showcasing how personal experiences of war are expressed through language and storytelling (Lukin and Castro, 2022). In the context of the film's portrayal of war scenarios, the characters' ability to mix between languages reflects not only their linguistic skills but also their cognitive adaptability in high-pressure situations. This cognitive flexibility allows them to navigate complex communication challenges

effectively, ensuring that critical information is conveyed accurately and efficiently. The seamless integration of English terms into Malay sentences demonstrates their bilingual fluency, enabling them to operate proficiently in multilingual environments (Karim et al., 2023). The findings of this research align with past studies on code-mixing in cinematic contexts, revealing a consistent pattern of using code-mixing to enhance communication clarity and authenticity.

## **Conclusion**

This study on code-mixing in *Air Force The Movie: Selagi Bernyawa* highlights the significant role of multilingualism in contemporary Malaysian cinema. The findings reveal that code-mixing serves not only as a linguistic tool for character authenticity and cultural representation but also as a means to enhance audience engagement. By blending Malay, English, and other languages, the film reflects Malaysia's sociolinguistic landscape, demonstrating how linguistic hybridity can enrich storytelling while fostering national identity. Moreover, the study underscores the broader implications of code-mixing in media, particularly its influence on language attitudes, communication strategies, and audience perception. As globalization continues to shape linguistic practices, future research could explore how code-mixing in films affects language acquisition, identity formation, and cross-cultural communication. Understanding these dynamics will contribute to a deeper appreciation of multilingualism in both cinematic and real-world contexts.

## ***Recommendations***

This study highlights the need for further research on code-mixing across different media genres, cultural contexts, and real-life interactions. Future studies could explore the impact of code-mixing on audience perception and character development in various forms of media, including television, literature, and digital content. Comparative analyses of code-mixing practices in different cultural and professional settings can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited to the analysis of code-mixing in a specific film. Future research should consider a broader range of examples across different genres and contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of code-mixing practices. Additionally, the study's focus on cinematic dialogue may not fully capture the complexity of code-mixing in spontaneous, real-life interactions.

## ***Limitations***

The analysis is confined to a single war film, constraining the applicability of the findings to broader cinematic contexts. The study refrains from exploring the wider socio-political implication of language utilisation in film, concentrating specifically on its role within the war genre in the Malay context. Therefore, future research should consider analysing a trilogy or multiple Malaysian war films to gain more profound insights into the linguistic dimensions of employed code-mixing strategies.

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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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