

INTER-SENTENTIAL SWITCHING IN ALEXANDER THIAN'S TWITTER ACCOUNT @aMazing

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Abstract: This is a qualitative study that focuses on inter-sentential switching found in selected tweets from Alexander Thian's Twitter account @aMazing. The data collection process is done by documenting the tweets he posts containing said code switching. The objectives of this study are to 1) observe the reasons behind his inter-sentential switching and 2) find which reason is more dominant. A theory proposed by Hoffman (1991) is used as a guidance to achieve these two objectives. The final findings conclude that the seven reasons from the theory are all used and found in the data. Meanwhile, Alexander Thian's intention of clarifying the speech content for his followers on Twitter as the addressee is the most prominent reason with 32% occurrences of total data, which amounts to 8 tweets out of 25 total. Among these reasons, the least observed is the purpose of quoting somebody else which only has 2% occurrences.

Keywords: *inter-sentential switching, Twitter, tweet*

In this digital era, language has no limit to go beyond any geological or even legal borders. Massive growth in technology, especially in the digital world, has enabled a language to contact and influence other languages easily. Contacts between languages occur when a person alternates between two or more languages (Weinreich, 1979). Prolonged contact between languages generally leads to bilingualism. There is a minimal definition of bilingualism where a speaker at least understands the meanings contained in a language other than their mother tongue, although without having a proper control of it (Diebold as cited in Romaine, 1995). Furthermore, Titone (1974) expressed that it is not adequate to simply translate the mother tongue into another language and label it as bilingualism. Bilingualism is the capacity to create an utterance in a different language with a well-applied structures and concepts (Hamers & Blanc, 2004). Finally, bilingualism is using two or more languages back and forth in one utterance, and the speaker or the doer is referred to as bilingual (Weinreich, 1979).

Bilingual speakers have a tendency to use more than one language despite their language proficiency level, where in their utterances, they may switch from one language to another (Rodrigues & Zimmer, 2016:2) in a phenomenon often called code switching. Hoffman (1991) explains that in terms of bilingualism, code switching is the alternation between (two or more) languages in a given discourse or even sentence. Further explained, code switching may occur in monolingual context which involves a switch between dialects or language styles. In addition, code switching is the switch of languages in a single utterance both in written and spoken communication (Poplack, 1980). Code switching is one of the academic phenomena that excite the curiosity of bilingualism professionals and learners alike (Bullock & Toribio, 2009). Code switching occurs everywhere, especially in a place or platform that contains diverse languages. Code switching is mainly studied in the scope of sociolinguistics as it studies languages related to the society.

Digital platforms, such as social media, allow people with diverse language backgrounds to communicate with relative ease. One of the now-popular digital communication platforms is Twitter. Twitter is a social media that combines instant messaging and content posting—often named as micro-blogging—that was launched in 2006. Twitter facilitates worldwide users to share posts called a tweet. A tweet is a post in Twitter where users upload a maximum of 280-characters in text or link, one video, four photos, and a Graphic Interchange Format or GIF (Twitter Inc., 2021). In the third quarter of 2021, Twitter had 211 million users worldwide (Statista, 2021). As a platform that facilitates worldwide users with diverse language background to communicate, code switching is often found in this social media platform.

Tweets in the Twitter account @aMazing (owned by Alexander Thian) usually—and quite often—contains code switching. Alexander Thian, usually called Thian, is a multitalented online figure. He is photographer, author, and social media influencer from Pontianak, Indonesia. As a social media influencer with 830 thousand followers on Twitter, Thian has a bigger chance at giving noticeable impacts to the public. He shares his daily stories, experiences, tips and tricks, jokes, and motivating words to his followers. His Twitter account @aMazing got verified by Twitter due to his massive interactions with his followers. In relation to this study, he shows—through his tweets—a good mastery of both English and Indonesia, and he usually switches between the two languages in his tweets.



Figure 1. Alexander Thian's Twitter profile

As one of the emerging linguistics phenomena, many researchers have conducted research concerning code switching. Poplack (1980) and Romaine (1995) classified code switching into three types: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag switching. Inter-sentential switching is a language switch that occurs between clauses or sentences. This type of switch requires a better fluency in both languages compared to tag switching, but less complicated than intra-sentential switching. Additionally, a bilingual usually has a reason for switching between languages. Hoffman (1991:115) proposed a theory explaining seven reasons for a bilingual speaker to switch codes. These seven theorised reasons are: talking about a particular topic, quoting somebody, being emphatic about something, interjection, repetition used for clarification, clarifying the speech content for the addressee, and expressing group identity.

Previously, Melvia et al. (2019) and Adi (2018) found inter-sentential switching to be the major code switching type in their studies respectively. Their studies also investigate the reasons behind code switching done by their research subjects, similar to what this very study is trying to do. To be more specific, some researchers conducted studies that only concern on certain types of code switching. One of them was a study conducted by Gulzar et al. (2013) that focuses on inter-sentential switching in spoken communication done by EFL teachers. Their study is a gender-based observation that analyses patterns of inter-sentential switching. Similar to Gulzar et al. (2013), this study also pays particular attention to inter-sentential switching. However, the object analysis of this study is written language, rather than spoken.

Finally, as the title of this study suggests, the focus is primarily on inter-sentential switching. This is mostly because the majority of Thian's tweets are classified into this type. Compared to the previously mentioned studies, this one is aimed at analysing new, more fresh data since it was taken from Twitter, a fast growing and very active social media. This study aims at analysing the reasons of Thian's inter-sentential switching in his tweets based on Hoffman's (1991) theory, and also to find out which reason will have the

highest occurrence and thus the most dominant one. Hopefully, the final findings reported in this study can be a source of useful information for readers on how linguistics, more specifically on bilingualism, can be applied in daily life situations.

METHOD

Following the objectives of this study mentioned earlier, it will therefore be carried out in a qualitative manner, with the data comprising of selected tweets from Alexander Thian's Twitter account @aMazing. This study focuses on the tweets that contain inter-sentential switching from English to Indonesian and vice versa. The range of the data taken is limited to tweets posted from July to September 2021. Data collection was done by documenting all the selected tweets from the source.

In terms of carrying out the qualitative analysis of this study, it follows a procedure proposed by Miles et al. (2014). The analysis process is done through data condensation where it is focused and organized into denser units. The data analysis process is then followed by data presentation where it would be shown in tables to see the frequency of each reason for code switching and followed by the resulting descriptive analysis. It should be noted that only the representatives of each reason would be presented due to space constraints. The last process is drawing and verifying the conclusion in accordance with the final result of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Code Switching in the Case of @aMazing's Tweets and Their Frequencies

After processing and analysing the data, it was discovered that all of the seven reasons of code switching from Hoffman (1991) were found in Thian's selected tweets. Further detail of the frequency of each reason can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of the Findings

Reasons of Inter-sentential Switching	Frequency	Percentage
Talking about a particular topic	5	20%
Quoting somebody	1	2%
Being emphatic about something	5	20%
Interjection	2	8%
Repetition used for clarification	2	8%
Clarifying the speech content for the addressee	8	32%
Expressing group identity	2	8%
Total	25	100%

Table 1 above shows the result after analysing the reasons behind Thian's inter-sentential switching in his tweets. Out of the 25 total data, 8 of them are done under the speaker's intention of clarifying the speech content for the target audience, in this case it is his followers. And as can be seen from the table above, this particular reason is the most dominant one he used amounting to 32% of the total occurrences. The second most common reasons are talking about a particular topic and being emphatic about something which are found in 5 data each with a percentage of occurrence of 20%. The reasons for interjection, repetition used for clarification, and expressing group identity are the third most used, each of them has 8% occurrences and was identified in 2 data. Meanwhile, the reason for quoting for somebody else has the least amount of usage compared to other reasons. It has 2% occurrences and is found in 1 data only.

From what can be seen above, Thian's inter-sentential switching happened more often to clarify the speech content for his followers. This finding is related to the limitation of characters in Twitter. As previously explained, a tweet only consists of maximum 280-characters. With this limitation, Twitter users should deliver the message concisely and usually need to clarify the content of the tweet to avoid misunderstanding. Thian is a bilingual who often alternates between languages in his tweet where he should deliver the message more clearly and comprehensibly. In consequence, as explained in the finding, inter-sentential switching with an intention of clarifying the speech content for the audience is the most prominent in his tweets. Additionally, he is a social media influencer. It is a must for him to avoid ambiguous messages for his 800.000 plus followers. Further analysis of the representative data for each reason can be seen in the following discussion.

The Seven Reasons for Code Switching

Talking about particular topic

When a bilingual speaker discusses a certain topic, a switch in the language (or code as it were) may occur to better lead the talk to the topic being discussed. This is because a certain topic may be more comfortable to be discussed in a certain language (Grosjean, 2010:574). This is in line with Hoffman (1991) that a switch in the code may occur when the speaker is talking about a particular topic in that particular language. It is a way to fulfil a lack of terms or language facilities that is absent but needed for the talk, or that there is a certain item that triggers some connotations relating to an explanation in another language, different from the one previously used (Hoffman, 1991). Below is the inter-sentential switching found in the data with this kind of purpose behind.

#PermissionToDance nempel banget ini lagu. Such a bop, such an earworm. Love love love the music video.

[#PermissionToDance stuck in my head. Such a bop, such an earworm. Love love love the music video.]

The data above showed a language alteration from Indonesian to English. The first sentence (ignoring the hashtag) is in Indonesian which reads “#PermissionToDance *nempel banget ini lagu*”. In this case a switch occurs between sentences where the next two “sentences” are fully in English. The language switch was done because there are no relevant terms in Indonesian language that closely refers to ‘bop’ and ‘earworm’. Both are terms that heavily relate to music or song. The term ‘bop’ is an English slang that describe a good beat in a song that makes the listeners want to dance to its beats. In addition, the term ‘earworm’ denotes to a catchy song that is easy (almost too easy) to remember, sticking to one’s ear. Thian did this particular inter-sentential switching to give a clearer context to his followers that he was talking about music, specifically how he loved the song entitled Permission to Dance.

Quoting somebody else

When a speaker is quoting somebody else, a switch usually occurs (Hoffman, 1991). Quoting someone’s utterance is also a way to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation—that is, as opposed to telling it in your own words through paraphrasing. Moreover, if the utterance being quoted is in a different language, it is better to quote it in its original language, again to avoid misunderstanding. Therefore, this situation will result in a switch from one language to another (i.e. from the speaker’s own to the source, or vice versa). Representative data in this situation can be seen below.

“Mau jadi youtuber”. He said that when I was asking about his dream job, so I sent him this.

[“I want to be a youtuber”. He said that when I was asking about his dream job, so I sent him this.]

The tweet shown above contains a quote from someone in Indonesian, while the rest (Thian’s own words) are in English. He shared a story of him doing a video call with his foster child named Hugo. He quoted Hugo’s statement that said “*Mau jadi youtuber*”. As mentioned, the quote is delivered in Indonesian, and Thian quoted it directly, using Indonesian. In the next sentence, he switched into English and explained the story and additional information behind the quote. The switch in this example occurred between sentences. It was intended to highlight the quote from Hugo. Therefore, the inter-sentential switching in this case has a reason for quoting Hugo’s utterance.

Being emphatic about something

People express their feelings both in verbal and nonverbal way. In verbal way, people express their feelings by saying it right away, through words. Empathy is a feeling of understanding others. Emphatic feelings may be expressed in a particular language based on the speaker’s preference and the situation of the conversation (Champoux-Larsson et al., 2021:75). Additionally, given a choice for multiple languages such as suggested by Champoux-Larsson et al. (2021), expressing the emphatic feeling might lead to a switch. Usually, bilingual speakers have a tendency to express their emphatic feeling by using the first language or the mother

tongue as it is somewhat closer to their psyche (Adi, 2018). The representative data from Thian's tweet in switching code to show empathy can be seen below.

Rest in love, @NDIGUN. Banyak banget yang sayang sama kamu, termasuk aku. Selamat jalan, selamat bersenang-senang disana.

[Rest in love, @NDIGUN. Many of us truly loved you, including me. Good bye, rest happily in heaven.]

Language switch is applied in the data above. The tweet started in English, expressing Thian's condolence to someone. In the second and third sentences, he switched to Indonesian. The position of the switch is outside sentence boundaries, or between sentences. In his first language, he expressed his feeling of empathy and wished the deceased one rest in peace (or "in love" as it were). He switched to Indonesian because he felt more convenient doing so to convey his feelings to an Indonesian friend aside to being more suitable to the majority of his followers who are Indonesian.

Interjection

An interjection is a short item that conveys extra meaning related to emotion, feeling of surprised, or to grab someone's attention. It functions as sentence connector or sentence filler that has no specific grammatical rules or semantic meanings. Hence, it is commonly found in communication between bilinguals, more in speaking than writing (Girsang, 2015). Bilingual speakers usually alternate from one language into another in a form of sentence connectors or sentence fillers that give extra meaning to the utterance. This is the situation where switching for interjection is applied. The data from Thian's tweet below represents such purpose in code switching.

Done. What a journey. Explosive. Another masterpiece. Sukaaaaaaa!

[Done. What a journey. Explosive. Another masterpiece. Love it!]

The tweet above was posted by Thian as a way for him to compliment a book he just finished reading. The tweet started in English, and at the last sentence (or rather word/phrase) it switched to Indonesian. He said "Sukaaaaaaa!" at the final of the tweet, instead of its English counterpart "love it!". The switch occurred outside sentence boundary. His switch was intended to add extra emotion to the tweet in which in the previous sentence he had stated that he loved the book. It exaggerated his compliment. Moreover, if the switch "Sukaaaaaaa!" is omitted, it would not change the meaning since the switch is functioned only as a filler or emphasis. Therefore, the inter-sentential switching was done for the purpose of interjection.

Repetition used for clarification

In a communication there is always a probability of misunderstanding to occur, taking into account the case of a tweet on Twitter where the characters are very limited, even more in a situation that involves more than one language. Repeating what is meant in both languages used (or maybe more) might be used to help avoid such misunderstanding as a form of clarification (Ivanova et al., 2022). The repetition can be done directly (as in the textual translation of the message) or using another term that denotes the same meaning. However, repetition is not only limited to be used for clarifying, but also emphasizing the content of the message. An example of such motive in code switching can be seen from Thian's tweet below.

Aku lagi tergila-gila sama Seitan. Enak luar biasa. Smokey, bold, flavourful. Seriously amazing.

[I am madly fall for Seitan. Extraordinarily delicious. Smokey, bold, flavourful. Seriously amazing.]

In that tweet Thian mentioned he liked a vegan protein that has the same texture as meat, named Seitan. He said it in two languages, firstly in Indonesian then switch to English in the third sentence. The position of the switch is between the second and the third sentences. In his opinion, Seitan is a super tasty food. In Indonesian he said he was madly in love for Seitan that has extraordinarily delicious taste. Then he added, in English, that Seitan is "Smokey, bold, flavourful and seriously amazing." Thian repeated in English what he said in Indonesian previously. He conveyed the same message in two languages. Although it did not

literally say or mean the same, the Indonesian and English words in the tweet is denoting the same point which is saying Seitan is super tasty food. Hence, the tweet contains inter-sentential switching under the purpose of clarifying the message by means of repeating the points.

Intention of clarifying the speech content for the addressee

In the case of bilingual speakers, the intensity of switching between languages is very high. Moreover, if the bilingual speakers who communicate have a high level of language mastery, the occurrence of inter-sentential switching is only getting higher since this type of switch requires a good level of proficiency (Li et al., 2021). The high intensity of this switch is motivated by the intention of the speaker to make the interlocutor or addressee or listener fully understood the content of the speech (Bonacina-Pugh, 2012:219). The speaker will explain or clarify the message or change the specific word(s) or term(s) to those that deemed more familiar for the addressee. The following is the representative data that fits the intention of clarifying the speech content for the addressee.

It's a scam. Ini metode untuk ambil data kartu kredit kalian.

[It's a scam. This is a method to steal your credit card information]

This tweet was posted by Alexander Thian to warn his followers about credit card scamming. First, he wrote in English "It's a scam". The word "scam" actually has the Indonesian equivalence "*penipuan*", and yet "scam" is used, perhaps since scamming is more of an international topic that needs not much localisation. However, he switched to Indonesian in the next sentence. This is classified as inter-sentential switching since the switch occurs outside sentence boundaries. Additionally, the switch to Indonesian was done by him in order to clarify about what he said in English in previous sentence to his followers who are mostly Indonesian. He intended to provide an explanation about the content of his tweet. He explained to his followers what credit card scamming is in their respective everyday language. By doing this sort of clarification, the communication between him and his followers as the addressee should run more smoothly.

Expressing group identity

A group almost always has an identity that is different from one another—at least in this case linguistically speaking (Merunka, 2013:239). This can be in the terminologies or styles that they use in daily speaking, especially more noticeable within their respective group. Since the identity marker is unique, people outside of the group member may not understand it. If the identity marker is famous, i.e. known by many people, people outside of their group will easily recognize which group that sort of language identity belongs to. Showing an identity marker may lead to language switch (Abubakr et al, 2019). The same concept had been stated by bilingualism experts like Poplack, Tuson, Oksaar, and Calsamiglia (as cited in Hoffman, 1991); they stated that a switch is a way to express group identity and group solidarity. The following tweet is the data representing such switch taken from Thian's Twitter.

Mau beli apa? Beli cibay dong. I dare you to say this to Chinese parents. Disabet gesper langsung.

[What do I want to buy? Of course, cibay. I dare you to say this to Chinese parents. You'll be smashed by belt buckle.]

The tweet above may be confusing to someone who does not understand what *cibay* is. In the context of the tweet, the term *cibay* carries two different meanings. In Bandung, West Java, *cibay* is the shortened form of *Aci Ngambay* which refers to traditional snack from West Java. This is the *cibay* that Alexander Thian was about to buy. On the contrary, in Chinese perspective, *cibay* is a taboo word that is impolite to be said to older people, especially parents. That is the reason why Thian said if one is brave enough to say it to Chinese parents, they will get angry. In sociolinguistics context, the switch here is also classified as inter-sentential switching as it occurs between sentences. Furthermore, Thian switched language to express two groups identity which is *cibay* that belongs to West Javanese and Chinese group. Therefore, the reason of the switch in this situation is for expressing group identity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the findings and discussions presented above, we can see various reasons behind inter-sentential switching in the Twitter account of Alexander Thian @aMazing. Hoffman (1991) theorised seven reasons for speakers to switch between codes or languages. These seven reasons are all identified in the data. The one that occur the most is for clarifying the speech content for the addressee. It was identified in 8 data out of 25 total which amounts to 32% of the total data. Talking about particular topic and being emphatic about something are in the second position. Each of these was found in 5 data and amounts to 20%. Additionally, three of these seven proposed reasons are found with the same level of frequency: switch for interjection, repetition used for clarification, and expressing group identity. Each of these appeared in 2 data with a percentage of 8%. Quoting somebody else was only identified in 1 data with 2% occurrence. This reason is the least used of all.

Twitter's rule in limiting the number of characters is related to the findings. This limit increased the tendency of Twitter users to deliver a concise and clear message. Therefore, bilingual Twitter users should clarify everything to make the readers easily understand the message conveyed; and Alexander Thian did just that. His status as an influencer who can give quite a massive impact to the public through what he posts is something he needs to consider. Posting an ambiguous message or confuse his followers will give a negative impact for public and for him.

Future research on this topic may focus on other types of code switching and analysed other aspects such as functions, patterns, gender-based analysis, etc. Researchers can take a wider scope that involves more than one person and elaborate the problem of the study in order to get more general findings. In addition, comparative study can also be done. The next research can be in different setting. Therefore, scientific information related to code switching in various platform both spoken and written communication can be described academically in a better way.

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