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Covid to Beat: Creative Intermingling of Translingualism in Comic *If Malaysia was Anime: Covidball Z*

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia, home to a multiracial community consisting of Malay, Chinese, Indian and others, typically practise two or more languages as Malay language is the official national language and English is the second language. The use of translanguaging amongst Malaysians is regular in spoken as well as written discourse. This particular research examined the use of translanguaging in written discourse, specifically in a comic book by Malaysian cartoonist Ernest Ng titled If Malaysia was Anime: Covidball Z. This comic book addresses real Malaysian scenarios such as the recent Covid-19 pandemic and political scenes with an adoption of Malaysian style of spoken discourse in written form. This research aims to explore the use of translanguaging in the mentioned comic book and explore Malaysians' views of the use of translanguaging in this comic book through interviews. To determine the use of translanguaging in the comic book, this study adopted Jakobson's (1987) six language functions as the theoretical framework. The findings of this study revealed that out of the six language functions stated by Jakobson, five were found in the comic book excluding the phatic function. Most interviewees were also found to have positive perceptions towards the use of translanguaging in comic books as it could display Malaysians' unique plurilingual communication skills.

Keywords: Comic book; Covid-19 pandemic; plurilinguals; translanguaging

INTRODUCTION

The term *translanguaging* was coined by Williams (1994) to refer to the use of two or more languages in a discourse. It involves the use of linguistic creativity for critical engagement with other individuals (Lee, 2015).While code-switching typically assumes speakers' incompetency in the language (Sridrar, 1996), translanguaging recognises speakers' skills in integrating their knowledge of different languages (García, 2011). Hence, translanguaging, according to Mazzaferro (2018), represents a new paradigm of language use that represents 21st century multilingualism. In an ideal situation, translanguaging use in a plurilingual society should not be associated with incompetence, yet, it should be recognised as creative language fluidity.

Translanguaging is widely used by the plurilingual speakers in multilingual countries. Malaysia is one of the multiracial countries whereby Malaysians would often switch between languages during discourse (David, 1999). The plurilinguals in Malaysia would translanguage habitually when conversing with family or friends. Malaysians would say "*Jom keluar* dinner tonight?" (Let's go out for dinner tonight) and "Last night I *penat sangat* so I just ordered food and slept early" (Last night I was so tired so I just ordered food and slept early) during conversation and fellow Malaysians would be completely fine with it since it is normal and common for

Malaysians to be shuttling multiple languages back and forth. These kinds of conversations indicate that translanguaging is very common in Malaysia and sometimes speakers do not even realise they are practising translanguaging.

Although translanguaging in spoken discourse has been widely debated, most researchers have focused on the use of translanguaging in educational settings. To date, there is a dearth of research which looks into the use of translanguaging in published written books. According to Inganatun (2013), one of the various kinds of language used in written form is literary work. Literary works are writings with or without illustrations. Comic books, however, are written works cooperating both word and image in storytelling production within a large scale of various interactions (Carrier & Oliker, 2000).

This research aims to discover the functions of translanguaging occurrences in Ernest Ng's *If Malaysia was Anime: Covidball Z* and finds out young Malaysian adults' perception of the use of translanguaging in this comic book. The comic book, published in 2020, revolves around the concept of Malaysia pre and post Covid-19. The characters are based on Malaysia's political figures in a fight with an enemy named *Covid-19* who is trying to infect everyone in Malaysia. It is up to the main characters Tun, General Hisham and Muhidin with other side characters to work together to defeat the common enemy and save Malaysian citizens. The author used real situations that had happened during Malaysia's MCO (Movement Control Order) and recent events to evoke humour in his comic book. The comic book also adopts Japanese anime culture as some of the characters as well as the writings are heavily influenced by the Japanese anime *Dragon Ball* and *Naruto*. In the 1980s, these Japanese anime shows were popular in Malaysia and they proliferated in the television programmes (Wahab, 2012). The author of the comic has then perhaps made use of the anime-like characters and Japanese elements to acquire young adults and adults' interest towards his comic.

To achieve the aim and objectives of this study, two research questions are formulated:

1. What are the functions of translanguaging in *If Malaysia was Anime: Covidball Z*?
2. How do young adults respond to the comic, *If Malaysia was Anime: Covidball Z* with respect to translanguaging?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multilinguals, according to Canagarajah (2012), combine their own languages and principles into English, which allows them to use different negotiation techniques to decipher other special varieties of English and create new practices, meanings, and grammars, producing a translingual practice.

In a multilingual nation such as Malaysia, the common language varieties that could be found include Bahasa Baku, Kelantanese Malay, Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, Tamil, Malayalee, Singhalese, and Bengali (Imm, 2009). In some Asian countries, Malaysia included, English is typically learned and utilised as a second language. Urban Malays would often switch between Malay and English (Omar, 1982; Song, 2019) and translanguaging is also used by multilingual speakers as a negotiating strategy (David, 1999). People who speak more than one language, or who have the capability over more than one variety of any language, are usually very sensitive to the variations in the vitality of the languages they use (Meyerhoff, 2018). As mentioned

by Abu-Krooz et al. (2018), they are equally aware that one variety would serve their needs better than another in certain situations.

According to Prilutskaya (2021), translanguaging has shown to be a powerful notion in applied linguistics, particularly in multilingual environments, over the last two decades. During this period, translanguaging in classroom discourse and social media has been widely researched. However, very few studies have looked into the use of translanguaging in literary works. Among the few studies on literary works, most focused on code-switching. For instance, Hamamra and Qararia (2018), Ibhawaegbele and Edokpayi (2012) and Inganatun (2013) investigated code-switching as stylistic devices in novels and suggested that the use of code-switching was to display the real use of English language in local contexts and to maintain the characters' identity and culture. The use of code-switching in novels was also found to comply with Hoffman's (1996) explanations which include:

a. to reflect the characters' group identity
b. being empathic about something
c. translanguage interjection
d. to talk about a specific topic
e. repetition to clarify

Code-switching appears to be premeditated in written discourse and is thus deliberate and purposeful (Rahim, 2008; Walshe, 2012). González Cruz (2017), studied Spanish words, phrases, and sentences that are used in written English popular romances corpus. Her study shows that there is a high use of code-switching between English and Spanish when the protagonists are of Hispanic descent. As per her analysis, she suggested that the use of code-switching is necessary to show the authentic ways of communication between English-Spanish speakers which is why the use is frequent. González Cruz further added that the discourse switches from Spanish to English and vice versa as a strategy by authors to achieve actual representation of interaction between the bilingual speakers.

Sato and Sharma (2017), examined the use of translanguaging in the English translation of *Godaan*, a 1936 Hindi novel which was translated to English by Anurag Yadav in 2009. They discovered that the literary work had traces of translanguaging to represent culturally specific materials, notions and socially constructed concepts which includes institutions, regulations, ranks, titles and relationship between people. Translanguaging is found to be transformative in nature and has the disposition to illustrate a multilingual community as well as the community's identity and norms among its plurilingual speakers.

Comic books are literary works that present a sequenced story in the form of comic strips to tell stories. As a form of storytelling, the comic book has become almost synonymous with speculative fiction, encompassing a wide range of genres (Connors, 2013). Botzakis (2009) also added that comics are rich as resources and have a role to engage readers to reflect and understand the culture from which they originated. It is also believed that comics can engage readers better than novels and short stories with its use of visuals, plots and characters.

Language used in comic books is not exclusively researched but is slowly catching on. Despite the difficulties of "the language of comics" as a scholarly principle, some research has supported the notion that when comics artists create their work, they use a system known as "visual language" (Cohn, 2012). Visual language is a unique "language" whereby characters in comic books "speak" using their body language. However, linguistically, the use of language in comic

books are also different. For example, a study by Walshe (2012), examined the use of Irish English dialect forms in Marvel superhero comics. His study concluded that in the Marvel universe, Irish speech is represented by a system of respellings and contractions to indicate an Irish accent, as well as supposedly typical Irish English lexicogrammatical features such as vocabulary choice and verb conjugations.

According to Bramlett (2016), a comic artist would use a variety of linguistic features in her comic. For instance, Jessica Abel depicted how her character in *La Perdida* was in search of a sense of identity as a Mexican-American woman through the use of various linguistic features. To insinuate that her character was still learning Spanish as a second language Some of the linguistics features include conversing in passable Spanish, use of code-switching, use of English spoken with a Spanish accent and grammatically incorrect Spanish. The use of these linguistic features illustrates actual representation of how a specific person would typically speak.

In a study by Farahsani et al. (2019), they explored the use of code-mixing in a comic published on Webtoon (digital comic platform) by an Indonesian comic artist. They found that since Indonesia is a bilingual country, the practice of using more than one language during discourse is justified even in comic strips. The practice of code-mixing is used by the artist to express the characters' emotions, feelings or thoughts. Similarly, Belhassena (2014), found that Algerian comic writers code-switch strategically and intentionally to deliver their message in their comic books. The results from her research demonstrate that comic book writers code-switch to intentionally represent authentic Algerian phraseology that is constantly changing due to political, geographical or sociolinguistic factors.

To date, studies on the use of translanguaging in comic books are still scarce even though its use is increasingly common in the globalised world. Therefore, a research which looks into the use of translanguaging in a light-hearted and entertaining comic book would be helpful to provide insights on the functions of translanguaging in literary work. In addition, it is important to gather readers' perceptions on the use of translanguaging as this can inform authors and publishers the potential value of translanguaging in comic books .

Comic books can engage readers more than novels due to the use of visuals, interesting plots and characters. People who read comic books, according to Halsband, want to see characters and read stories that represent their own experiences, as cited by Hartsell (2017). Breidenbach (2012) points out that a comic artist uses his comic strips to portray his Chicano (Mexican ancestry born in the United States) identity and political ideas in his research of language, identity, and discourse in Lalo Alcaraz's comic strips. Similarly, Ernest Ng's comic book *If Malaysia Was Anime: Covidball Z* portrays the comic artist's identity as a Malaysian representation while also correlating his comic strips to real-life events in Malaysia. The fast-paced narratives of the comic and the imaginative characters inspired by Malaysia's former ministers and popular anime, Dragon Ball, captured the interest of young adults in Malaysia. According to Bramlett (2016), comics often consist of two primary elements, visuals and language. If comics include these two elements, readers are more likely to be drawn to them along with an engaging plot. Moreover, adopting scenarios or plotlines that readers might relate to would also be a selling advantage for comic books (Hartsell, 2017). In other words, the use of language in Ng's comic book is a good attempt to connect with readers by illustrating how Malaysians actually communicate through translanguaging by focusing on the sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape during the initial stage of the Covid-19 pandemic in Malaysia.

METHOD

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study attempts to interpret the use of translanguaging between English and Malay language through a content analysis qualitative analytical approach. By the use of a content analytical approach, this research aims to recognise the translanguaging phenomenon in the comic book titled *If Malaysia was Anime: Covidball Z,* illustrated by Ernest Ng, a plurilingual Malaysian. The choice of choosing this comic book was made by the reason that the comic book depicts actual past events that happened in Malaysia. Secondly, according to Ng and Lee (2019), one of the factors that could encourage users to translanguage is informal settings. Comic books are depicted as light reads, hence, the settings of comic books are often informal and this encourages the use of translanguaging. In Ng's comic, the management of Covid-19 pandemic is intrinsically linked to actual past events and the political scene. As political contents are usually touchy, the use of translanguaging in the characters' dialogues in reference to serious situations help to reduce its sensitivity through humour.

To find out young Malaysian adults' perceptions on the use of translanguaging in the comic book, individual interviews were carried out. The questions asked include:

1. Is the use of translanguaging regular between you and your friends or family? In what kind of situation?
2. What was the impression you had when coming across the use of translanguaging in the comic book? How do you feel about it?
3. Was the author's intention of including translanguaging in his comic book intentional? Why do you think so?
4. Since the setting of the comic book is based in Malaysia, in what way did the use of translanguaging depict the way Malaysians speak?
5. In your opinion, how should the use of translanguaging be used in comic books?

PARTICIPANTS

For this research, purposive sampling was used. Ng's comic book was examined and examples of translanguaging used were extracted to answer research question one (1).

To answer research question two (2), five (5) participants who fulfilled the following criteria were selected for interviews:

1. Malaysians
2. 18-30 years old
3. Aware of the use of translanguaging in written literature

One of the researchers chose the participants by going through Ernest Ng's followers on Instagram. 12 Instagram users who have interacted with Ng's social media posts were contacted through Instagram direct message and invited to participate in the interview. All of the Instagram users took between 3 to 5 days to respond to the direct message and the first five respondents who fulfilled the criteria above and agreed to be interviewed were selected for this study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Jakobson's (1987) six (6) language functions were used as the theoretical framework of this study:

a. Directive - refers to when speakers are trying to either build an intimate relationship with the hearer, persuade hearer, request information, or attract attention.
b. Expressive - speakers express their emotions or feelings and their bilingual identity.
c. Referential - the way speakers translanguage to maintain or facilitate conversation, deliver accurate meanings of words/concepts, elaborate their ideas or incorporate habitual terms or references in their discourse.
d. Phatic - the use of non-referential language to express feelings or create a sociable atmosphere.
e. Metalinguistic - the use of language to talk about itself.
f. Poetic - compressed form of words. Its language qualities compete for attention with the message's meaning.

The language functions in Jakobson's (1987) framework are helpful in describing the use of translanguaging. Lee (2020) has used Jakobson's framework to analyse the use of translanguaging in verbal communication while this study attempts to apply Jakobson's framework in the analysis of the use of translanguaging in comics. As explained by Jakobson (1987) himself, the model is applicable for all different types of communication in a wide range of applications.

In cases whereby overlappings between the six categories of language functions occur, the researcher analysed them accordingly. In other words, a translanguaging utterance could be categorised to be having different language functions.

PROCEDURE

To find out the functions of translanguaging, all the examples of the use of translanguaging in the comic book were compiled and then categorised according to Jakobson's (1987) six language functions. The categorisation was done by one of the authors and checked by two colleagues who are graduates of Master's Degree in languages and linguistics. The score of the inter-rater reliability test was 88.24%, and this means that the coders agreed to 15 out of the 17 codes (functions of translanguaging). The remaining 2 codes were later discussed and verified by the other author who owns a doctorate in applied linguistics.

The English translation of the Malay words found in the comic was added in parentheses to aid the understanding of readers who do not know the meaning of the Malay words. The translation was cross-checked by the Malaysian authors who are proficient in both Malay and English. Albeit having no formal translation training, the authors are scholars of languages and linguistics.

As for the interviews, the participants who fulfilled the criteria in *Participants* were approached and their consent to be part of this research was asked. Prior to the interview, the participants were sent a few strips from the comic book that showed the use of translanguaging. Researcher's email address and personal number were provided along with the consent form in the event if participants had questions regarding the interviews or the comic strips. The interviews were done a week later through individual voice calls. These voice call interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically.

FINDINGS

There were a total of 18 translanguaging occurrences in the comic book *If Malaysia was Anime: Covidball Z*. Table 1 shows the translanguaging occurrences which were categorised according to their functions.

TABLE 1. List of translanguaging occurrences

Functions	Occurrence(s)	Percentage
Directive	1	5.56%
Expressive	1	5.56%
Referential	8	44.4%
Phatic	-	0%
Metalinguistic	1	5.56%
Poetic	7	38.8%

TRANSLANGUAGING IN THE COMIC BOOK

The comic book was examined. all translanguaging occurrences in the comic book were extracted and were categorised according to Jakobson's (1987) six language functions and were discussed further following their purpose and reason why the author decided to include them in the comic book. The interviews, on the contrary, were transcribed and applied to look into the participants' perceptions on the translanguaging used.

REFERENTIAL FUNCTION

The most used function of translanguaging in this comic book is the referential function. It appeared 8 out of 18 occurrences (44.4%). The first example of translanguaging with referential function is as follows:

> Character A: THIS COVID DON'T SCARE ME!
> Character B: LET'S GATHER!
> Character C: I WON'T KENA COVID LAH! (I WON'T GET COVID LAH!) - ***lah*** is a prominent
>   discourse particle in Malaysian English.
> Character D: LET'S ***BALIK KAMPUNG***! (LET'S GO BACK TO OUR HOMETOWN)
> Character E: JOGGING TIME!
> Character F: ***JOM*** MAMAK! (LET'S MAMAK)
>
> (Ng, 2020, p. 31)

"Let's *balik kampung*" said by character D shows a referential function in which Malaysians habitually use when referencing that they want to go back to their home village. The term *balik kampung* is a commonly used term amongst Malaysians to show their act of going back to their hometown. The phrase is often and commonly used during festive seasons such as Hari Raya (Eid) celebration whereby most Malaysians, especially Muslims, would take a few days leave from work and visit their parents in their hometown village. Hence, the author used the phrase

balik kampung in his comic to show how Malaysians would translanguage using commonly or habitually used phrases. The word *Jom* said by character F is also an example of a referential function of habitually used words amongst Malaysians. Malaysians would usually say *Jom* to their family, friends and even colleagues as an expression of invitation. In this context, character F said *Jom mamak* meaning he is inviting his friend(s) out to eat at an Indian Muslim restaurant (mamak). The expression of invitation using the word *Jom* is habitually common as well.

The second example appears on page 34 of the comic book:

<blockquote>
Character A: ***BOMOH***! HELP ME FIND HIS WEAK SPOT!
(SHAMAN! HELP ME FIND HIS WEAK SPOT!)
Character B : I'M ON IT!
</blockquote>

Bomoh is the Malay word referring to a shaman. The translanguaging function here shows a referential function through which the use of the word *Bomoh* in Malaysia became common since the event of Malaysian MH370 plane that went missing in 2014. During the sorrowful tragedy that received national attention, a group of self-proclaimed shamans, or *bomoh* in Malay offered help to search for the missing plane (BBC Trending, 2014). Ever since then, the word *bomoh* has been commonly used by Malaysians to mock the self-proclaimed group of shamans. Recently, one of the self-proclaimed shaman, who declared himself as the *Raja bomoh* (Shaman king), resurfaced in a Youtube video uploaded on 19 March 2020 in accordance to the pandemic outbreak. In that video, he is seen to be performing a ritual that he claimed will create a shield around Malaysia that can protect the nation from diseases (Zikri, 2020).

The third example is on page 51:

<blockquote>
Character A: ***MAK CIK*** KIAH (AUNTY KIAH)
Character B: THANK YOU.
</blockquote>

Another referential function can be seen when the author used the word *Mak cik* to refer to an elderly Malay woman instead of aunty to convey how actual Malaysians would address an elderly woman in Malaysia. Malaysia, home to a multiracial community, has preferences on how we would address other people, especially amongst Malaysians. For Malay elders, Malaysians would usually address them by *Mak cik* or *Pak cik*, as for other ethnicity elders, Malaysians would often use *aunty* and *uncle* to address them accordingly. Furthermore, *Mak cik* or Aunty in English is widely used, encompassing a wide range of social roles, identities, and interpersonal relationships, reflecting acculturations to a society (Lee & Shanmuganathan, 2020). *Mak cik* Kiah is actually an imaginary figure made by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as an example of what Malaysians should be expecting when receiving the *Bantuan Prihatin Nasional* from the government during his speech in March 2020. Hence, the use of *Mak cik* Kiah here is referential in terms of referring to Malay elderly as well as referring to the imaginary person mentioned by the Prime Minister.

The fourth example is as follows:

<blockquote>
Character A: ***MAK CIK KIAH***? (AUNTY KIAH)
Character B: WHO IS THAT?
Character C: ***SIAPA KAH***? (WHO IS SHE?)
Character D: ***MAK CIK KIAH TU SIAPA***? (WHO IS AUNTY KIAH?)
Character E: ***SIAPA TU***? (WHO IS THAT?)
Character F: SHE SELL ***GORENG PISANG***? (BANANA FRITTERS)
Character G: **WO PUCU TAO*** (I DON'T KNOW) *Mandarin
</blockquote>

<div align="right">(Ng, 2020, p. 53)</div>

The above extract again shows a referential function of translanguaging with the use of *Mak cik* Kiah. In addition, the excerpt shows another referential function in which character F used the phrase *goreng pisang* to refer to banana fritters, a common term Malaysians use to mean banana fritters. The phrase *She sell goreng pisang* is also grammatically incorrect according to both English and Malay language rules to portray colloquial Malaysian English that is common in Malaysia. According to Lee (2015), colloquial Malaysian English has a system of its own that includes:

1. Tendency of dropping subject pronouns for referential pronouns (Eg. Always say cannot, cannot. [You always prohibit me from doing anything])
2. Using plural forms of uncountable nouns (Eg. -Informations [Uncountable noun])
3. Using simple past forms for present perfect form (Eg. -You eat already? [Have you ate?])
4. Using invariant present tense form (Eg. -She come yesterday [She came yesterday]
5. Inaccurate word order (Eg. -You take this for me can? [Can you take this for me?])

The use of colloquial Malaysian English in the excerpt above shows influence of the verbs in Malay language are not marked for tenses. *She sell goreng pisang* is a direct translation of the Malay sentence *Dia jual goreng pisang*, another distinct feature of colloquial Malaysian English. This particular phrase also represents the directive function as the character translanguage to the Malay language mid-sentence to probably attract attention from the other characters or have an intimate relationship with the other characters. *Goreng pisang* is also grammatically incorrect as *pisang goreng* is the grammatically acceptable term for banana fritters. As the author is Malaysian, we could assume that his characters are of different races and this particular character, character F, can be assumed that Malay is not his/her first language. This character used his/her knowledge of the Malay language to guess who this mysterious *Mak cik* Kiah character is, hence, using the system of colloquial Malaysian English to ask the question.

The fifth and last example is on page 109:

Character A: ***DAH DAH MINUM AIR SUAM*** (IT'S OKAY DRINK WARM WATER)
Character B: ***SAYA NAK CAKAP 500 PESERTA! BUKAN NEGARA!*** (I WANTED TO SAY 500 PARTICIPANTS! NOT COUNTRIES!)
Character A: ***BIAR AIR TOLAK PERASAAN NEGATIF MASUK ASID PERUT*** (LET THE WATER PUSH THE NEGATIVE EMOTIONS INTO YOUR STOMACH ACID)
Character B: ***SAYA DIIKTIRAF SATU DUNIA TAU!*** (I'M RECOGNISED WORLD WIDE YOU KNOW!)
Character A: ***OK TAHNIAH TAHNIAH*** (OK CONGRATULATIONS CONGRATULATIONS)

The whole conversation above is in Malay . It serves as a reference to the event in which Dr Adham Baba, the Health Minister of Malaysia in 2020, explained about Covid-19 situation to UMNO's (United Malays National Organisation) president Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi during a live video conference. In the actual event, Dr. Adham Baba accidentally said 500 countries instead of 500 participants. The author deliberately uses Malay here as an attempt to link it to the actual past event.

The referential function is prominently displayed in this comic book by the author to display the Malaysian way of speaking and identity. As stated by Shahrebabaki (2018), the way you speak contributes to the identity of the speech community. For this reason, the author relates readers with his comic book through the use of common Malaysian words and phrases into his comic book.

The poetic function was used 7 out of 18 occurrences (38.8%) in this comic book. The first example which can be seen on page 13 is as shown below:

Character A: ***MAKAN MANA MALAM NI***?
              (WHERE ARE WE EATING TONIGHT?
Character B: ***DIAMLAH***! (SHUT UP!)

This is a poetic function of translanguaging by which the author translanguage to Malay to add a sense of humour to his readers. Based on a study by Lee (2020) in analysing the function of translanguaging performed by Korean-American students, she discovered that the Korean-American students used poetic function of translanguaging only when they want to add a sense of humour into their conversation by making jokes or exaggerating their statements. To contextualise, in February 2020, former Malaysia's Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Razak posted on Facebook *"Azmin, makan mana malam ni?"* (Azmin, where should we eat tonight?) to mock Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali's previous post of having breakfast in his house earlier that morning before his effort to form a back door government was rejected by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Malaysia's prime minister at that time. Datuk Seri Najib's post had media and citizens' attention when Malaysians assumed it was insinuated to mock Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali's failed effort. This rationalises the author's use of translanguaging in a poetic function to add a sense of humour into his comic book. Additionally, as the translanguage employed prompt emotions, this excerpt could also be read as an example of an expressive function.

The second example is on page 33 is "***Air suam*** *no jutsu!*. When directly translated, it means "Warm water technique" whereby *air suam* is warm water in Malay and *no jutsu* is 'technique' in Japanese. *No jutsu* is a reference to the Japanese anime "Naruto" that is quite famous in Malaysia. The function of this translanguaging is poetic, adding humour in the comic book by relating the situation to a previous Malaysian situation whereby the Health Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba spread false information on how to curb the spread of Covid-19 virus. As per his statement, according to Malaysia Kini (2020), the health minister stated that by drinking warm water, Covid-19 can be avoided. The statement was made on TV1 live television broadcast during a Covid-19 update on 20 March 2020 and was criticized for spreading misleading information. Hence, the author used a*ir suam no jutsu!* as a poetic function by which it adds humour to the comic book.

The third example of poetic function "***TEROPONG BOMOH*** NO JUTSU!" appears in page 35. This example shows a poetic function of translanguaging whereby the author's intention is to add humour in his comic book. *Teropong bomoh no jutsu* is another attempt to mock the group of shamans relating to the MH370 incident. To break it down, *teropong* means binoculars in Malay. During the MH370 incident, the group of shamans brought several binoculars to look for the MH370 missing plane. The act was mocked by the whole nation and even now, the author used the incident to add a sense of humour in his comic book. *No jutsu* is the second reference to the anime "Naruto".

The fourth example "***PRIHATIN*** TENSEI!" is on page 49. In this example, *prihatin* is the Malay term for concern. The author of the comic book used the word *prihatin* as a referral to the government aid program *Bantuan Prihatin Nasional* which was aimed to help Malaysians who are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Secondly, *tensei,* meaning technique in Japanese, is another

referral to the Japanese anime, "Naruto". The author used the phrase *prihatin tensei* as a comical element to arouse spontaneous irony by adding humour.

The fifth example is on page 74:

Character A:	***BANG~ CARA SIDAI BAJU MACAM INI LAH~~~! CANTIK TAK* MAKE UP *SAYA~~? *GELAK MANJA**** (HONEY, THIS IS THE WAY TO DO THE LAUNDRY~~~! IS MY MAKE UP BEAUTIFUL?) *Manja laugh'*
Character B:	Your friend ah bro?
Character A:	***JANGANLAH MARAH MARAH~~*** (DON'T BE MAD~~)

In the example above, Character A is using a mockery sense of humour in a poetic function that is directed to the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia (KPWKM). The author's usage of "***JANGANLAH MARAH MARAH~~***" elicits emotions that serve as an expressive function, while the use of tilde "~~" suggests that the character is trying to be flirty or 'manja' (displaying a sense of clinginess or childlike manner in order to be pampered) through playful speech (Dictionary.com. 2022). In March 2020, KPWKM took to Instagram (Social media photo sharing application) the ways or tips women should perform in order to avoid arguments between spouses during the first Malaysian Movement Control Order 1.0 (MCO). This evoked public uproar amongst Malaysians, especially women, that find the Instagram post sexist and demeaning in view of the fact that the instagram post subtly suggests that women should act accordingly to prevent arguments between spouses. Many Malaysians feel that the Instagram post is putting unnecessary pressure on women and they believe both men and women have a role in maintaining peace and harmony in the family. KPWKM since then had taken down the post and apologised publicly.

The sixth example of a poetic function is on page 84 of the comic book:

Character A:	HEY! ***JOM*** TIK TOK! ***KESANA, KESINI*** (HEY! LET'S TIK TOK! HERE AND THERE)
Character B:	SHUT UP LAH! CAN YOU TAKE THIS SERIOUS??

Kesana, kesini shows the poetic function of adding humour into the comic book since the use of the phrase *kesana kesini* received a national backlash from Malaysians. This refers to when Malaysia's Minister of Higher Education, Noraini Ahmad, urged Malaysians to join a Tik Tok (social media video sharing application) contest and did a short video of herself giving an example of how the Tik Tok video should be in 2020. *Kesana kesini* actually refers to a statement Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin made on a press conference announcement which urged Malaysians to stay home and to not go *kesana kesini* (here and there) to stay safe from Covid-19 (. The Tik Tok video resulted in, again, public uproar since a lot of Malaysians feel that instead of campaigning and urging Malaysians to join a video contest, Malaysian ministers should focus on the global pandemic and not dancing to parody remixes of the speech.

The last example of a poetic function "***500 NEGARA* NO JUTSU!!!*" is on page 107. This example fulfils the poetic function by adding a sense of humour. *500 negara* is a referral to Dr Adham Baba, Malaysia's Health Minister who unintentionally remarked that he had a video conference with WHO (World Health Organisation) with 500 other countries instead of 500 participants worldwide. This received multiple comments from Malaysians as there are only 195 countries in the world and when Dr Adham Baba proudly exaggerating he had the video conference with 500 other countries, Malaysians took to themselves and expressed their feelings regarding the

matter on social media platforms. The author, once again, used irony in invoking a sense of humour to his targeted Malaysian readers.

EXPRESSIVE FUNCTION

Other than poetic and referential function, the translanguaging used in the comic book reflects an expressive function only once which is shown in page 26 of the comic book:

> Character A: I'M OUT. HE'S YOUR PROBLEM NOW.
> Character B: ***WOI***!! (HEY!!)

The excerpt above shows expressive language function whereby character B expresses his emotion of dissatisfaction with character A for leaving him in the midst of an emergency situation. To put in context, character A was supposed to be the leader of the country and defend against the enemy (Covid-19) but he left as soon as character B stepped into the picture. Instead of working together, character A left, leaving character B feeling dissatisfied and cheated. The author used *WOI* (Malay), instead of HEY (English) to exhibit actual spontaneous Malaysian reaction, especially Malays, when presented with that kind of situation. According to Ye (2004), the most spontaneous expression of feelings using interjections is in the first language.

METALINGUISTIC FUNCTION

Metalinguistic function is only used once in the comic book and is shown in page 39:

> Character A: IT'S NOT CALLED ***KOBIS***. ***KOBIS*** IS CABBAGE

The excerpt above shows a metalinguistic function to facilitate communication. On page 39, character A was correcting the other character as he had said *Kobis* instead of Covid. This excerpt shows that character A has a broader language knowledge than the other character. As seen in plain sight, character A was able to distinguish the other character's error of equalising the word *kobis* with Covid. This is highly because the enunciation of the word Covid when comparing it with the word *kobis* (cabbage) in Malay is almost the same. The word *kobis* as understood by the other character shares the same perception and interpretation of linguistic input with Covid however, in fact it differs.

DIRECTIVE FUNCTION

Other than that, the directive function of translanguaging is shown in page 53:

> Character A: ***MAK CIK KIAH***? (AUNTY KIAH)
> Character B:WHO IS THAT?
> Character C: ***SIAPA KAH***? (WHO IS SHE?)
> Character D: ***MAK CIK KIAH TU SIAPA***? (WHO IS AUNTY KIAH?)
> Character E: ***SIAPA TU***? (WHO IS THAT?)
> Character F: SHE SELL *GORENG PISANG*?
> Character G: **WO PUCU TAO*** (I DON'T KNOW) *Mandarin

In the excerpt above, Characters C, D and E show the directive function of translanguaging whereby they are requesting information from a fellow character regarding who *Mak cik Kiah* might be. Characters C, D and E, presumably are Malays asking other Malay characters who the mentioned *Mak cik Kiah* is. Hence, the directive function of translanguaging was used as the characters are requesting additional information. Other than that, it is also a directive function to show the relationship the characters have with one another. Lastly, *Wo pucu tao* is actually Mandarin for "I don't know" and the use here is to show language flexibility in Malaysia.

Based on all 18 examples, only five out of six functions of translanguaging according to Jakobson's (1987) language functions can be found in the comic book which are poetic, referential, expressive, metalinguistic and directive. Considering the comic book is of non-fiction/humour genres, the use of poetic function is the most prominent and predictable as the author wanted to add comedy elements in his comic book. According to Jakobson (1987), poetic function refers to the attitude towards the communication as a whole and focuses on the aesthetic function of the language. Hence, the author repeatedly takes advantage of words and phrases from past events and includes them in his comic book as attempts to bring his readers to reminisce events that raised concerns in Malaysia but when looking back into it, many would find it amusing especially when using them in comical contexts.

The referential function is also used extensively due to the reason that the author included common Malaysians' way of speaking in his comic book to depict real Malaysian communication skills. The referential function focused on the communication context (Kanaza, 2020). In this context, the author translanguage in a referential manner to generally insert Malaysian way of communicating in his comic book. Assuming that the author's target audience are Malaysian adults, inserting the Malaysians way of speech could give readers a sense of place as the way they typically speak is inserted into the comic book. Thus, the author relates readers to his comic by using readers' language identity, the way they normally speak.

Expressive, metalinguistic and directive functions are used to show Malaysians' spontaneous dual language knowledge reactions. Additionally, expressive and directive functions use of translanguaging in the comic book portrays and represents characters' identities as plurilingual speakers living in Malaysia. Although the expressive function was only used once, the author did not skip on the opportunity to express the character's feelings of dissatisfaction with another character in the Malaysian way. The author opted to use translanguaging and express the character's feelings by using a Malay word of expression in an attempt to create a Malaysian bilingual speaker's spontaneous reaction. The directive function, however, was used by the author to attract attention to the character and/or to show the intimate relationship the characters have with one another to the point where they are comfortable to translanguage amongst themselves. Comparably, the metalinguistic function was used by one of the characters in the comic book to show the character's knowledge of both English and Malay to correct another character's pronunciation of the word "Covid".

The author did not use the phatic function of translanguaging since phatic functions are socio-pragmatic functions that are normally employed for social cues in situational circumstances.

YOUNG ADULTS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF TRANSLANGUAGING

The five participants who were interviewed in this study were 2 males and 3 females who were between 18 and 30 years old. As shown in the quotation below, they were fluent in 2 or more languages and often mixed the languages in their everyday conversation.

"I would use phrases like "dabao" and "ane". You know, common Chinese and Indian words that we Malaysians always use."

(Participant 3)

The participants reacted positively to the translanguaging used in the comic book as most of them point out the fact that Malaysians' way of communicating is "uniquely beautiful" (participant 3). They feel that the use of both Malay and English language is normal since it is the way Malaysians speak. Participant 4 thinks it is a great approach to discover and gain new words, based on the way it is presented. When asked if the use of translanguaging in the comic book was intentional, participant 2 stated that the characters were speaking like "true" Malaysians, hence agreeing that the comic book characters were translanguaging intentionally. Without exception, every participant believes that translanguaging should be used in other comic books and future literary works by other authors/illustrators. Participant 5 considers that there are benefits and disadvantages in the use of translanguaging but she mentioned that if the use can cause people to read more, based on the creative way of writing, then comic artists should consider applying it. She then added, "translanguaging is a great style of writing and communicating which serves the purpose of delivering a message".

All the Malaysian interviewees admitted that they do use translanguaging in their everyday lives as the mixed ethnicities of Malaysians make the use of translanguaging inevitable and common. The use of translanguaging in the comic book did not take them by surprise and positive feedback was given by all interviewees. The interviewees felt that the use of translanguaging in Malaysia is common, therefore, the use of it in a comic book illustrated by Malaysian comic artists is expected and they believe that the use is intentional and fully planned. The interviewees also perceived that the use of translanguaging in the comic book successfully depicts how Malaysians speak in real life. As translanguaging received positive perception from the interviewees, comic artists should continue the use of it in their comic books.

CONCLUSION

Translanguaging in a multilingual community is considered as a norm as speakers would often mix their language knowledge together to form a complex language structure that creates meaning. Code-switching and translanguaging, when employed by plurilingual speakers, should be considered as a standard practice as speakers exercise their language knowledge in a single form of communication. The use of translanguaging in a plurilingual country exceeds the educational settings as speakers practice their translanguaging skills beyond classroom settings. Having said that, this research aimed to look into the use of translanguaging in a comic book set in Malaysia, one of the many multilingual countries in the world.

In terms of language functions, five out of six Jakobson's (1987) language functions are presented in the comic book *"If Malaysia Was Anime: Covidball Z"*. The poetic and referential functions are the most significant language functions that were used in the comic book as the author strives to exhibit his Malaysian identity in his writing. The phatic function on the other hand was not used as the use is mostly for social interaction that uses non-referential language to create a sociable atmosphere between speakers and hearers. The interviews achieved positive attitudes on the use of translanguaging. Participants felt that translanguaging practices are ordinary occurrences in Malaysia, even when the use is in writings. Based on the interviews, the participants

also encouraged illustrators/comic writers to use translanguaging in their comic books that will display the unique communication skills plurilinguals possess.

This is a small case study in which the results and data collected do not represent the whole population, and only a small sample took part in this research. Future researchers should also look into the author's other work and compare the use of translanguaging. This will allow a more in-depth research that can help generalise the reason and functions of translanguaging use. Another recommendation is to consider analysing two or three Malaysian comic artists' work and compare the findings. By making comparisons of different comic artists, the reasons and functions of translanguaging in Malaysian comic books could be explored with a more in-depth explanation. In addition, future researchers could also look into other types of literary works that exhibit the use of translanguaging.

This comic book is one of the many examples that show the use of translanguaging in literary works has grown especially in multilingual countries such as Malaysia. Directors, script writers and artists like Ernest Ng use translanguaging to demonstrate language flexibility of plurilingual speakers in multilingual countries. This suggests that the use of translanguaging in literature works, including comic books, is effective in representing language versatility by plurilingual speakers and future authors should continue to employ translanguaging in their works as a representation of plurilingual speakers. Additionally, a few of the translanguaging utterances used in the comic book overlap between the six functions in Jakobson's framework; representing more than one function. The flexibility of translanguaging in comic books is demonstrated by the fact that, if the author is imaginative or creative, the language he uses may engage with some of the six functions in Jakobson's framework, fulfilling more than one purpose.

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