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LANGUAGE COMBINATION IN EFL BILINGUAL INSTRUCTION: A DISCOURSE-ANALYTIC STUDY OF TEACHER CODE-SWITCHING

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Abstract

This study examines the code-switching practices of EFL teachers in bilingual classrooms through the approach of discourse analysis. Using a descriptive qualitative design, data were collected through classroom observations, transcriptions, and interviews with a bilingual EFL teacher. The findings reveal that the teacher used three types of code-switching: tag-switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching, which were all used strategically during the class. For all types of code-switching, the teacher used these to explain complex material (instructional), to manage classroom activities (managerial), and to encourage or connect with students (interpersonal). Rather than hindering successful language acquisition, in fact, code-switching provides a supportive scaffold that enhances comprehension, active participation, and teaching efficacy. This paper emphasizes the relevance of code-switching within pedagogy and adds to the existing literature on bilingual pedagogy within EFL teaching contexts.

Keywords: *Code-switching, bilingual classroom, EFL teacher.*

Introduction

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, the use of two languages has become a common practice, especially in Indonesia. One practice that stands out is code-switching. Gumperz (1982) defines code-switching as the linguistic practice of using two or more languages within a single interaction by multilingual speakers. In an EFL classroom, code-switching takes place when the teacher switches from the target language (English) to the students' first language (Indonesian), or the other way around, for some teaching-related reason.

As described by Poplack (1980), code-switching can be divided into three major categories: tag-switching, which involves the insertion of short tags from another language into the target language; inter-sentential switching, which occurs at the end of one sentence and the beginning of another; and intra-sentential switching, which takes place within a single sentence. According to Mattsson and Burenhult (1999), bilinguals or multilinguals often code-switching for various reasons, including instructional (explanation of a lesson or guidance), managerial (structuring and running the class), and interpersonal (creating or establishing relationships with or among students).

From my perspective, code-switching is not just about language choice, but rather code-switching is more appropriately categorized as one of the pedagogical strategies used by a teacher to explain, calm, and create a proportional balance in the classroom atmosphere. When used appropriately, code-switching helps maintain the flow of learning, clarify complex content, and strengthen the relationship between teacher and students, especially in contexts where students may not be fully confident in the target language.

In the context of teaching strategies, code-switching occurs rather spontaneously. For instance, a teacher may try to explain difficult grammar concepts by using a student's language or even switch to another language to connect with the students. However, some people believe that code-switching makes it difficult to learn the target language. In fact, when looked at more closely, code-switching tends to act as a form of scaffolding that enhances the understanding of the material (Macaro, 2005). Some experts, like Cook (2001) and Garcia (2009), consider code-switching not only as a communicative phenomenon but also as a pedagogically useful device in teaching and learning.

Many researchers have started to examine the impact of code-switching done by EFL teachers as bilingual approaches to education gain traction. A study by Adriosh and Razı (2019) found that code-switching serves significant teaching and management roles in classroom interaction rather than just switching between languages. Their results underline that teachers purposefully use code-switching to help meaning negotiation, clarify difficult subjects, and keep classroom control, therefore stressing its educational value beyond simple language replacement.

In the same way, Nguyen, Grainger, and Carey (2016) report in their research conducted on EFL classes in Vietnam that code-switching could enhance students' understanding, particularly with complicated subjects such as grammar and abstract vocabulary. The use of the students' mother tongue offered meaning and helped improve interaction in class. Next, Wang and Curdt-Christiansen (2019) noted that code-switching is affected by the teacher's professionalism and school policies, as well as the practical needs of communication. Their study indicates that teachers purposefully employ both English and the local language at different times to gain control over the classroom context.

In Indonesia, Puspawati (2018) researched teachers' use of code-switching in EFL classrooms and found that it served important instructional and interpersonal functions. The teachers resorted to code-switching to relax, build rapport with learners, and underscore specific points. The study also noted that students felt more at ease and confident in class when teachers used familiar language. Wibowo, Rahmawati, and Kamil (2021) also showed that code-switching helps teachers be more effective and improves communication between students. When students are not speaking English frequently, using their first language helps them feel more confident and improves how they interact with others in the classroom. This is especially true when giving instructions or praise.

Although these studies are useful, they focus more on measuring the level of code-switching and the reasons for it. They ignore the social context, communicative intentions, and broader discourse consequences of this practice. In other words, knowledge about how teachers use code-switching to build relational, instructional, and interactional dynamics with students in bilingual classrooms is very limited. Furthermore, hardly any studies conducted in Indonesia have explored this topic from a discourse analysis perspective.

Based on the background above, the aim of this study is to explore the code-switching practices carried out by EFL teachers in bilingual classrooms using a discourse analysis approach. In this study, I focus on the forms and functions of code-switching, the motivations behind the communication carried out, and how code-switching reflects pedagogical strategies and the social relationships between teachers and students. This study not only provides an overview of the practice of language combination in a more complex classroom but also makes a real contribution to the development of more contextual and responsive teaching strategy practices in multilingual education.

Research Methodology

The design of the research was a descriptive qualitative design guided by discourse analysis. This approach was chosen to explore and understand the meaning behind the teacher's code-switching practices within bilingual classroom interactions. Discourse analysis is relevant to this study as language is perceived as a form of social action with its educational, cultural, and social context (Fairclough, 2003). Qualitative methods are the best fit to the study's context because they respond to intricate issues, especially those related to human interactions (Creswell, 2014).

This research was conducted at one of the vocational high schools in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, SMK Negeri 1 Barru, which is well known for implementing English teaching using a bilingual approach. The main participant of this study was an EFL teacher who was chosen through purposive sampling because of certain defined characteristics: active teaching in a bilingual classroom, frequent and strategic use of two languages during instruction, and willingness to participate in observations and interviews. Data were obtained from classroom observations, audio and video recordings, transcriptions of classroom discourse, and semi-structured interviews to examine the teacher's rationale and objectives for code-switching in the classroom.

Fairclough (2003) described Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a three-dimensional analysis of the data. First, the type of code-switching was textually analyzed using Poplack's (1980) classification of tag-switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching. Second, discursive practice analysis explored the functions of code-switching at the instructional, managerial, and interpersonal levels as outlined by Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) Third, social practice analysis examined the windows of code-switching in regard to the teaching relations and strategies used with students in the bilingual classroom setting.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings of the observations carried out in one of the bilingual classes in SMK Negeri 1 Barru show that switching code is an integral part of EFL teaching practices. The use of code-switching does not appear to be random but rather as part of intentional pedagogical strategies to aid comprehension, classroom management, and social interactions. According to Poplack (1980), there are three types of code-switching: tag-switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching. Each of these forms of code switching has different functions depending on the context in which it is used.

An example of Tag-switching was found where the teacher brought in short Indonesian phrases into English. This was often used to confirm students' understanding or to emphasize certain information.

Teacher : "You already understand this part, kan?"

Teacher : "Let's continue with the next exercise, ya."

The use of the words "kan" and "ya" in this context serves as interregional communication facilitators to create a relaxed atmosphere between students and teachers. The teacher seems to

deliberately use an Indonesian tag to make students feel comfortable and less depressed when directed in English.

In the interview with the teacher, she explained that these inserts are used to "read the students' situations" and make the class more vibrant.

> *"Kalau saya terlalu kaku pakai full English, siswa malah diam. Tapi kalau saya sisipkan kata kata yang familiar, mereka ikut engage."* (Teacher's interview, 2025)
> *(If I use full English too rigidly, the students are just silent. But when I slip in some familiar words, they become more engaged).* (Teacher's interview, 2025)

Next, inter-sentential switching was found as the teacher was explaining new material. Teachers often begin and also clarify in English and then repeat in English to clarify intent or understanding.

> *Teacher : "We use the simple past tense to describe completed actions in the past. Misalnya, kamu mau bilang 'Saya makan pagi tadi', kamu harus pakai bentuk lampau 'I ate breakfast this morning.'"*
> *(We use the simple past tense to describe completed actions in the past. For example, if you want to say 'Saya makan pagi tadi', you must use the past tense, 'I ate breakfast this morning).*

> *Teacher : "Modal verbs like 'can', 'may', and 'must' show ability, permission, or obligation. Jadi, kalau kamu mau bilang 'boleh', pakai 'may' atau 'can', tergantung konteksnya."*
> *(Modal verbs like 'can', 'may', and 'must' show ability, permission, or obligation. So, if you want to say 'boleh', use 'may' or 'can', depending on the context).*

In this case, the instructional functions are most dominant. The teacher switches to Indonesian when she realizes that the material is quite abstract or even difficult, especially in the grammar section. This aligns with the opinions of Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) regarding instructional code-switching, which is used to help students understand difficult concepts by using simpler language.

Meanwhile, intra-sentential switching can be found in daily routine instructions, especially when the teacher gives administrative direction. The teacher can more easily use two languages in one sentence to achieve communication efficiency and effectiveness.

> *Teacher : "Setelah itu, please kumpulkan worksheet-nya ke meja saya, jangan lupa tulis nama."*
> *(After that, please collect the worksheet on my desk, don't forget to write your name)*

> *Teacher : "Kalau sudah selesai diskusinya, you can share your answer ke teman sebelahmu."*
> *(If you are done with the discussion, you can share your answer with the friend next to you)*

Teacher : *"Take out your buku catatan, we will write some expressions today."*
(Take out your notebook, we will write some expressions today)

This type of code-switching is used in the context of managerial functions, for example, in managing classroom activities, giving instruction, and managing time. The use of two languages in one sentence facilitates communication, and it helps students' understanding of instructions.

Besides academically, code-switching has also served the purpose of helping teachers build social relations with students. Teachers seem to frequently code-switch to Indonesian or mix it with English when trying to motivate, empathize, or lighten the mood.

Teacher : "Good job! Kamu sudah mulai berani bicara. That's progress!"
(Good job! You have started to be more confident in speaking. That's progress!)

Teacher : "Don't be afraid to make mistakes, salah itu biasa dalam belajar."
(Don't be afraid to make mistakes, it's totally normal when you're learning).

Teacher : "Ayo semangat, you can do it! Ibu yakin kalian semua bisa."
(Come on, you can do it! I'm sure you all can).

The use of all forms of code-switching shows the interpersonal function that helps build the emotional relationship between the teacher and the students. This is also in accordance with previous study findings that code-switching is often used to facilitate affective communication in an EFL class.

"Kalau saya motivasi pakai Bahasa Inggris semua, kadang mereka seperti tidak menangkap. Tapi kalau saya bilang 'you can do it, Ibu yakin kalian bisa', mereka senyum dan langsung semangat." (Teacher's interview, 2025)
(When I try to motivate them using full English, sometimes they don't catch on. But, when I say "you can do it! Ibu yakin kalian bisa", they smile and immediately get excited). (Teacher's interview, 2025)

The results of the observations and interviews showed that code switching is not only a bridge of understanding linguistically, but also a means of social interaction and a bilingual pedagogical reflection strategy of the social needs children. In this study the teachers employed code switching in a flexible manner. They changed languages to fit the teaching situation, students' responses, and how difficult the materials were.

Discussion

Types of Code-Switching Used by the Teacher

The findings of the study revealed that the teachers made use of three main types of code-switching: tag-switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching as classified by Poplack (1980). All three were used flexibly according to the teaching context which showed the teachers had pragmatic awareness and linguistic control in bilingual class interactions.

Tag-switching occurs with the insertion of short phrases or words in Indonesian, "kan" or "ya", into English speech. This type of switching is practiced in order to keep the flow of

communication and foster emotional closeness with the students. As explained by Holmes (2013), tag-switching often serves as a discursive marker smoothing interactions and reveals social engagement.

Inter-sentential switching occurs when a teacher says a sentence in English and switches to using Indonesia in the next sentence. This occurs quite often when a teacher is explaining difficult concepts. This reflects a teaching strategy that facilitates learning, consistent with Macaro's (2005) perspective that the mother tongue can be employed to construct cognitive aids when dealing with complex subjects.

Intra-sentential switching occurs within a single sentence that combines two languages. For example, in classroom instructions: "*Please kumpulkan worksheet-nya ke meja saya."* This type of switching, as described by Myers-Scotton (1993), represents an advanced level of bilingual competency, as it requires cross-systematic fluency at the utterance level. Thus, the teachers showed not only functional language use but also skillful flexibility in adapting their use of shifting style with the communicative objectives in the class.

Functions of Code-Switching in the Classroom

Mattsson and Burenhult (1999) classified the various types of code-switching into diverse activities such as instructional, managerial, and interpersonal functions. All three categories are essential to teaching and learning in its full scope.

The instructional function appears when the teacher explains the grammatical or vocabulary concepts of English using the Indonesian language. This makes it easier for the students to grasp complicated topics. According to Cook (2001), code switching facilitates the learning process by allowing students to form understanding from a familiar language to the novel language. Garcia (2009) also stresses that translanguaging in teaching supports knowledge construction systematically and integration of language is not rigidly separated.

The manager functions arise when the teacher organizes his or her class, does administrative work, or manages class time. In this case, the use of intra-sentential switching is very effective for conveying information rapidly. Ferguson (2003) explains that switching for managerial functions serves to improve the operational efficiency of the classroom and reduce barriers to communication.

Furthermore, interpersonal functions relate to the teacher's approaches to fostering emotional relationships with learners through motivation, praise, and affection. In a multilingual context, Garcia (2009) considers the emotional aspect of language, where teachers tend to use friendlier and more relaxed language to create a secure atmosphere for students. According to Sert (2005), the use of code-switches for interpersonal purposes contributes to the development of a supportive classroom atmosphere, which improves learners' emotional engagement with the learning activities.

The use of these various functions shows that the teachers possess a high level of sociolinguistic awareness in managing a bilingual class. Code-switching is not merely a means of communication but a pedagogical strategy that aims to address the problem of language as well as establish social ties that facilitate learning.

The findings in this research support the results of previous studies, which also indicated that code-switching provides benefits in the context of foreign language teaching. For example, the research conducted by Puspawati (2018) showed that teachers applied code-switching to build rapport with their students and ease the atmosphere of the classroom. The interpersonal function in this study also reflects these findings. According to Wibowo, Rahmati, and Kamil (2021), students think that teachers' code-switching is a good way to improve pedagogy, especially when it comes to getting students to interact with each other and reducing anxiety during communication. This is line with the study's findings that teachers switched codes to give instructions and explain complicated ideas in a way that was easy to understand.

Adriosh and Razı (2019) underlined that code-switching in EFL classrooms is more than simply switching between languages; it is a tool for meaning negotiation, classroom management, and instructional clarity. Their results back the theory that code-switching reflects the dynamic social interaction between teachers and students, which aligns the discourse analysis approach applied in this paper. At the same time, Wang and Curdt-Christiansen (2019) also note that the practice of code-switching is influenced by the professionalism of the teachers and the policies of the employing institution. This research adds the perspective that, besides those factors, the responsiveness to students' needs and the context of the materials are also key deciding factors in the teachers' decisions regarding switching.

The results of this study are important both in terms of their theory and practical implementations. From a theoretical perspective, the finding supports the view that code-switching is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a bilingual class teacher's pedagogical strategy showing her sensitivity to students' needs. Practically, EFL teachers, especially at the secondary level, may strategically employ code-switching to facilitate comprehension, maintain classroom dynamics, and foster more inclusive learning environments. The first language of the students should not be avoided, as long as it is purposeful and enhances the learning objectives.

However, there are some limitations in this research. Only one participant from one school was included, so the results cannot be generalized. There is a chance that not all the classroom dynamics were observed given the short observation period for specific class sessions. Furthermore, the interview data is restricted to the teachers' perspectives, while students, whose views regarding the influence of code-switching are crucial, were not examined in this research.

From the limitation above, it is suggested that further research should involve more participants from various schools and backgrounds in order to get a more representative picture. Further research may also add a focused group discussion method (FGD) with students to see how they define the over-coding done by teachers in the learning process. In addition, it would be interesting if further research linked how often the override code is performed with the performance of students' learning or analyzed the role of decoding at different levels of language skills (such as reading, speaking, and grammar). In this way, further research may further submerge the code as a learning strategy in more complex bilingual situations.

Conclusion

This study shows that code-switching is one of the strategies employed by EFL teachers in a bilingual classroom setting. The teachers utilize three types of code-switching, namely tag-

switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching. All of them are used according to the class situation, for example during explaining the lesson, while giving instructions, or even making the class more relaxed. This shows that code-switching is not a disruptive thing to learning but a strategy that enhances students' lesson comprehension and engagement. Using a discourse analysis approach, this research illustrates the teacher's use of two languages as a form to adapt to students' needs and the situation within the classroom.

From the functional aspect, a teacher employs code-switching for three main purposes: to assist in explaining the material (instructional), to manage the learning activities (managerial), and to establish good rapport with the students (interpersonal). The mixture of Indonesian languages in the teaching of English helped boost the students' confidence without causing stress. The findings of this study also support the previous study, which claims that code-switching increases the effectiveness of learning. Although this study adds value by paying attention to how code-switching is embedded into real talk in the classroom. In other words, code-switching is a practical teaching strategy that teachers can implement to make instruction in foreign languages clearer, more comfortable, and more responsive to the students' needs.

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