

# TEACHER'S BELIEFS ON USING CODE SWITCHING IN RELATION TO BUILDING STUDENTS' SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

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## Abstract

This study investigated the phenomenon of code switching or the use of English and Indonesian as a medium of instruction used by the English as a Foreign Language teacher in her classroom discourse. It was conducted in a seventh grade English class at one secondary school in South Sumatera, Indonesia. This case study focuses on revealing the teacher's perceptions towards her use of code switching in relation to build her students' social emotional competence. The teaching and learning processes in the classroom were recorded and transcribed to explore the occurrence of code switching in the classroom discourse. A face to face semi-structured interview with the teacher was held and analysed to see her perception and purposes of doing code switching in the class. The study results indicated that the switching between English and Indonesian in the EFL classrooms plays a positive role in building the students social emotional competence during the teaching and learning process. The main reason the teacher uses code switching is to have a better communication with her students while transferring the material or topic of discussion as well as to remind and motivate them to have higher social emotional competence in their English learning process.

## 1. Introduction

Based on the data of the quality map of the junior high school level in 2016 from the Educational Profile of South Sumatera, the standard quality of education in South Sumatera is still low, especially for the standards of evaluation, learning process, and learning results (Profil Pendidikan Provinsi Sumatera Selatan, 2016). In relation to the learning process, Abrar, et. al. (2018) also found that (1) language barriers (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency); (2) psychological factors (anxiety, attitude, and lack of motivation); and (3) learning environment (teachers, peers, and topics) were problems occurred in the EFL, especially the speaking learning context in Indonesia. Moreover, the results of an interview with two English teachers in South Sumatera also showed that the seventh grade students in junior high schools today mostly face a lot of problems during the English teaching and learning process due to the implementation of the 2013 Indonesian National Curriculum in which they did not get any knowledge or skills of English from formal elementary school anymore. This put so many burdens for these seventh grade students and made them less eager to study English. Therefore, the English teachers were afraid that this problem would cause bigger and more complex problems in the Indonesian EFL context in the future.

Meanwhile, Indonesia is a multilingual country, in which almost all people in Indonesia are capable of using at least two languages, the mother tongue and Indonesian language as their second language. Although English is still considered as a foreign language in Indonesia, most people in Indonesia especially students use English

during the English classroom discourse at schools. The languages that the English teachers and their students use during the teaching and learning process are usually the combination and/or mixing between English and Indonesian language.

Moreover, today's schools are expected to do more than they have ever done in the past. They face unprecedented challenges to educate the increasingly multicultural and multilingual students. Students nowadays come to school with much more complex social-emotional experiences. Therefore, they require social-emotional skills to achieve quality of life, including a positive academic outcome in school context.

The school culture and climate contribute to supporting students academically and social-emotionally. Therefore, integrating social emotional learning strategies into the national curriculum used in the schools is inevitably necessary. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) involves processes through which children and adults develop fundamental emotional and social competencies to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationship, and make responsible decisions. Ideally, SEL takes place within the context of safe, participatory school, family, and community environments that support children's development and provide opportunities applying these competencies.

In addition, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a nonprofit entity that advocates and provides leadership for high quality SEL programming and learning standards, in 2004 has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies or the kinds of social and emotional skills that are important for children (from preschool to high school) to develop, which include: (1) self-awareness (understanding feelings, self-confidence); (2) social awareness (respecting and understanding others, and appreciating differences between people); (3) self-management (managing emotions, being able to set goals and stick to them); (4) responsible decision making (choosing wisely and thoughtfully); and (5) relationship skills (cooperating, communicating, making friends, and resolving conflict). Moreover, Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) stated that the effect sizes from the 207 SEL interventions they reviewed averaged out to an improvement of 11% in achievement tests and 25% in social and emotional skills and a 10% decrease in classroom misbehavior, anxiety and depression, compared with pupils who received no program, effects which held up on average for at least six months after the interventions.

Students' social emotional skills are important to learning and achievement, but the social emotional competencies of their teachers may also critical to the classroom. As cited in Jennings and Greenberg (2009), there is growing recognition that teachers make a crucial contribution to the social and emotional development of their students (Birch & Ladd 1998; Hamre & Pianta 2001, 2006; Murray & Greenberg 2000; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman 2003) that has lasting effects on their lives well into adulthood (Pederson, Fatcher, & Eaton 1978). Socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioral guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation, coaching students through conflict situations, encouraging cooperation among students, and acting as a role model for respectful and appropriate communication and exhibitions of prosocial behavior (Jennings & Greenberg 2009).

As proposed by Yoder (2014), teacher language which refers to how the teachers talk to students is one of the important social teaching practices to facilitate the development of student social, emotional, and academic skills in the classroom. Teacher should encourage students effort and work, restating what the student did and what that student needs to do in order to improve. Teacher language should also encourage students how to monitor and regulate their own behavior, not just tell students how to behave. Furthermore, teachers conducting code switching are assumed to be choosing a certain cultural and linguistic behavior in order to build the social emotional competence with their students (Hollie 2011).

According to Myer-Scotton (1997), code switching occurs when bilingual speakers switch from one language to another in the same discourse, sometimes within the same utterances. It involves the alternate use of two languages or linguistic varieties within the same utterance or during the same conversation (Hoffmann 1991). Specifically, in the context of teaching Lin (2007) defines classroom code switching as the alternating use of more than two linguistic codes in the classroom by any of the classroom participants, such as teachers and students. The functions of teacher code switching are recognized as topic switch, affective functions, and repetitive functions (Mattsson & Burenhult 1999). First, in topic switching the teacher alters his or her language considering the topic being taught. This usually occurs in teaching grammar, while students focus on the new knowledge. Next, affective functions are important in the declaration of emotions, and forming a relationship between the teacher and the student. Finally, in repetitive functions code switching is used to clarify the meaning of a word, while stressing on the content for better comprehension (Sert 2005).

In Indonesian EFL context, the use of two languages – English and Indonesian language - as a medium of instruction can be considered as a phenomenon of code switching, which can be claimed as one of the useful conversational strategies in the Indonesian EFLclassroom discourse (Suganda & Zuraida 2017). The affective function of code switching is assumed to associate with two of the five competencies in SEL, namely the social awareness and relationship skills. Social awareness involved the perspective taking, empathy, appreciatingdiversity, understanding social and ethical norm for behavior, recognizing family, school, and community supports. While, relationship skills include building relationships with diverse individual and groups, communicating clearly, working cooperatively, resoving conflicts, and seeking help.

Therefore, this study proposes to investigate the phenomenon of code switching conducted by the EFL teachers in the classroom discourse in relation to the teachers and students' social emotional competence. It focuses on revealing the teacher' perceptions towards her use of code switching in relation to build her students' social emotional competence.

## **2. Method**

This study was conducted as a descriptive qualitative case study. It was conducted in one of the seventh grade English classes ina private junior high school in South Sumatera, Indonesia. The English teacher who participated in this study was recruited and agreed to involve in this study by implementing the social emotional learning strategies during her teaching in the classroom discourse for eight weeks.

The social emotional learning strategies in this study include three main steps: (1) Silent Sitting (in the Pre activity), where students close their eyes and sit in a relaxing posture, while having the teacher reading a motivational story to prepare them for that day's lesson (2) the use of a balance teaching strategies and collaborative learning strategies, including asking open-ended questions, suggesting possible answers from which students might choose, checking with students to see if they understand what has been taught by asking them to repeat it to the teacher or to a classmate, working in a large group, in a small groups, in pairs, or by themselves, role-playing, games, and lecturing (in the Whilst activity), and (3) writing reflective journal about (i) the two things/materials from the lesson that students can do well that day, (ii) the reasons why they can do the things well, and (iii) the things they want to do well later (in the Post activity).

The data of this research were collected from the classroom observation and interview. The teaching and learning processes in the classroom were recorded (videotaped class for three times 90 minutes) and transcribed to explore the occurrence of code switching in the classroom discourse. A face to face semi-structured interview with the teacher was held and analyzed to see her perception and purposes of doing code switching in the class.

The first observation was used to identify the students' characteristics, attitudes, or social emotional competence. The results from the first to the third observation were compared in order to see the changes of the students' attitude or behaviour after coping with their English teachers who used code switching as a medium of instruction for integrating the social emotional learning strategies to teach the 2013 Curriculum based English materials and/or topics. The interview with the teacher was mainly used to find out about her perception towards the use of code switching in relation to building her students' social emotional competencies.

The validity and reliability issues were gained through triangulation of multiple data sources (interviews and videos of lessons). The qualitative procedures were used primarily in the data analysis for describing the detailed code switching used in the classroom as an attempt to explain the results of the study.

### 3. Findings and Discussions

#### 3.1. Findings

The results of the transcripts from the three times classroom observations showed that the teacher used Indonesian language and English in the classroom, and frequently switched between English and Indonesian in the classroom.

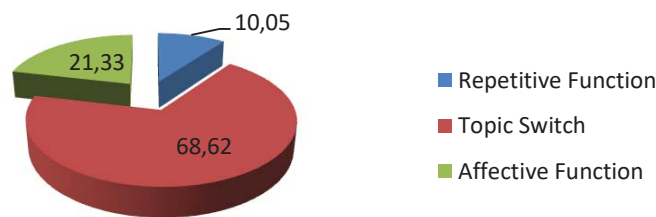
**Table 1.** The Frequency and Comparative Occurrence of the Languages Used

Language	Observation			
	1st	2nd	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Average
Full Indonesian	46.27	41.11	42.07	43.15
Full English	5.36	12.03	21.33	12.91
Code Switching	48.37	46.86	36.6	43.94

Table 1 shows the percentage of using English (12.91%) which is less dominant than Indonesian (43.15%) in the class. However, the teacher (T1) also code switched (43.94%) between English and Indonesian during the class. She kept trying to speak and explain in the Indonesian language and only inserted or used English to recall (1) the specific examples of utterances and/or expressions of the topic explained in the class, (2) the everyday expressions, such as good morning, good bye, be quite, thank you, good job, and any questions?, and (3) the vocabulary from the previous meetings. Specifically during the Silent Sitting session (in Pre-activity) the stories read by T1 were in Indonesian. From the interview session, she also claimed that she must use Indonesian in order to make the students understand and able to focus on the content of the stories.

Therefore, as seen in Figure 1 T1 only code switched between English and Indonesian 10.05% for repetitive function, 68.62% for topic switch, and 21.33% for affective function.

**Figure 1.** Functions of Code Switching



In relation to the social emotional learning focused in this study, the results of the transcripts showed that one of the several main factors in terms of purpose for T1 to use Indonesian language during the teaching and learning process was the affective function. She mostly switched from English to Indonesian when she warned and/or reminded the students about their attitudes during the class. Several main details and extracts showing the affective function of code switching conducted by the teacher (T1) during the classroom context are as follows:

**Extract 1**

- T1 : Next, Kevin Shihab.  
 S11 : [being quite and afraid to come forward to the front of the class]  
 T1 : Kevin, *tidak ada yang tidak bisa. Mengerti tadi kata Doki kan? Dia melompat, kawannya mati, dia masih berusaha. Ayo cepat, Kevin!*  
 [Kevin, **nothing is impossible. Remember what Doki said, right? He hopped, his friend died, but he kept trying. Come on, hurry up, Kevin!**]  
 Ss : [talking and whispering by themselves]  
 T1 : *Yang lain kalau mau dihargai, hargai temannya.*  
 [**Others, if you want to be appreciated, appreciate your friend.**]  
 Ss : [quite]

The Indonesian statements occurred here were made consciously by T1 to encourage S11 to try to practice his speaking in front of the class. Moreover, the statement “*Yang lain kalau mau dihargai, hargai temannya.*” was used to remind the whole class to appreciate S11 and not to be busy with their own matters.

### Extract 2

T1 : Kita tidak punya PR malahan. Catatan, Latihan, Hafalan. Itu saja bawa. Malam sebelum kamu tidur, buat jadwal langsung jadi pagi tidak lupa. Memang disuruh kerja? Tidakkan? Paling bantu orang tua kan? Nyapu, nyuci piring. Gak ada beban kalian tu. Jangan diulangi lagi. Gak mau saya ya! Saya gak mau lagi!

**[We don't even have homework. Just bring your notebook, exercise book, and recitation. That's it! At night before you go to bed, make a schedule, so the next morning you will not forget. Did you work very hard? No, right? You just help your parents to sweep the floor or wash the dish. You don't have a burden in your life. Don't repeat it. I don't want it to happen! I don't want it to happen again! ]**

Ss : [quite]

Extract 2 shows the context of situation in which one of the students forgot to bring his notebook. The Indonesian statements from T1 were used to give advice for all the students to be more responsible for their duties.

### Extract 3

Ss: [complaining about the chair with bubble gum on one of its legs]

T1: Which chair? Bangkunya di mana itu? Saya gak mau ada yang makan permen karet di kelas ini ya. Siapa lagi yang makan permen karet? Permen karet itu ada bungkusnya kan? Bungkusnya itu kamu simpen di saku. Nanti kamu pake lagi buat buang permen karetnya. Bukan ditempel bawah meja.

**[Which chair? Where is the chair? No one is allowed to eat bubble gum in this class. Who else ate bubble gum? It has the plastic wrap, right? Put it in your pocket. Use it later to wrap your bubble gum. Don't stick the bubble gum below the table!]**

Ss: [silent]

In Extract 3 some students told T1 that there was a chair with bubble gum on one of its legs. The code switching from English to Indonesian occurred here in which the Indonesian sentences used by T1 after the expression "Which chair?" were all used to warn the students in order to keep the classroom clean.

In addition, the results of the interview showed that the English teacher had positive perception towards the use of code switching for building her students' social emotional competencies. T1 claimed that she would always use Indonesian when she wanted to get angry to her students. However, she said that she would try to give advice and remind her students using positive statements, rather than speak in high pitch with negative statements.

### 3.2. Discussions

This study revealed that the teacher of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia code switched between English and Indonesian in the classroom discourse. She had positive perception towards her use of code switching during the English teaching and learning process. The English teacher conducted code switching because she wanted to have a better communication with her students while transferring the material or topic

of discussion. She always introduced the common utterances and/or expressions of English to her students, but switched and/or mixed English and Indonesian in order to make sure the students could understand her explanations. With regards to students-teacher relationship as part of a positive learning environment, code switching helps foster a better relationship with the students (Moghadam, Samad, & Shahraki 2012).

Moreover, for building the students' social emotional competencies in the classroom discourse warning and reminding the students to behave well were also the responsibility of a teacher. Using positive encouraging utterances and statements is believed to be more efficient than talking with high pitch and negative discouraging utterances and statements. This shows that teachers are at the same time trying to build students' positive characters or behaviours. It is believed that using the first language to communicate these aspects with the students is better. Therefore, the English teachers tend to switch and/or mix English and Indonesian. Conducting code switching during the teaching and learning process can be considered as the teachers' social emotional competence because teachers recognize their tendencies to use code switching while communicating with their students can affect their interaction with the students, such as to manage the behavior and relationships among them. In addition, as cited in Jennings and Greenberg (2009) the social and emotional skills of teachers influence student conduct, engagement, attachment to school, and academic performance (Baker 1999; Hawkin 1999; Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon 1997; Sutton & Wheatley 2003; Wentzel 2002), and teachers skilled at regulating their emotions report less burnout and more positive affect while teaching (Brackett, Mojsa, Palomera, Reyes, & Salovey 2008).

To sum up, the results of this study indicated that the switching between English and Indonesian in the EFL classrooms plays a positive role in building the students' social emotional competencies in the classroom discourse. The main reason the teacher uses code switching is to have a better communication with her students while transferring the material or topic of discussion as well as to remind and motivate them to have higher social emotional competence in their English learning process.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In the context of using code switching as a medium of instruction used in the social and emotional learning strategies in the class, the teachers' code switching was used for affective reasons, namely to build a positive teacher-students relationship, which leads to build the students' behaviour and attitude. This shows that the teachers' use of code switching related to the teachers and the students' social emotional competencies. Teachers who conduct code switching can be particularly supportive in some situations; however, it must be part of an intentional, balanced approach in which teachers follow a clear plan for when they use each language and are clear about the specific goals they seek to accomplish. When conducting code switching in a social emotional learning context, teachers insist to have a better communication with her students while transferring the material or topic of discussion. Moreover, it is also used to remind and motivate the students to have better social emotional competencies during their English learning process in the classroom discourse.

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