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# Students' Perception Towards Teacher's Code-switching in EFL Classroom: Exploring Pedagogical Functions

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#### Abstrak

Alih kode adalah sebuah fenomena yang tidak dapat dihindari yang sering terjadi di kelas-kelas Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing atau bahasa kedua. Terlebih lagi, fenomena ini sering dianggap seolah sebagai fenomena gajah di dalam ruangan: keadaan di mana guru mengakui adanya alih kode tersebut namun tidak pernah benar-benar menyadarinya. Beberapa penelitian sebelumnya terkait topic alih kode di kelas EFL hanya berfokus pada analisis tipe-tipe analisis yang dilakukan oleh guru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari tahu fungsi-fungsi pedagogik di balik keputusan guru untuk melakukan alih kode dan menentukan persepsi siswa terhadap alih kode yang dilakukan guru. Observasi di dalam kelas dan dua sesi wawancara telah dilakukan dengan partisipan satu orang guru Bahasa Inggris dan tiga orang siswa dengan mengaplikasikan desain penelitian studi kasus. Telah ditemukan bahwa kemahiran berbahasa Inggris siswa yang rendah memengaruhi persepsi siswa terhadap alih kode, dan guru sangat sadar terhadap fungsi-fungsi pedagogic ketika dia memutuskan untuk melakukan alih kode.

Kata Kunci: code-switch, perception, pedagogic, L1, L2

#### Abstract

Code-switching is an inevitable phenomenon that often happens inside a foreign or second English classroom. However, this phenomenon is often treated like the elephant in the room: the teacher recognizes its presence but is never really aware of it. While many studies regarding code-switching topics in EFL classrooms only focus on analyzing the type of teacher's code-switching. This study aims to seek out the pedagogical functions behind the teacher's decision to code-switch and determine the students' perception towards the teacher's code-switching. The classroom observation and two interview sessions are conducted with one teacher and three participants by applying a case study. It is found that the student's shallow English proficiency influences the student's perception of code-switching, and the teacher is very conscious of the pedagogical functions when she decided to code-switch.

Keywords: code-switch, perception, pedagogic, L1, L2

#### Introduction

Indonesia is one of the multilingual countries in the world, and it has 748 languages, with *Bahasa* Indonesia as the national language. Although, many citizens still use vernacular languages such as Sundanese, Javanese, etc. Furthermore, in Indonesian, English as a Foreign Language is only used in some particular event or function, and it is still rarely used in daily communication.

English has been taught in Indonesia as a Foreign Language, starting in elementary school to university students. The condition in the classroom sometimes makes the teacher have to code-switch from the Indonesian language to English. In the classroom setting, code-switching is an alternative way of using the teacher and students (Lin, 2007). The phenomenon of code-switching is inevitable in the teaching and learning activity inside the classroom. There are specific reasons why the teacher had to code-switch. One reason why code-

switching often happened in the EFL classroom is that the teacher and the students share the same L1 language (Lo, 2015). Although, the usage of codeswitching in the classroom as a method used by a teacher to make the students understand the concept of L2 in L1 has been a controversial issue for decades ago (Hall & Cook, 2012). Furthermore, this controversial issue has become a hot topic that many researchers have researched this experience from many perspectives, such as pedagogical and sociocultural (Cahyani, de Courcy, & Bernett, 2016) and sociolinguistic (Martin-Anatias, 2019). The research results regarding this topic shown various data depend on the site and participant included.

In the Indonesian EFL classroom, codeswitching has been claimed to positively affect communication between the students and teacher in the cultural, social, and communicative aspects (Suganda, Loeneto, & Zuraida, 2018). Although, codeswitching is considered an issue in teaching a language because it occurs subconsciously and without any strategy from the teacher. Furthermore, it has been an issue in a multilingual society that claimed that code-switching is a sign of someone's incompetence and linguistic weakness. Thus some teachers are trying to avoid code-switching in the classroom activity (Palmer, 209). In addition, some people refuse to accept another language other than a target language during language teaching activities in the classroom. On the contrary, others see this as an essential way to acknowledge how students' L1 benefit their L2 learning development.

Several research results are conducted from different contexts to detect both students' and teachers' perceptions of code-switching. For example, the research conducted in 111 countries and 2,785 teachers as a participant by Hall and Cook (2012, 2013) showed that they find it easier to comprehend specific grammatical rules and vocabulary. It also revealed that L1 could change the classroom atmosphere to be more friendly and relatable to the student's backgrounds.

Despite all the controversial issues regarding whether it is necessary to use L1 as a medium of teaching English as a foreign language, many scholars stated that allowing L1 in foreign language teaching is very effective and time-efficient in particular circumstances (Chamber, 1992).

The present study's implication is to identify the function of code-switching from a pedagogical perspective and what it can serve in the classroom, whereas English is a foreign language. Additionally, it is also crucial to viewing the students' perception of the code-switching done by their teacher, concerning explore whether the code-switching has influenced the students' perspective that could help them develop their L2 learning process.

Based on the reasons above, the researcher decided to conduct research about code-switching by the teachers, seek students' perceptions, and explore the pedagogical function. Therefore, the researchers will conduct qualitative research entitled: Students' Perception Towards Teachers' Code-switching in EFL Classroom: Exploring Pedagogical Function.

#### Method

#### **Participants**

The participants of this study were two teachers and six students of eighth-graders who are native speakers of the Indonesian language. The teachers must have been teaching English for more than five years.

### Instrumentation

All of the process to obtained the data is known as instrumentation (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2011). Instrumentation is a mechanism to collect the data to become more manageable, get a more detailed result, and

systematically arrange the data to make the chunks of data become easier to process (Arikunto, 2010). The instruments in this research are open-ending interview, and online classroom observation that being audio recorded.

#### **Data Analysis**

The data received from the online classroom sessions, teachers' interviews, and students' interviews will be analyzed and explored to find the most frequent features guided by the research questions. Therefore, the data will be analyzed and coded.

The thematic analysis approach will be used to suit the data that had been gathered, such as observation and interview. The study will use a thematic analysis framework (Gibson & Brown, 2009), and for the second research questions about pedagogical functions will be guided by Ferguson's theoretical framework (Ferguson, 2009)

Thematic analysis is one of the ways to analyze the qualitative data, to identify the pattern and find out the theme from chunks of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "The word 'thematic' relates to the aim of searching for aggregated *themes* within data" (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p.127). Thematic analysis will be very effective if the research objective is to thoroughly analyze the chunks of qualitative data to find any correlation between a phenomenon and explain elaborately about how a phenomenon occurred from the author's perspective (Fereday &Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The thematic analysis analyzes the collected data about students' perception towards code-switching done by the teacher. Therefore, this analytic framework will be used for the second research question.

#### **Finding and Discussion**

#### **Functions of Code-Switching in Pedagogy**

This data is taken from the interviews and the classroom observation that occurred during the covid-19 pandemic. The teaching and learning process is carried out through *Google Meeting*, while the author observes the occurrences of the code-switching by the teacher during the process. The teacher was teaching simple present continuous tense during this meeting.

# Code-switching as a medium to transmitting knowledge

The finding shows that the teacher tended to codeswitch to L1 when explaining a complex concept of grammar and also non-familiar words of English that the student with low English comprehension might find difficult to understand.

The data expose that the teacher's decision to codeswitch to L1 when explaining complicated grammar concepts to the student is reasonable.

#### a) Data 1.1

"Yang pertama itu ketika menjelaskan materi, karena tiap pertemua kan materinya akan berbeda. Kalau instruksi-instruksi itu kan tiap hari tidak berbeda contohnya, "open your book.", "read page number...." Instruksi-instruksi harian yang mereka setiap hari sudah tau. Tapi kalau materi misalnya menjelaskan simple present tense, di sini kita mungkin harus membutuhkan untuk menggunakan alih kode"

In this data above, the teacher admitted in the interview session that she admitted that she need to code-switch to L1 when explaining complicated grammar concepts because of the everyday instruction that occurs in the classroom such as, "open your book" and "read page number.." is already familiar for the students. However, the complex concept of grammar, such as simple present tense, is relatively unfamiliar. Thus it needs code-switching. This data is validated by circumstances that happened during the teaching and learning process in this data below:

## b) Data 1.2

"Ok Next. What is simple present continous tense? [L2] Di sini dijelaskan bahwa simple present continous tense adalah bentuk kata kerja yang digunakan untuk menggambarkan, mengidentifikasi, menjelaskan kegiatan yang sedang berlangsung. Artinya, kegiatan itu ketika kita lihat, pas kita ngelirik atau pas kita melihat, kegiatan tersebut sudah berlangsung sebelum kita melihatnya kemudian kita melihat ketika dia masih berlangsung gitu yah, jadi ini kegiatannya sedang berlangsung kalau yang positif, kalau yang negatifnya berlangsung, tidak dan kalau sedang interogatifnya menanyakan apakah kegiatan tersebut sedang berlangsung sekarang [L1]"

Here, the teacher first tried to use L2 to ask the students about simple present continuous tense using a very familiar sentence form, then the teacher codeswitched to L1 when explaining simple present continuous tense. The teacher's decision to codeswitched to L1 indicated that she wants to make it easier for the students, especially students with low English comprehension. Therefore, she first read the explanation from the screen and then tried to explain again using L1, but this time using very easy-tounderstand sentences using an example that the students can easily relate to. Undoubtedly, transmitting knowledge is the function of codeswitching in pedagogy that helps to explain extensive and unexposed concepts in L1.

#### c) Data 1.3

"I am reading a book at the moment." [L2] Nah, saya sedang. I am(to be) sedang itu artinya saya sedang membaca [L1]"

In the data above, the teacher first read the example of simple present continuous tense from the

screen using L2, then code-switched to L1. Next, the teacher translated each L2 word into L1 using very familiar L1 words. Finally, the teacher code-switched to L1 to emphasized the meaning to make it easier for the students with low English comprehension to grasps the idea.

#### d) Data 1.4

**""She is not wearing a seatbelt."** [L2] Dia sedang tidak menggunakan sabuk pengaman [L1]"

In the extract above, the teacher read the example in L2, but the code-switched every word into L1 when the necessity arises. In this data, she translated the word 'seatbelt' to prevent confusion for students with shallow English comprehension.

#### e) Data 1.5

""we are baking some breads. [L2]" Kita sedang meng-oven roti. Nah ini contoh dari kalimat positif. [adi, ada I (subject), to be, dan verb 1+ing [L1]"

In the data above, the teacher still codeswitched to L1 whenever there are unfamiliar words, as indicated in 'meng-oven' this is the L1 translation of 'baking.' The word 'baking' might be unfamiliar for some students thus, to prevent any confusion it is better to code-switched all the words to L1.

The data gathered from the interview session with the teacher also showed that she tends to codeswitched to L1 whenever there are unfamiliar words when explaining the material in the classroom.

#### f) Data 1.6

Iya ada. Misalnya kata atau kalimat yang kurang familiar di telinga mereka. Misalnya adverb of time, adverb of place, dan adverb of manners. Atau vocabulary yang masih asing. Ini sebenernya apa kalau kita gak jelaskan menggunakan alih kode, mereka pasti gak ngerti ini artinya apa."

Based on the teacher's statement above, she is justified in code-switching. Furthermore, she mentioned several English materials such as adverb of time, adverb of place, and adverb of manners that share a big possibility that many students cannot understand the meaning. Moreover, she stated that there is some unfamiliar English vocabulary that needs to be translated to L1 because there is a possibility that each class that she taught has some students who still lack English vocabulary, which she stated in the following data.

#### g) Data 1.7

"..bagaimana tujuan pembelajaran itu bisa dicapai atau dikuasai oleh siswa salah satu caranya dengan alih kode. Kalau kita misalnya menggunakan Bahasa Inggris dari awal sampai akhir mungkin hanya 50% siswa yang memahami, berarti ada 50% lagi yang membutuhkan alih kode karena kemampuan mereka terbatas"

From the text above, the teacher stated that one way to achieve the learning objective in the classroom with 50% of students with low English comprehension is through code-switching. She also stated that if the learning process only uses L2 as a medium of instruction, only half of the students will achieve the learning objective. Thus, to overcome that issue, she chooses to code-switch.

## h) Data 1.8

"Ok the last one the type of simple present continous tense [L2] adalah kalimat interogatifnya. Nah, di sini dalam kalimat interogatif to be nya yang ada di depan.[L1]"

From the extract above, the teacher explained the interrogative type of simple present continuous tense. First, she uses L2, but then she code-switched to L1 when explaining the grammatical rule of the interrogative type. She stated that the 'to be' in the interrogative sentence is placed in the first sentence.

#### i) Data 1.9

"are you watching a soccer at the moment?" "is he watering the fllower." [L2] Dan sebagainya. Jadi to be nya yang ada di depan. [L1]"

The extract above shows that the teacher said several examples of simple present continuous tense in L2. Nevertheless, she code-switched when stated the given point of the interrogative type of simple present continuous tense.

# Code-switching as a medium to manage the classroom

There are some circumstances in the classroom that need to be code-switched besides transmitting knowledge, such as classroom management. Unlike transmitting knowledge that happened when explaining a lesson, classroom management took place during a whole teaching and learning process. This function frequently appears during technical situations in order to motivate the student, discipline, clarify task instructions, and an attention-focusing device.

In the following data, the teacher code-switched as a signal for classroom management.

#### a) Data 2.1

"Please turn on your camera [L2] yah jadi Ibu bisa lihat wajah-wajahnya jadi kalau yang belum cuci muka, cuci muka aja dulu ga usah mandi yah. Pake kerudungnya aja samakan warna putih kalau yang pake, yang cowok dirapihkan aja.[L1]"

From the extract above, L2 uses when the teacher asked the students to turns on their camera. Furthermore, the teacher also recommends that their students wash their faces and wear an appropriate uniform before the class begins to look at their faces. Therefore, this data indicates that L1 is used in the classroom for classroom management needs.

#### b) Data 2.2

"Ok now, I will share the materials. Please pay attention. This is about simple present continous tense. OK [L2]. Sudah muncul di layar kalian? Halo. Direspon sudah muncul belum [L1]"

The teacher first used L2 to present the material from the data above, but when there is a technical problem, she code-switched to L1 immediately as indicated in "sudah muncul di layar kalian? Halo, Direspon sudah muncul belum?". It means that the teacher is aware of the situation in the classroom that needs to be code-switched. Thus, whenever the necessity arises, she immediately code-switched to L1. Moreover, using L2 as a medium of solving a technical problem could be bothersome, especially for students with shallow English comprehension. Therefore, the teacher's decision to code-switched can be considered as a way to manage the classroom.

#### c) Data 2.3

"OK do you understand? Have you got the idea?[L2] Paham? Nanti kalau ada pertanyaan langsung saja ya ga usah ibu ini kan...[L1]"

The code-switching extract above indicates a teacher's way to manage the classroom. Because, the teacher uses L2 to ask for student's understanding regarding the material, and then she code-switched to L1 to inform the students to immediately ask her if they still confuse the material without waiting for her permission.

#### d) Data 2.4

Teacher: "Now let's take a look at your module book [L1], coba diliat buku modulnya tadi ada di unit berapa nak?"

S1: "ke delapan bu [L1]"

Teacher: "ke delapan oke ya buka unit ke delapannya.... Nah tugas kalian coba kerjakan dulu nomer satu formative test unit delapan nomer satu sampai sepuluh. [L1]"

In the extract above, the codeswitching done by the teacher was to indicates classroom management to clarifying task instruction. First, the teacher was instructed to open the students' module book in L2, and then she immediately codeswitched to L1 to asked the students about the unit they are currently studying. Moreover, she continued explaining the task in L1. In addition, the teacher's decision to code-switched to L1 when instructing a task is considered essential, especially for the students with shallow English comprehension.

#### e) Data 2.5

"Number one "we blablabla about the present continous tense now." Which one? A, B, or C?[L2] Mana jawaban yang benar? Come one [L2], coba yang mana jawabannya? Kalau ada pertanyaan we blablabla about the present continous tense now. Which one? [L1] Ayo nak gak usah takut atau malu-malu jawab aja.."

The above extract shows a teacher code-switch to L1 after presenting a question in L2; this is an attempt for a teacher to encourage their students to answer the question given to them. Especially in the sentence, "Ayo nak gak usah takut atau malumalu jawab aja", which means "Come on, do not be afraid or shy just answer it". This sentence also expressed encouragement from the teacher for their students; thus, it fulfills a function of code-switching in pedagogy.

# Code-switching as a medium of interpersonal relations

In an EFL classroom, especially when English is not its second language and it is not easy to gain exposure to the language, using English can indicate a distanced relationship between the students and the teacher. Therefore, building a warm personal bond between the teacher and their students is necessary to code-switch to the students' L1. Moreover, code-switch to L1 when necessary during informal social interactional help the students to feel encouraged to learn the target language. Unlike, code-switching for transmitting knowledge and classroom managerial purposes, code-switching for interpersonal relations usually appears at the beginning and the end of the class.

#### a) Data 3.1

"Ok. Good morning everyone [L2] Apa kabar semuanya? Sehat yah? Kemarin sudah keluar

nilai PTSnya. Puas dengan nilai segitu?Inggrid gimana kemarin nilainya[L1]"

The line above shows the teacher code-switching that happened when the teacher and their students are exchanging greetings. This utterance occurred at the beginning of the class session when the teacher first greeted the students in L2. Next, the teacher asks about their current students' health and asking about their scores on the previous exam, and she also asked whether they are satisfied with the score they got. This line shows the teacher's code-switching to display an informal personal relationship with their students in the classroom.

#### b) Data 3.2

"OK. Thank you for joining my class today [L2], terimakasih yang sudah bergabung. Ibu ucapkan mudah-mudahan kalian tetap sehat terus dan tetap semangat ya. Tinggal 3 bulan lagi kalian menghadapi ujian dan setelah itu kalian menjadi murid kelas 3[L1]".

The data above indicates that the teacher used L1 to motivate and encourage students when the class ended. The teacher code-switched to L1 to encourage her students for the final exam and the new semester. Thus, the Indonesian language is consciously carried out in the classroom as a medium for academic motivation

In conclusion, based on the data analysis result revealed that the teacher consciously code-switched to L1 for three different functions: transmitting knowledge, classroom management, and interpersonal relations.

# Students' Perception Towards the Teacher's Code-switching

The students' interviews' interpretation revealed that using codeswitching to L1 by the teacher when taught the target language (L2) is preferable. The findings exposed that using L1 is preferable because the students believe that learning a foreign language carried by the target language as a medium of classroom communication is too difficult to understand. This extract below is supporting the statement above:

# Code-switching affecting students understanding of the material

The students' interviews' interpretation revealed that using codeswitching to L1 by the teacher when taught the target language (L2) is preferable. The findings exposed that using L1 is preferable because the students believe that learning a foreign language carried by the target language as a medium of classroom communication is too difficult to understand. This extract below is supporting the statement above:

#### a) Student 1 (S1)

S1:"Lebih suka pakai alih kode ke Bahasa Indonesia sih Bu. Karena kan lebih mudah dimengerti gitu, kaya gampang dicerna ke pikiran gitu."

S1 stated that learning English through his mother language is easier to understand and to process in his mind. His opinion towards using code-switching during the L2 learning process indicated that L1 helps him understand the material more quickly and does not have to work hard to understand the material when it is carried out in L1.

### b) Student 2 (S2)

S2: "Saya sendiri sih Bu, kayanya enakan kalau dicampur Bu. Misalkan Bahasa Inggris tuh terus nanti diterjamahin sama gurunya itu. Jadi, Kita sendiri paham apa yang dimaksud sama kata dalam Bahasa Inggris itu."

S2 answered when asked about her preferences about using code-switching in the classroom or not. S2 answered that she preferred to use code-switching in the classroom. In addition, she also adds that the L2 word should be translated into L1 by the teacher. Thus, she can understand the material more easily.

### c) Student 3 (S3)

S3: "Lebih suka belajar dengan yang menggunakan alih kode. Alasannya, karena kan kita masih belajar jadi kita juga belom, semuanya belom tau. Jadi kita juga harus tahu bahasa Indonesia terus bahasa Inggrinya juga. Biar paham ini lagi belajar apa" S3 answered when asked about her preference when learning L2. She answered that she preferred to learn L2 using codeswitching because S3 admitted that she is still a student and a newbie in learning English, which means that her English ability is limited. Therefore, she said that she needs to know the L2 translation in L1 to helps her understand the material that her teacher is teaching.

# Code-switching increasing students' motivation in learning L2

In this part, the interview result revealed that the use of code-switching in the EFL classroom shows that students feel more motivated during the teaching and learning process. The data below implies that the eight-grader middle school students in Indonesia are still very limited in L2, making it easier for them to be motivated when the target language is carried out in their source language. The following data below shows how code-switching increase the students' motivation:

#### a) Student 1 (S1)

S1: "Iya bikin lebih semangat lagi belajar Bahasa Inggris"

S1 answered when asked about his opinion about whether learning L2 using code-switching contributed to his motivation. S1 stated that using code-switching as a medium of communication that carried out the L2 material, especially when the unfamiliar words appear affecting his willingness and motivation to study hard more.

#### b) Student 2 (S2)

S2: Iya jadi lebih termotivasi untuk belajar Bahasa Inggris lagi, jadi lebih semangat dan meningkatkan prestasi "

From the extract above, S2 stated that code-switching during the L2 learning process helps her feel motivated. Moreover, she also said that it helps her enhancing her academic achievement. This data indicated that, a significant contribution of codeswitching in the classroom to students' academic achievement.

#### c) Student 3 (S3)

S3: "Iya, jadi lebih giat untuk belajar lagi"

Similarly, just like the other students' answers, S3 also stated that using codeswitching in the classroom helps her be more motivated to study even more challenging.

Code-switching affecting students' willingness to participate in the classroom activity and reducing nervousness

#### a) Student 1 (S1)

S1: "Sangat meningkatkan kepercayaan diri Saya karena, dengan menggunakan alih kode bisa mengurangi rasa grogi sedikit dan pas di rumah mau mempelajari materi ulang juga jadi lebih mudah"

S1 positively answered when asked about whether code-switching helps him feel more confident to participate in the classroom activity and whether code-switching helps him reduce nervousness. S1 stated that code-switching increases his confidence level and helps him feel less nervous during a classroom activity. Moreover, he also stated that when he went home from school, code-switching helps him to review the material more easily.

#### b) Student 2 (S2)

S2: "Iya Bu, saya jadi lebih percaya diri untuk berpartisipasi di dalam kelas dan tidak malu-malu saat maju ke depan."

S2 answered how code-switching could affecting her confidence and willingness to participate in the classroom activity and reducing nervousness. As a result, S2 said that she felt more confident to participate in the classroom activity. Moreover, she also adds that she does not feel shy anymore standing in front of the class when joining a classroom activity.

### c) Student 3 (S3)

S3: "Iya jadi lebih percaya diri untuk berpartisipasi. Nggak takut salah dan ga grogi"

The author asked during the interview session whether code-switching has affected her confidence and willingness to participate in the classroom activity and reduce nervousness. S3 answered that code-switching able to make her feel more secured when answering the question. As a result, she does not feel afraid to make a mistake. Moreover, she also adds that she felt more confident to join the classroom activity and does not feel nervous at all.

#### Conclusion

The present study aims to discover the pedagogical functions of teacher's code-switching in EFL classrooms and ascertain the students' perception of teacher's code-switching. The data analysis results obtained from classroom observation and interviews revealed that the teacher consciously used three different pedagogical functions of code-switching: transmitting knowledge, classroom management, and interpersonal relations were used in the 8th grade EFL classroom, and it was discovered that the students had positive perceptions to the teachers' code-switching in 8th grade EFL classroom. Based on the result of the study, there are two implications. The first one, the teacher should be able to read the classroom situation and recognize each students' ability to decide whether code-switching is necessary. Second, code-switching done by the teacher should be able to fulfill the pedagogical functions. Therefore, the learning objective can be achieved.

A significant limitation of this study is in terms of generalizability. This study only has a small number of participants (three students and one teacher) in a middle school in East Bogor district in Indonesia, which makes it inaccessible to generalize the findings of this study. To explore different findings, future research may add more requirements for the participants. Future studies may conduct another data collection technique because the limited data collection in the present study (interview and classroom observation) cannot obtain a more specific students and teacher perspective.

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