

## **Codeswitching Practices in English Teaching**

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### **1. Introduction**

The interplay between language learners' use of their first language (L1) and second language (L2) has been the subject of renewed interest in second language acquisition (SLA). The use of L1 can play a strategic cognitive role to scaffold learners' second language tasks. Added to this, the use of code-switching practices by teachers involved in teaching English for beginners is believed to be advantageous as it offers a lot of functions as reviewed by a great number of experts. In recent years, there has been an unpredicted surge of research interest in the phenomena of bilingual issues, in particular code-switching (abbreviated CS) – alternating one language with another language which is utilized in the process of teaching and learning. The essence of this effort is the utilization of first language (L1) in the process of second language teaching and learning.

However, the above issue is debated by many experts. For example, Rollin-Ianziti and Brownlie (2002) state that the exclusive employment of English as a target language by teachers in EFL teaching and learning is a strong principle advocated by teaching methodologies, notably the communicative approach to language teaching. This belief is based on the assumption that the use of English without re-coursing the first language (L1) would facilitate students' acquisition of the target language. In other words, English teachers must provide students with real English communication in order to help students acquire English well. Macdonal (1993) urges that the exclusive use of the target language would develop students' own in-built language scheme. Further, Krashen and Terrell (1983), with their natural approach, also suggest that foreign language teachers should create communicative foreign language situations and strictly minimise the use of student first language. The inclusion of L1 in classroom communication would only hinder the process of EFL teaching and learning and create classroom communication dynamic, which leads to students concentrating less on the target language. Therefore, the use of L1 must be at best minimised, or at worst avoided totally (Nation, 1997 and Belz, 2003). The above statements are argued by Skinner (1985), who states that the exclusive use of L2 is believed only to hinder the process of developing concepts and to

block students' thoughts and ideas which have been developed in L1. Other scholars (Macaro, 1995, 2001; Levine, 2003) also claim that the exclusion of L1 in foreign language teaching and learning is likely to be unreasonable, since it may only deprive students' strategies to learn the target language. Gutrie (1984) questions whether the use of L2 results in greater intake by learners. Dickson (1992) states that the quantity of teacher L2 input may not be as beneficial as the quality of L2 input. This implies that CS should be tolerated as it is being a fundamental language skill that needs to be employed. CS is a normal part of interacting in multilingual contexts which offers many functions to second language learners, in particular beginning learners.

The utilization of CS in teaching and learning contexts serves as one of teaching strategies practiced foreign/second language teachers and their students to compensate for linguistic shortcomings and to maintain a communication with beginning learners who have varying language proficiencies. Added to this, the use of L1 can play a strategic cognitive role to scaffold learners' foreign/second language tasks. In support of the above issue, Faltis (1989) states that alternating two languages, which is called codeswitching can be employed as a bridge between the two languages (first language and second language) in teaching a second language. Cook (1991) claims that CS can be a strategy of communication for English Language Teaching (ELT) to sustain the continuity of the interaction between English teachers and their students. The utilization of CS in the process of teaching and learning can minimize tension and stress on the part of students. This implies that code-switching practices conducted by teachers and beginning learners are advantageous rather than disadvantageous on the ground that CS offers many functions as mainly discussed in this paper.

## **2. Code-switching Defined-**

The definition of code-switching has been debated by many experts as it occurs in defining a bilingualism. As a result, many terms have been offered to define the interchangeable use of two or more languages. The terms include code-mixing, language alternation, language alternation, and code-switching. Among researchers have not agreed upon the definition of code-switching. To avoid the contradiction of the terminology, they use 'language mixing', which refers to bilinguals' behaviours to codealternate from one language with another language. Further, they assert that language mixing includes code-switching, code-mixing, and borrowings. Different from their assertion, David (2003) states that code-mixing refers to the employment of two languages in turn, but it is only concerned with limited or token use of the target language. Code alternation is defined as when the same person code-switches between turns. Code-switching then deals with the use of more than one code, which

can appear within a turn or within utterances. Kamwangamalu (1992) uses language alternation for code-switching and code-mixing. The former deals with alternating one language with another language across sentence boundaries, while the latter within a sentence (Grosjean, 1982; Brice, 2001). In other words, the forms of language alternation can be single words (nouns, pronouns, adjective, and verbs), phrases (noun phrases, preposition phrases, and alike), or sentences. Romaine (1998) classifies CS into three, namely intersentential code-switching (switching across sentence boundary), intra-sentential codeswitching (switching within sentence or clause), and tag code switching (emblematic code-switching).

In line with the discussion above, CS is one of the bilingualism phenomena characterized by the use of two or more languages alternated one another in one conversation event (Romaine, 1998; Berthold, Mangubhai, Bortorowizs, 1997). Such alternation is a normal, common, and significant aspect of bilingual nature (Grosjean, 1982) adds that the alternation of two or more languages in discourse often with no change of conversant or topic. In more detail sense, Gumperz (1982) defines CS as ‘the juxtaposition within the same exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems’. The code-switched items are prosodically, semantically, and syntactically tied in a single speech act (Romaine, 1998). Another definition is offered by Richards et al. (1992), stating that it is a switch by a speaker from one language to another language. The switch can be in the middle of discourse or even within one sentence. In support of this definition, Omar (1993) defines codeswitching as alternating one code with another ‘in the speech of a particular speaker in a particular situation’. Jariah (2003) adds code-switching from one language to another is not merely engaged with equal proficiency which a bilingual has, but a bilingual speaker often code-switches from one language to another to resolve the language difficulty. In other words, a bilingual speaker who has limited proficiency tends to use of code-switching by repeating and reformulating utterances from of one language to another (see David, 1999, 2001). Further, David (2002) claims that code-switching employed by Malaysian Sindhi families is used as a communicative strategy to compensate insufficient linguistic mastery.

For the purpose of this paper, the use of English alternated with Indonesian or vice versa by foreign language teachers and foreign language learners who do not have equal proficiency in both English and Indonesian, can be included as code-switching activities. The term code-switching used in this study is defined in much broader sense of its conventional definition since English teachers and first grade students involve more than two languages alternated one with another no matter what they repeat, reformulate or literally translate utterances from one language to another. They may switch at any point of sentences, and between sentences or within sentences. In addition, this study does not differentiate code-

switching and code-mixing since the term code-switching is also to encompass code-mixing (see May, et al, 2004; Baker, 2001).

### **3. Function of Code-switching in non-formal setting and formal setting-**

The study of code-switching on functional aspects was carried out by Kaizol (2000) who dealt with code-switching between Spanish and English in contemporary American society. In terms of factor, she documented that there were six factors which prompted CS. They were (1) familiarity, (2) informality, (3) setting, (4) roles, (5) topic, and (6) speakers' physical characteristics. Of six factors, a familiarity was considered to be the main factor influencing code-switching practices. In terms of functions, her results revealed that CS served 14 functions. They were (1) personalization, (2) reiteration, (3) designation, (4) substitution, (5) emphasis, (6) clarification, (7) objectivization, (8) untranslatability, (9) mitigating message, (10) interjections, (11) parenthesis, (12) aggravating messages, (13) quotation, and (14) topic shift. Of 14 functions, personalization was noted as the commonest type of code-switching. With regard to the functions of CS in English language teaching, Cook (2001) highlights that the use of L1 in EFL teaching and learning can sustain the continuity of communication between English teachers and their students. Further, he claims that the utilization of student first language in foreign language teaching and learning is beneficial as it can serve a number of functions which include to clarify grammar, to arrange tasks, to give instructions, to check comprehension, to sustain discipline, and to conduct classroom activities. With regard to these arguments, the exclusive use of English by English teachers in classroom communication, for example, at vocational schools, should be reconsidered. Otherwise, it only discourages students to learn English and raise an impression that English is the most difficult subject to study.

### **4. Functions of CS in teaching English for beginning learners**

In reference to the function of CS practices in teaching English for beginning learners, there are at least seven functions which include (1) getting work done, (2) attention getting, (3) conversational devices, (4) getting along with others, (5) language building, and (6) mitigating a message, and (7) reinforcing learners' memory. Each function is discussed below.

#### ***a. Getting work done***

The term *getting work done* refers to directing students to deal with the tasks or activities in the process of English teaching and learning. Look at the bold and italicized forms as shown in the following data.

## ***b. Attention getting***

To run the English language teaching process well, English teachers make an effort to attract students' attention in order that their students focus on the topics discussed. One of the methods to attract students' attention was to code-switch from English to Indonesia or vice versa. The data examples are presented below as shown in bold and italicized forms.

T : ***Coba perhatikan*** ('Listen.') Please pay attention. Budi, *kalau ngantuk cuci muka sana.* (Budi, if you are sleepy, wash your face there.) Number five. He works until one o'clock *bekerja sampai* ('work until') one o'clock and then have a half of an hour *setengah jam* ('a half hour') for lunch. Number five Randy.

Randy : He works until one o'clock and has lunch at half past one. It is true.

T : *Ya, true.* (Yes, right.)

T : ***Coba perhatikan kolom A.*** ('Please, pay attention to column A.') Is it a house-wife or mother? *Maksudnya apa?* (What does it mean?) *Pertanyaannya apa?* ('What is the question?') *"Mengapa orang-orang suka belanja di pasar* ('Why do people like shopping in the market?') Why do people like shopping in the market? *Dikira* ('Guess') who *siapa* ('who?') *Di suruh maju dua kali salah terus.* ('Do twice, you always have wrong answers/I ask you twice but you always have wrong answers.')

## ***c. Language building***

To build learners' language, teachers may switch from English to Indonesian or vice versa. This is aimed at constructing the learned language as presented in the following data.

T : From the dialog, which one you do not know the meaning? *Mana yang tidak tahu artinya?* ('Which word do you not understand the meaning of?') What about '***here you are***'? *Artinya apa* ('what is the meaning of 'here you are'?')

S : Yes, here you are?

T : ***Ini pesanan Anda atau ini milikmu*** ('This is your order or it is yours.') Anything else? *Ada yang lain* ('Anything else?')

S : No.

## ***d. Mitigating a message***

To minimise misunderstanding, English teachers often practise CS from English to Indonesian or vice versa. Such codeswitching practices are used to clarify a certain message. This clarification aimed to minimise any ambiguous words or sentences leading to incomplete understanding, and to resolve any confusing ideas. The CS practices for mitigating a message are presented in the following data as shown in the bold and italicized forms.

T : Okay...*satu siswa membuat satu pertanyaan* ('every student makes one question') like this.

S : ***Satu aja pak?*** ('Only one question, Sir?')

T : Yes one sentence. I give you one minute. *Satu menit aja.* ('Only one minute.')

## ***e. Reinforcing learners' memory.***

Alternating English with Indonesian or vice versa can be also used to reinforce learners' memory in order that the learned materials can be stored in long term memory enabling learners to recall it any time they want. The examples of the function are presented below.

T : What is the difference between how many and how much? ***Bedanya apa antara how many dan how much?*** ('What is the difference between how many and how much?')

S : **How many** bendanya bisa dihitung sedangkan **how much** bendanya tidak dapat dihitung. ('For how many, the noun can be counted while for how much the noun cannot be counted.')

T : Very good. **Jadi how many menanyakan berapa banyak benda tetapi bendanya dapat dihitung.** ('So how many is used to ask for nouns which can be counted.')

Bendanya disebut apa tadi? ('What is it called?')

S : Countable noun

## 5. Conclusion

After looking at these few examples of the functions of CS, it is obvious that CS is not idiosyncratic. In other words, the use of CS practices by foreign language teachers is not randomly done. It tends to facilitate students to acquire the target language as it offers many functions as discussed above. All the functions discussed previously can be subsumed under the umbrella function of facility of expression. This implies that code switching should be tolerated or even promoted in the teaching of English for beginning learners like first grade students of junior high schools. Allowing English teachers and first grade students to code-switch from English to Indonesian or vice versa is favourable, in terms of classroom communication. Psychologically, English teachers and first grade students feel comfortable and confident to switch from one language to another language when they are involved in English language classes. In addition, switching from English to Indonesian or vice versa might encourage beginning English learners to learn English and create an image that English is not a difficult subject to learn. Once they believe that English is not difficult to learn, this will enhance their willingness to learn English better. To sum up, English teachers and first grade students should not be concerned about codeswitching practices during classroom communication because these practices tend to promote relaxed and engaged environment, which is more conducive to English language teaching and learning.

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