

Code Switching Used by Teacher in Teaching English at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo

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Abstract

This study examined the types of code switching used by an English teacher and the reasons the teacher applied code switching in teaching English at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the data were collected in August 2022 through classroom observation, video recording, and a structured interview with the eighth-grade English teacher. The observation was conducted in three classes for three 60-minute meetings, and the data were transcribed, reduced, classified, and interpreted based on Poplack's typology of code switching. The findings showed that intra-sentential switching was the most dominant type with 81 occurrences, followed by inter-sentential switching with 41 occurrences and tag switching with 12 occurrences. The teacher used code switching to clarify classroom instructions, explain vocabulary and grammar, reduce students' confusion, and help students understand learning tasks. The study concludes that code switching functions as a pedagogical strategy for facilitating English learning, particularly in junior high school contexts where students' English proficiency is still developing.

Keywords: *code switching, English teaching, bilingual classroom, sociolinguistics, junior high school*

Introduction

Bilingual and multilingual communication is a common phenomenon in Indonesia. In daily interaction, speakers often move from one language to another because they have access to more than one linguistic code. This language movement is known as code switching, namely the process of alternating one language or variety with another in a single communicative event. In sociolinguistics, this practice is closely related to the relationship between language choice, social context, and communicative purpose (Holmes, 1992; Wardhaugh, 2006).

In English language classrooms, code switching appears when teachers use English and Indonesian alternately during explanation, instruction, questioning, classroom management, and feedback. The use of more than one code may help students understand difficult vocabulary, classroom commands, and learning tasks. However, code switching also needs to be described carefully because teachers may use it for different purposes and in different structural forms. Gal (1979) explains that code switching can function as a conversational strategy, while Poplack (1980) classifies code switching into tag switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching.

Several previous studies have examined code switching in English learning contexts. Murdani (2011) investigated code switching in teaching English to third-grade students

of SMP Karitas Ngaglik and used observation, questionnaires, and interviews to describe the classroom phenomenon. Rahmina and Tobing (2016) found that code switching in English language learning at MA Mu'allimaat Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta appeared mainly in inter-sentential and intra-sentential forms, with students' limited English ability as one of the dominant background factors. Hamzah (2008) also showed that teachers' language codes in English instruction are related to classroom communication needs.

Although these studies provide useful explanations, classroom-based research on the specific forms and reasons for code switching in junior high school English classes still needs more contextual evidence. SMP Negeri 3 Palopo provides an important context because English is taught to students whose English mastery is still developing. Based on preliminary observation, the English teacher frequently switched between English and Indonesian during the teaching and learning process. This condition indicates the need to identify the types of code switching used by the teacher and to explain why the teacher applied code switching in teaching English.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of code switching used by the English teacher in teaching English and to describe the reasons the teacher applied code switching in the classroom. The novelty of this study lies in its focused description of code switching practices in the eighth-grade English classroom at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo by combining observation data and teacher interview data.

Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative design because it aimed to understand and describe the phenomenon of code switching used by an English teacher in the classroom. Qualitative research was considered suitable because the data consisted of utterances, classroom events, and explanations from the teacher rather than numerical test scores. The study was conducted in August 2022 at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo, located on Jl. Andi Kambo, Wara Timur District, Palopo City.

The participant of the study was the eighth-grade English teacher of SMP Negeri 3 Palopo. The participant was selected using purposive sampling because the teacher met the criteria needed for the research objective, namely teaching English in the observed classes and using code switching during the teaching and learning process. The research instruments were an observation sheet and a structured interview guide.

Data were collected through classroom observation and interview. The researcher observed the teaching and learning process in three classes for three 60-minute meetings and recorded the teacher's utterances using video recording. The observation focused on words, clauses, sentences, and utterances that showed switching between English and Indonesian. After observation, the researcher interviewed the teacher using prepared questions to obtain information about the reasons for using code switching in teaching English.

The data were analyzed descriptively through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. First, the recorded utterances were transcribed and selected based on their relevance to code switching. Second, the selected data were classified using Poplack's typology: tag switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching. Third, the classified data were presented in tables and interpreted to answer the research questions.

Results

The observation showed that the English teacher used three types of code switching during the teaching and learning process: tag switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching. The distribution of the types in classes VIII.C, VIII.D, and VIII.G is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of code switching types in classroom observation

Type of code switching	Class VIII.C	Class VIII.D	Class VIII.G	Total
Tag switching	6	4	2	12
Inter-sentential switching	16	18	7	41
Intra-sentential switching	43	21	17	81
Total	65	43	26	134

Tag switching appeared when the teacher inserted a tag, short expression, or local particle into an utterance. The teacher used this type 12 times. Examples include "The last title ya," "Salt itu asin yaa," and "Is it clear paham ji." These examples show that the inserted elements such as ya, yaa, and ji functioned as reinforcement or confirmation at the end of the utterance.

Inter-sentential switching appeared when the teacher shifted language between sentence boundaries or when an English utterance was directly followed by an Indonesian equivalent. This type appeared 41 times. Examples include "Afgan, please open your hat buka topimu," "Don't be shy jangan malu-malu," and "Okay time is over waktu sudah habis." These utterances show that the teacher often repeated or clarified classroom instructions by moving from English to Indonesian.

Intra-sentential switching was the most frequent type, with 81 occurrences. This type appeared within the same sentence or clause, for example "Masih ingat apalagi bahasa Indonesiannya show appreciation to others?", "So untuk pertemuan kita kali ini, this is the last title for chapter one," and "Okay because time is over jadi remember ya untuk pertemuan selanjutnya." The teacher used this pattern while explaining vocabulary, checking students' understanding, and managing learning activities.

The interview data showed that the teacher frequently used code switching because many students were confused when the lesson was delivered only in English. The teacher considered code switching necessary to help students understand what was being explained and what they had to do during the lesson. Therefore, code switching was not used randomly, but as a support strategy to make the learning process more effective.

Table 2. Examples of code switching found in classroom observation

Type	Example from classroom data	Description
Tag switching	The last title ya.	The tag ya emphasizes or confirms the utterance.
Inter-sentential switching	Afgan, please open your	The Indonesian phrase

	hat buka topimu.	translates or clarifies the English instruction.
Intra-sentential switching	Masih ingat apalagi bahasa Indonesianya show appreciation to others?	English and Indonesian are mixed within the same sentence.

Discussion

The findings show that intra-sentential switching was the most dominant type of code switching used by the teacher. This finding indicates that the teacher commonly combined English and Indonesian within a single sentence while explaining lesson content. Such switching is understandable in a junior high school classroom because students need support in connecting English expressions with their Indonesian meanings. The dominance of intra-sentential switching also suggests that the teacher's classroom language was flexible and responsive to students' immediate comprehension needs.

The use of inter-sentential switching shows that the teacher frequently provided translation or clarification after English instructions. This pattern is useful when the teacher needs to ensure that all students understand classroom commands, task instructions, or the meaning of a particular expression. The finding is consistent with the idea that code switching can occur as a conversational strategy to adjust communication according to the situation and participants (Gal, 1979; Wardhaugh, 2006). In this classroom, switching from English to Indonesian made the teacher's instruction more accessible.

Tag switching was the least frequent type, but it still played an important role in classroom interaction. Short tags such as *ya*, *yaa*, *ji*, and *ta* helped the teacher emphasize meaning, check understanding, or maintain interpersonal closeness with students. This supports Poplack's (1980) explanation that tag switching involves inserting short elements from one language into an utterance in another language. In the classroom data, these tags did not change the main meaning of the sentence; instead, they strengthened the teacher's message and classroom rapport.

The teacher's reasons for using code switching were closely related to students' limited English mastery. The teacher believed that switching between English and Indonesian helped students understand the lesson, especially when explaining vocabulary, giving instructions, or asking students to complete tasks. This finding supports previous research by Rahmina and Tobing (2016), who found that limited student ability in English was an important factor behind the use of code switching in English learning. It also aligns with Murdani (2011), who described code switching as a practical classroom phenomenon in English teaching.

Overall, code switching in this study can be seen as a pedagogical strategy rather than merely a sign of language limitation. The teacher used code switching to bridge students' prior knowledge and the target language, to reduce misunderstanding, and to create a more supportive learning environment. However, the use of code switching should still be balanced so that students continue to receive sufficient exposure to English. Teachers need to use code switching strategically, especially for clarification, reinforcement, and classroom management.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the English teacher at SMP Negeri 3 Palopo used three types of code switching in teaching English: tag switching, inter-sentential switching, and intra-sentential switching. Intra-sentential switching was the most frequently used type with 81 occurrences, followed by inter-sentential switching with 41 occurrences and tag switching with 12 occurrences. The dominance of intra-sentential switching shows that the teacher often mixed English and Indonesian within the same sentence to explain lesson content and check students' understanding.

The teacher used code switching because students' understanding of English was still limited. Code switching helped the teacher clarify instructions, explain vocabulary and grammar, and ensure that students understood what they had to do during the lesson. Thus, code switching contributed to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

The limitation of this study is that the data were collected from one English teacher and three classroom observations in one school. Further research is recommended to involve more teachers, more classroom contexts, and better recording equipment such as a camera with a clip-on microphone so that classroom utterances can be documented more clearly.

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