

A Sociolinguistics Analysis of Code-Switching Used in English Language Classroom

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Abstract

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This study examines the phenomenon of code-switching that occurs in the English learning process in the informal tutoring class ProBimbel. The purpose of this study was to identify the types of code-switching used by students, the context in which code-switching occurs, and its sociolinguistic functions in teaching and learning interactions. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach, with eight prospective ProBimbel students (casis) as subjects who had an Indonesian language background and English language skills at elementary to intermediate levels. The data were collected through direct observation and audio-visual recordings of classroom activities, and were later analyzed using a systematic coding framework to identify the forms of code-switching and interpret their meanings. The results showed that intra-sentential switching was the most dominant type of code-switching (50%), followed by inter-sentential switching (25%) and tag switching (25%). The most frequent code-switching functions included clarification, expressions of misunderstanding, transitions, and opening discussions. These findings suggest that code-switching functions as an adaptive communication strategy and contextually supports the language learning process. In conclusion, code-switching is not a linguistic error but rather a reflection of developing communicative competence.

Kata Kunci:

*alih kode, kelas
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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji fenomena alih kode yang terjadi dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kelas bimbingan belajar informal ProBimbel. Alih kode merupakan praktik penggunaan dua bahasa atau lebih dalam satu konteks komunikasi, yang umum ditemukan dalam lingkungan bilingual, termasuk lingkungan pendidikan. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk

mengidentifikasi jenis alih kode yang digunakan oleh siswa, konteks terjadinya alih kode, dan fungsi sosiolinguistiknya dalam interaksi belajar mengajar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, dengan delapan calon siswa ProBimbel (casis) sebagai subjek yang memiliki latar belakang bahasa Indonesia dan keterampilan bahasa Inggris pada tingkat dasar hingga menengah. Data diperoleh melalui observasi langsung dan pencatatan aktivitas kelas, yang kemudian dianalisis untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk dan makna penggunaan alih kode. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa alih kode intrakalimat merupakan jenis alih kode yang paling dominan (50%), diikuti oleh alih kode interkalimat (25%) dan alih kode tag (25%). Fungsi alih kode yang paling sering terjadi meliputi klarifikasi, ungkapan kesalahanpahaman, transisi, dan pembukaan diskusi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa alih kode berfungsi sebagai strategi komunikasi adaptif dan secara kontekstual mendukung proses pembelajaran bahasa. Sebagai kesimpulan, alih kode bukanlah kesalahan linguistik melainkan cerminan dari pengembangan kompetensi komunikatif.

INTRODUCTION

The use of two or more languages in a single communication context has become an integral part of bilingual and multilingual societies, including in the realm of education. In the context of learning English as a foreign language, the phenomenon of code-switching, also known as language-switching, often occurs, both consciously and unconsciously (Nurhasanah, 2021). Teachers and students often use code-switching as a communication strategy to bridge the gap between the target language (English) and the mother tongue (Bahasa Indonesia). Although some people consider code-switching as a form of weakness in mastering a foreign language, sociolinguistic studies show that this phenomenon has functional and strategic value in the teaching and learning process (Yan, 2023).

The phenomenon of code-switching is often found in tutoring classes that teach English to prospective students or elementary and secondary learners, particularly in structured learning environments like the ProBimbel English program, which was selected as the focus of this study because it provides a clear example of how students and teachers naturally alternate between languages during

instruction. In classes like this, the students' homogeneous language background (speaking Indonesian) and their still-developing English language skills encourage language mixing. Teachers often insert instructions or explanations in Indonesian so that students can more easily understand the material (Winola, 2021). At the same time, students also tend to mix English and Indonesian when asking, answering, or discussing. This shows that code-switching does not only occur due to linguistic limitations but also as an effort to build understanding, comfort, and communication effectiveness.

Several previous studies have shown that code-switching plays an important role in bilingual learning environments, particularly in supporting comprehension, building rapport between teachers and students, and facilitating smoother communication during classroom interactions. These findings indicate that code-switching is not merely a linguistic mixing practice, but also a strategic tool used by both learners and instructors to achieve instructional goals and enhance learning outcomes.

However, there has not been much research that specifically observes the form and function of code-switching carried out by students in the context of informal tutoring classes. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the practice of code-switching that occurs in English classes attended by eight ProBimbel casis students. Through a quantitative approach and analysis of real language samples obtained from student-teacher interactions during the learning process, this study will identify the types of code-switching that occur, their frequency, and the sociolinguistic functions they serve. This approach is expected to provide a more concrete picture of the dynamics of language in the teaching and learning process in bilingual classes.

Based on this background, the formulation of the problem in this study is formulated as follows: (1) What do students in ProBimbel English classes use the types of code-switching? (2) In what contexts does code-switching occur during the teaching and learning process? (3) What is the function of using code-switching in teacher-student interactions and between students in the class? By studying this problem, the research results can contribute to the development of foreign language

learning strategies, especially in understanding the role of the mother tongue as a learning aid in bilingual classes. In addition, these findings can also be a reference for teachers or instructors in designing a more inclusive and communicative teaching approach.

Understanding Code-Switching

Code-switching is a significant area of study in linguistics, particularly in the context of multilingual and multicultural societies. Yusuf et al. (2024) state that code-switching portrays the social and cultural dimensions that is related to cognitive comprehension than only about a mere linguistic practice. According to Astani (2020), as well as Laksono and Annisa (2022) state that this phenomenon is unavoidable in communication involving more than one language. In practice, code-switching has become a standard tool used in various situations, including in foreign language learning (Maranan et al., 2025).

In general, code-switching is defined as the transition from one language or language variation to another in a communication situation (Ezeh et al., 2022). For example, a speaker who starts a conversation in Indonesian and then inserts or switches to English is engaging in code-switching. Algethami (2025) added that code-switching can occur without disrupting the linguistic function because each element maintains its meaning and communicative role. Poplack (2015) categorizes code-switching into three types: tag-switching (the insertion of short phrases at the beginning or end of a sentence), inter-sentential switching (switching between sentences), and intra-sentential switching (switching within a sentence). These three forms illustrate the flexibility of speakers in using two languages alternately, both for functional, expressive, and pedagogical purposes.

Based on the various theories presented, it can be concluded that code-switching is a linguistic phenomenon that plays a crucial role in bilingual and multilingual communication. This phenomenon not only reflects a speaker's ability to master more than one language but also reflects social identity, communicative needs, and cognitive strategies used to clarify meaning and facilitate interaction. Thus, code-switching is not simply a form of code-mixing, but a practice that has

functional, social, and pedagogical value depending on the context of the communication.

Types of Code-Switching

Code-switching is a phenomenon in which bilingual or multilingual speakers switch languages within a single conversation. There are two main types of code-switching, namely, intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching. Intra-sentential code-switching occurs within a sentence. Language switching can be in the form of words, phrases, clauses, or parts of sentences inserted from another language into a complete sentence. This type is considered more complex because it involves direct language changes within the same sentence structure, thus requiring mastery of the grammar of both languages simultaneously.

Inter-sentential code-switching is a language switch that occurs between sentences or clauses. In this type, one sentence is spoken in one language, and the following sentence uses a different language. This language switch is more clearly visible because it occurs at the sentence boundary (Kadir, 2021).

In addition, according to Poplack (2015), there are three types of code-switching:

1. Tag Switching

This type involves the insertion of tags or short words such as "you know," "right," or "kan," which are usually not syntactically tied to the main sentence. Tag switching functions as a marker of bilingualism without disrupting the sentence's structure. For example, "It is cold today, right?"

2. Inter-sentential code switching

Occurs when language switching is done at the boundary between two sentences or clauses. In this type, one sentence is entirely spoken in one language; then, the following sentence switches to another language.

3. Intra-sentential code-switching

Language switching within a sentence involves the insertion of words or phrases from another language within the same sentence.

In short, code-switching helps the speakers to express ideas or emotions more effectively, and its type depends on the position of the language switch within the

utterance: whether it occurs within a sentence (intra-sentential), between sentences (inter-sentential) or through the insertion of certain tags (tag switching).

Sociolinguistics in Education

Sociolinguistics plays a crucial role in education, particularly in language teaching, as this study views language as a tool for social communication, not merely a grammatical system (Aminah et al, 2025). In the context of education, understanding sociolinguistics allows teachers to understand how language is used in various social situations by the community of speakers (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). This is the basis for creating learning that not only emphasizes the structural aspects of language but also pays attention to language variations, social contexts, cultural values, and norms inherent in its speakers. For example, the communicative competence-based learning approach emphasizes the importance of students' ability to use language appropriately in different social situations.

By integrating sociolinguistic principles, language education becomes more relevant and contextual. Methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT) were born from the awareness that the success of language learning lies in students' ability to communicate effectively in real life, not just memorizing language structures. In addition, students are also equipped with an understanding of language varieties, dialects, language choices according to context, and interference phenomena so that they not only learn "what" and "how" to say something but also "when," "to whom," and "in what situations" the words are used. Thus, sociolinguistics not only supports effective language teaching but also encourages the formation of complete sociolinguistic competence in students.

METHOD

The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative. This approach was chosen to describe and analyze the phenomenon of code-switching that occurs naturally in English classes. Descriptive qualitative research enables researchers to observe and interpret how students use language switching (code-switching) as part of their everyday classroom communication without interfering with the learning

process. Recent studies support the relevance of this approach: according to (Hafid & Margana, 2022), code-switching serves as an interactional resource that helps learners manage classroom discourse effectively, while (Steiger, 2025) highlight that code-switching in EFL contexts often emerges spontaneously as students attempt to negotiate meaning and maintain communication flow. These contemporary perspectives reinforce the appropriateness of using a descriptive qualitative design to capture authentic linguistic behavior in the classroom.

The subjects in this study were eight prospective students (cases) in the ProBimbel English class. These students were selected purposively because they showed characteristics that were in accordance with the objectives of the study, namely, students with basic to intermediate English skills who tend to switch languages in learning interactions. Data were collected through a series of procedures, including direct classroom observations and audio recordings. During the observations, the researchers documented real-time interactions between teachers and students as well as interactions among students, focusing on instances of spontaneous language switching. The audio recordings were used to ensure accuracy and allow for repeated examination of the communication patterns. All collected data were transcribed verbatim and subsequently categorized to identify specific types and functions of code-switching that emerged during the learning process. The analysis followed a qualitative approach, involving coding, pattern identification, and interpretation to ensure that the findings reflected the actual language behaviour observed in the classroom.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, data were taken from real interactions that occurred in an English class at the ProBimbel tutoring institution. The class consisted of eight prospective students (cases) who came from a background of Indonesian as their main language, but actively used English in the context of learning. Observations were made during the learning process, with the aim of capturing the phenomenon of code-switching that naturally emerged in conversations between teachers and students, as well as between students.

Table 1. Code-Switching Analysis

No	Std. Code	Sentence	Type	Function
1	A	“Miss, boleh nanya? What is the meaning of <i>though</i> ?”	Intra-sentential	Clarification
2	B	“ <i>This is easy</i> , aku bisa jawab”	Tag switching	Showing confidence
3	C	“Agak bingung, <i>i don't know how to answer</i> ”	Inter-sentential switching	Expressing difficulties
4	D	“Miss, mau izin. <i>May I go to the toilet</i> ?”	Intra-sentential Switching	Transition
5	E	“Kayaknya ini <i>adjective, right</i> ?”	Intra-sentential switching	Check understanding
6	F	“Soalnya <i>is too hard</i> , miss”	Inter-sentential	Complaints
7	G	“Miss, aku kurang paham <i>this one</i> ”	Intra-sentential	Clarification
8	H	“Yup that's right, tapi kenapa pilih itu?”	Tag switching	Provide confirmation and open discussion

The use of code-switching in English teaching and learning interactions within a bilingual environment such as the ProBimbel class reflects a natural pattern in which students shift between languages as part of their communication and learning strategies. Based on the students' utterances, it can be observed that intra-sentential switching appears most frequently. This type of switching occurs when students insert English phrases or clauses into Indonesian sentence structures, or the other way around. For instance, in the sentence “Miss, I don't understand this one,” the student does not speak entirely in English but incorporates key English expressions that are relevant to the learning context. This illustrates that students are actively navigating the transition from relying on their first language (Bahasa Indonesia) to engaging more confidently with the target language (English). They tend to choose words or phrases that feel most effective or familiar to help them convey their intended meaning.

In addition to that, inter-sentential switching also emerges in the classroom interactions. This type typically appears when students alternate between languages across different clauses or sentences. An example can be seen in the utterance “Agak bingung, I don't know how to answer,” where the shift between languages helps the student express confusion more clearly and naturally.

Another form that appears in the data is tag switching, which is characterized by the use of short English expressions such as "right?" or "Yup, that's right." These tags are usually added to seek confirmation, strengthen statements, or maintain engagement with the interlocutor. Their presence indicates that even brief English expressions can play an important role in managing interactional flow and expressing pragmatic intentions in classroom communication.

In terms of function, code-switching carried out by students has significant pragmatic and pedagogical value. From the eight speech samples analyzed, there are three main functions that can be identified. The first is the clarification function, used by three students, such as in the sentence "Miss, boleh nanya? What is the meaning of though?", which shows that students use switching to clarify the meaning of words or concepts in the target language. The second is the function to show understanding or confusion, also found in three students. For example, statements such as "Agak bingung, I don't know how to answer" show that code-switching is an expressive tool to convey students' difficulties appropriately. This function is very important because it allows teachers to immediately recognize obstacles to understanding and adjust their teaching approaches. Third, two students use switching for transition and collaboration functions, such as when asking permission ("May I go to the toilet?") or opening a discussion with a friend ("Yup that is right, tapi kok pilih itu?"). This confirms that switching also supports social interaction in the classroom and reflects students' developing communicative competence in a bilingual context.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that code-switching is not a form of language error but an adaptive linguistic strategy, especially for foreign language learners who are still in the process of acquiring full proficiency in the target language. In the context of English learning in the ProBimbel class, switching occurs naturally and contextually, not because of students' inability to speak English but as part of the process of internalizing the language. This phenomenon reflects the dynamics of a bilingual class, where students use both languages simultaneously to facilitate communication, understand materials, and express ideas effectively. Thus, teachers' understanding of the functions and types of code-switching can help

create a more supportive and responsive learning environment, where students are not forced to be "immediately perfect" in one language but are given space to build their competence gradually and naturally.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that code-switching is a common and functional phenomenon in English learning environments, particularly in informal settings such as the ProBimbel tutoring class. Students engage in various types of code-switching. Most dominantly intra-sentential, primarily to clarify meaning, express difficulty, or facilitate smooth transitions during communication. These patterns demonstrate that students are not merely compensating for linguistic limitations but are strategically combining languages to maximize comprehension and participation. The ability to switch codes fluidly indicates a developing communicative competence, where both English and Indonesian serve complementary roles in supporting the learning process. From a pedagogical standpoint, code-switching should be seen not as a hindrance but as a valuable tool in language acquisition. Those who understand the pragmatic functions of code-switching can leverage it to better connect with students and create a more inclusive, adaptive, and communicative classroom atmosphere. Recognizing and supporting students' bilingual expressions allows for a more realistic and empathetic approach to foreign language instruction, one that acknowledges the gradual nature of language mastery and encourages learners to build confidence while transitioning between linguistic systems.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educators incorporate code-switching strategically in classroom instruction, especially during explanation of complex concepts or when addressing students' comprehension difficulties. Training programs for English teachers should include modules on the positive pedagogical use of code-switching to help them manage bilingual interactions more effectively. Future research may also investigate how intentional code-switching techniques can influence students' long-term language proficiency and classroom engagement in varying instructional settings.

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