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Teachers' Use of Code Switching in EFL Classroom and its Functions

ABSTRACT

The debate about the use of L1 (first language) in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes has been around since the teaching as a foreign language itself. The arguments that support the use of L1 use in EFL classes claimed that L1 can be a great tool for students for L2 (English) acquisition and learning. This claims lead to the EFL teachers' use of code switching (CS) in the classroom. This research aims at investigating the teachers' belief about code switching and its function in EFL classroom. Three experienced teachers of English Language Education Department in a private university participated in this study. The study used observation and interview as the data collection methods. The observation was done through video recording on class sessions, and the interview was done to confirm teachers' use of CS based on the recording. The result reveals that the teachers have made informed decision on their teaching practice, especially on the use of CS as a teaching method to facilitate students' learning. The teachers mostly used inter-sentential switching in CS. The reasons for using CS in the classroom were to help students learn, to facilitate students with low level of L2 proficiency and to teach efficiently. The functions of teachers' CS were to construct and transmit knowledge, to manage the class, and to build interpersonal relation with the students. This study indicated that teachers in this research were aware of the use of CS in teaching and learning L2 to facilitate learning.

Keywords: code switching, code switching in EFL class, teachers' beliefs

INTRODUCTION

Codeswitching (hereafter CS) is "an individual's use of two or more language varieties in the same speech event or exchange" (Wooland, 2004, pp. 73-74). Bullock and Toribo (2009) defined CS as "the ability on the part of bilinguals to alternate effortlessly between their two languages" (p.1). This definition indicated that CS only occurs among people who master two or more different languages, and their practice of the use of these languages in communication. However, there

are two opposing argument on the reasons why people code switch. The first argument stated that CS was a result of language incompetency by bilinguals that may indicate problems in the mastery of one of the languages (Edwards & Dewaele, 2007; Wooland, 2004). For example, non-native speakers of English may switch to their first language because they forget the English words, or they do not know the English expression they want to use. On the contrary, another argument stated that CS is actually an evidence of bilingual/multilingual competence, which means that CS can be seen as an additional communication sources that bilinguals can use (Bullock & Toribo, 2009). The use of CS is a competence that bilinguals/multilinguals have, since to do CS speakers must have complex knowledge about the languages and the cross-cultural communication norms (Kustati, 2014).

The use of CS may also be found in a classroom context, especially in classrooms that consists of bilingual, or even, multilingual speakers, such as foreign language (L2) classes. Although there is a tendency to impose the use of only L2 in such classes, CS phenomenon is unavoidable. Especially in Indonesia, as a multilingual and multicultural country where people speak more than one languages and dialects, the use of CS in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes is inevitable. In the classroom context in Indonesia where teachers and students share the same first language, research (Kustati, 2014; Nurhayati, 2014; Widia, 2015; Fatimah 2016; and Fhitri, 2017) showed that CS was used by teachers in EFL the classrooms. The research indicated that teachers used CS in teaching and learning process for various reasons. The main reason would be to facilitate students' learning because by using CS teachers believed that they increase students' under-standing of the teaching materials (Widia, 2015), and provide students with comprehensible input, especially for lower level students (Fatima, 2016). The research by Kustati (2014) also showed that when teachers used CS the classroom engagement was improved because the students understand the instruction better.

On the other hand, research about the use of CS in EFL classes in Indonesian context also revealed some concern about the over-use of CS in the classroom that may affect negatively toward the teaching and learning process. Teachers were also concerned that students may get used to CS, and it can decrease the willingness of the students to speak English (Kustati, 2014). A study by Fhitri (2017) also indicated that teachers' use of CS was not a strategy that is consciously used by the teachers to facilitate learning. Instead, teachers used CS because they were influence by the students who use first language, which was considered as a distraction when teachers used English (Fhitri, 2017). Sakaria and Priyana (2018) also pointed out that excessive use of CS in EFL classroom may make students overly dependent. They encouraged teachers to use CS cautiously, so that it can facilitate learning. Thus, although the use of CS can be beneficial for EFL classroom, cautions should be considered whether teachers use CS as a strategy to facilitate learning, or they just use CS as a sign of teachers L2 incompetency.

This research investigated the use of code switching done by Indonesian teachers in university context and explored the functions of those CS in teaching and learning process. Two research questions that this research investigated are:
1. How are Indonesian university teachers' code switching functioned in EFL classes?

2. How do Indonesian university teachers perceive the use of code switching in their EFL classes?

This research is hoped to be able to give contribution to understanding about the teachers practice of the use of CS in the classroom as a strategy to facilitate classroom learning. Besides, the result of this study can be used as a reflection for teachers on their practice of using CS in their classroom so that they can use CS effectively.

LITEARURE REVIEW

Types of code switching

In terms of types of code switching, this research focused on the categorization proposed by Poplack (as cited in Jingxia, 2010). Types of CS were divided into three categorized types of CS into three categories namely "tag switching, inter-sentential switching and intra-sentential switching" (p.11). "Tag-switching is the insertion of a tag phrase from one language into an utterance from another language; Inter-sentential switching occurs at a clause or sentence boundary" (Jingxia, 2010, p. 11), while "Intra-sentential switching occurs when words or phrases from another language are inserted into a sentence of the first language" (Yletyinen, 2004, p. 15). Among the three types of CS, the intra-sentential is considered the most complex one, and can only be used by fluent bi/multilinguals, while inter-sentential switching requires more fluency than the tag switching (Jingxia, 2010). From the previous explanation, it can be inferred that intra-sentential is the most difficult to do, and tag switching is the least difficult

Functions of teachers' code switching in EFL classes

Research reported that teachers' CS in EFL classes functioned for three major purposes such as for constructing and transmitting knowledge (Qing, 2010; Jingxia, 2010; Azlan & Narasuman, 2013, Shay, 2015, and Fhitri, 2017), for classroom management (Mugla, 2005; Tien, 2010; Shay, and 2015), and for affective functions (Qing, 2010; Widia, 2015; Fhitri, 2017, and Sakaria & Priyana, 2018). First, research reported that teacher often code switch to first language when teachers explain complex concept to the students such as grammar, new vocabulary, and the content of the textbook. Teachers were reported to use CS in this situation in order to help students understand the concept better and understand the English text better. When constructing and transmitting knowledge, teachers felt that it is important to use language that students understand, and using CS was sought as a strategy that teachers used to accommodate that purpose.

Second, the function of CS is for classroom management; teachers often used CS to give instructions, to regulate students' behaviour and to maintain the flow of the class. Teachers tend to use L1 to give instruction to the students to ensure that every student comprehend the instruction correctly and do the intended activity precisely (Mugla, 2005). Teachers typically use L2 for giving instruction but then give L1 translation to ensure all students have understood them and applied them correctly (Mugla, 2005; and Tien, 2010). The next function of CS in classroom management is to regulate students' behavior. It is also speculated that when conflict and tension happened in the classroom, teachers often consciously used L1 to show their

authority (Tien, 2009). Similarly, Fhitri (2017) also reported that teachers used CS to get attention from the students when they make noises when teachers explained the lesson. Sakaria and Priyana (2018) also reported that CS were often used for maintaining the flow of the class to keep the conversation going.

Lastly, teachers also use CS for affective functions such as building interpersonal relation with the students in the classroom. The use of CS in the classroom may contribute to creating a more supportive language environment that enables teachers to build solidarity and intimate relations with the students (Qing, 2010; Widia, 2015). Fhitri (2017) reported that teachers often use CS to create relaxed and informal classroom situation, which may encourage students to participate in the classroom activity (Sakaria & Priyana, 2018). A study by Tien (2009) also revealed that when teachers were engaged in informal conversations with students, they switched to L1 Raschka et al. (2009) emphasize that teachers often use L1 before starting the formal lesson to establish a closer relationship with the students.

Teachers' perception toward the use of CS in ESL classrooms

Some research reveals that teachers hold positive attitude toward using CS in ESL classrooms. For example, a research by Jingxia (2010) reported that teachers agreed that the use of CS in the classroom gave a great benefit for classroom teaching and learning process. The teachers in her research explained that the use of CS helped the teachers in explaining grammar and vocabulary which facilitated the students' learning. Although the teachers in this research claimed that they used CS unconsciously - CS came naturally – the

teachers were aware that CS that they did have certain functions that could help their students learn L2 effectively and efficiently. Another study by Songxaba, Coetzer, and Molepo (2017) which investigated the teachers' perception on the use of CS as a strategy in second language teaching in Afrika. This study also revealed that teachers also hold positive perception about the use of CS in this study. Their study also revealed that teachers were aware that the use of CS in second language learning is a good strategy for L2 learning, and they all expressed that they did not use only L1 when teaching L2 because they believed that it cannot improve the students' communication skills. These studies revealed that despite the controversies on using L1 in teaching EFL classes in the form of CS, teachers have had to be aware that CS has to be sought as a strategy in teaching and learning, not be sought as a tool to conceal their incompetence in using L2. This study was carried out to find out whether the teachers in this study have made informed decision in using CS in the classroom as a strategy in EFL classes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive qualitative research design which explored the function of teachers' code switching in EFL classes and the teachers' perception on the use of code switching in their EFL classes. Based on the aims of the research, descriptive qualitative is an appropriate design because descriptive qualitative research design is usually used to explore the participants opinion, believes, and/or thoughts.

The participants of the research were three (3) teachers who teaches EFL classes in university level in Indonesia. The teachers taught in an English Language Education Department that prepares the students to become EFL teachers starting from

elementary school to senior high schools. Pseudonym is used to describe the participants to protect participants' identity. The participants in this study were Mr. Alvin, who had taught EFL classes 7 years, and had masters' degree in English Education, Ms. Dina, who has experience in teaching EFL classes in university level starting from 2003 (15 years) and masters' degree in Innovative technology in education, and Ms. Pamela, who had five years of experience in teaching EFL classes and hold master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). These teachers were selected for some reasons. First, the teachers have, at least, five-year experience in teaching EFL classes. The experience in teaching EFL classes is important consideration in this research since with their experience, the researcher believed that the teachers can offer their professional opinion about their practice in the classroom, in this case, the use of CS.

This research used observation and interview to collect the data. The observation was carried out by video recorded the teachers' class sessions focusing on the teachers' use of classroom code switching. The video recorded was done without the presence of the researcher to maintain the natural flow of the class. Each class of the teachers was a four-credit class which lasted about three hours and twenty minutes, so the researcher decided to only record one session of the class because she thinks that the data collected from one session of the class was plentiful to collect the data about the use of CS from the participants. The researcher recorded Mr. Alvin's class of Listening and Speaking for Career Development, Mr. Dina's class of Listening and Speaking for Daily Conversation, and Ms. Pamela's class of Listening and Speaking for Daily Conversation. These classes were offered to first year

students of university and aimed at developing students' speaking and listening skills.

The video recordings, then, were analysed by the researchers to note on the use of CS and to categorize the functions of the CS that the teachers used. The researchers noted the events sampling where teachers used CS throughout the class then categorizes the events into types of CS and functions of CS. Then, the note and the category, then, was used as a guideline to interview the teachers to ask about their perception of their use of CS in their classroom. The researcher used a semi-structured interview where she asked the participants about what they think about the use of CS in EFL classroom, if they were aware when they use CS, and what were the functions of their use of CS in the classroom. The interviews were tape recorded for the purpose of data analysis. The recordings, then, were transcribed and analysed by coding the data to find the emergence themes from the interview related to the teachers' perception on the use of CS and its function.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section explained about the findings both from the observation and the interview. For the first part, researchers described the data from the video-recorded observation on the events sampling where the participants used CS in the classroom, then followed by the interview that explained why the teachers used CS in those instances. The next session discussed about the teachers' perception on the use of CS in their EFL classes which resulted from the interview.

Functions of CS in EFL classroom

To understand the functions of teachers' CS in the classroom, the researcher recorded three class sessions. Each class was recorded for about 200 minutes or 3 hours and 20 minutes. The recordings were, then, analysed to see the functions on the teachers' CS. The recorded class session revealed that the teachers used CS for many purposes. First, it is recorded that CS was used when teachers introduce new vocabulary and language expressions, explain grammar points, and explain content (function of telephoning). For example, in the beginning of the class, Ms. Pamela required the students to read verses of the Quran and their translation. She then used CS to introduced vocabulary in the English translated version of the verses of the Quran. Mr. Alvin also used CS when introducing new words, phrases, and expressions used in making phone call. Besides for explaining new vocabulary and explaining, the recorded showed that CS was used for explaining content.

In the interview Ms. Pamela argued that using L1 for introducing new vocabulary and grammar point is more efficient, and students seemed to understand the words or grammar point quicker that when she explained them in L2. When explaining about how to make phone conversation, Mr. Alvin also used CS. He switched from L2 to L1 and vice versa because he claimed that to do phone conversation correctly, students must know about the cultural aspects about phone conversation, so explaining the cultural aspects is easier to be done in L1. The finding of this research is similar to the research done by Sakaria and Priyana (2018) who suggested that CS can facilitate teachers to communicate complex concept in L2 and can also be used to increase students' understanding and comprehension. Jingxia's (2010) research also revealed that teachers used CS to translate unknown vocabulary items, explain grammar, and to emphasizing some explanation points.

On the contrary, Ms. Dita did not use CS in explaining grammar. In the interview, Ms. Dita argued that she thought that she did not have to switch to L1 in explaining the grammar points because the grammar she explained on the day the class was recorded was simple, and she also stated that the students seemed to understand her explanation in L2 well. From this finding, it can be seen that the use of CS was not only determined by the concept that the teachers wanted to deliver, but also determined by the students' needs. This finding is supported by Stylianou-Panayi (2015) who argued that teachers' use of CS should be done for the better result of the students, and the amount of CS used by teachers should also decided to cater the students' need.

Next, there were some instances in this research where teachers used CS for classroom management purposes. The most frequent that the teachers did was using CS for giving instructions, introducing lesson's objective, and repeating questions. There were many events in the recording that showed when teachers gave instruction to the students they often use CS to make sure that the students understood what they have to do for their classroom activity. Besides for giving instruction, there was one even recorded that Mr. Alvin also used CS to introduce that day's lesson objective, and in the interview, he claimed that he used CS to ensure that students understand the objective of the lesson so that he and the students can work together to achieve the objectives. In addition, teachers also used CS for repeating questions. Questions are

considered important in teaching and learning process. Mostly, teachers used questions to facilitate learning and comprehension. That is why it is very important that students understand the question in order for them to learn.

The result of this research about the use of CS for giving instruction is similar to the studies by Mugla (2005), and Tien (2010). Mugla (2005) also confirms that the teachers typically use L2 for giving instruction but then give L1 translation to ensure all students have understood them and applied them correctly. Tien (2010) seems agree with those statements by stating that teachers switch from L2 to L1 to give explicit classroom instructions such as directing students to be engaged in pair or group discussions or to perform certain classroom activities. The use CS to repeat questions was supported by Mugla (2005) who argued that the teacher uses L1 to present the question that is easier to understand by the learners, so that the teacher can elicit appropriate answers.

The last function of the CS that was shown in the recording was for affective purposes. In this research, the teachers used humour to build interpersonal relation with the students. In many incidences, Ms. Pamela Switched from L2 to L1 when she told jokes to students. In the interview, Ms. Pamela stated that she used L1 to tell jokes because the jokes would be understood easily when it is done in L1. When asked about what the function of the joke in her class was, she argued that it functioned to build a friendly and relaxed atmosphere with the students because she believed that when students feel close with the teacher and feel relaxed in the classroom, they will learn better. This statement is supported by Tien (2009) who stated that teachers also employed L1 to bridge the gap between

themselves as the authority figures and the students, in order to express a degree of solidarity or a jocular relationship between the teacher and students. That use of CS may enable the teachers to build up solid relationships with students in classrooms (Tien, 2009). Raschka et al. (2009) also emphasize that teachers often use L1 prior to the start of the formal lesson to reduce distance between them and their learners; and when the distances are reduced, teachers may establish solidarity and a close relationship with their students. Humour that the teacher used in this study can be a way to reduce distance and gap between the students and the teacher.

Teachers' perception on using CS in EFL classroom

In terms of language of instruction, Mr. Alvin mainly used L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) as the language of instruction, he sometimes used English in the observed class session. The observation revealed that Mr. Alvin code switching happened mostly from L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) to L2 (English). Ms. Pamela and Ms. Dina used English (L2) as the language of instruction. Ms. Pamela sometimes used CS in her teaching, and the CS happened between L2 (English) and L1 (Bahasa Indonesia), while Ms. Dina never use L1 during the observed class session. These research findings about the practice of using CS in EFL classroom may reflect the controversies whether teachers should or should not use the L1 while teaching the L2 (Stylianou-Panayi, 2015). Those who believe to use L1 in teaching L2 argued that L1 gives a powerful influence on the learning process, since learners tend to use L1 as a starting point when they learn a new language (Mugla, 2005). While those who disagree of using L1 argued that teachers can avoid using L1 in EFL classroom by using certain techniques (Stylianou-Panayi,

2015). However, no research or theories suggested the use of L1 only or over use in an L2 classes. As Ghobadi & Ghasemi (2015) recommended that careful use of L1 in foreign language learning should be considered, so that the use of L1 can be beneficial to speed up the process of L2 learning.

In terms of types of code switching, the most frequently used of CS was the inter-sentential switching where the teachers switch between clauses or sentences. The second mostly used types of CS was the intra-sentential switching when the switching happened within clauses and sentences, and the tag-switching was the least CS types that the teachers used. The findings of this research about the types of CS that the teachers used is similar to studies conducted by Jingxia (2010), Azlan and Narasuman (2013), and Hayati (2014).

The interview with the teachers revealed that all teachers mentioned that they are aware or conscious that they use CS. So, the use of the CS in their classrooms was something that the teachers do deliberately, not something that they do unconsciously. This research result is contradictory with the research by Jingxia (2010) that revealed that teachers code switching occurs automatically or unconsciously. However, the conscious use of CS may indicate that the teachers in this research were aware of the function of L1 to help the learners learn L2. This is indicated by the reasons on why they do the CS.

The first reason why the teachers in this research used CS in the classroom is to help students learn. Two teachers argued that the use L1 and L2 in turns to help students understand the materials that they explained, so that the students can learn from the class. They also expressed that sometimes they can see that the students

are lost when they use L2 only and they use L1 to clarify their explanation or their instructions. Ms. Pamela also argued that she used L1 as the last resource when using L2 seemed to be too confusing for the students. This result of the interview was also supported by the observation result that showed that the teachers did code switch to L1 after several receptions of explanation in L2. Apparently, L1 was used unless the teachers thought that the students had not understood the teachers' explanation or instruction. In other words, the use of CS by the teachers indicated that the teachers were aware that CS is a beneficial instruction technique in teaching L2 (Sakaria & Priyana, 2018).

The second reason of using CS was when the teachers thought that the students' English competence is low. During the interview all the teachers expressed that they will immediately switch to L1 when they saw that the students' L2 competence is still low that the use of L2 only in the classroom would not facilitate learning. As Bullock & Toribo, (2009) argued that learners, especially in the early stages of learning, often use their first language (L1) due to their temporary or permanent gap in language knowledge or a process referred to as crutching. The teachers use of CS from L2 to L1 were meant for crutching for the students. Fatimah's (2016) research also supported that teachers used CS when they taught students with low level of proficiency.

The third reason expressed by the teachers to use CS in the classroom was for efficiency consideration. The teachers expressed that sometimes it is time consuming to give complex instruction or to explain complex concept using L2 because they must repeat the instruction and the explanation several times to make ensure

comprehension. Then, teachers argued that switching the instruction and explanation to L1 will be time efficient. This reason was also expressed by Shay (2015) who argued that by using CS to give instruction, to clarify meaning and to stress importance of the L2 content may result in efficient comprehension. In addition, by simplifying the comprehensible input for learners, the use of L1 for this purpose may sometimes encourage students to participate and produce the desired L2 responses (Mugla, 2005; Raschka, Sercombe, & Chi-Ling, 2009). These reasons of using CS from the teachers clearly showed that the teachers participated in this research showed that they made informed decision on their teaching to use CS as a tool to help them teach effectively and efficiently that may lead to students learning.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results revealed that all the participants in this study used CS in their EFL classrooms, and they sometimes switched from L2 to L1, and vice versa, and they consciously used CS in their classroom. The CS that the teachers used happened in inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching. The most frequently used switching is inter-sentential level where teachers switch codes in the clauses and sentences level, and the least was the tag switching. For the reasons why teachers used CS were to help students learn, to facilitate students with low level of L2 proficiency and to teach efficiently. The teachers believed that CS can be a tool for them to facilitate teaching and learning process in the classroom. This showed that teachers in this research have made informed decision regarding CS in their teaching and learning process.

Regarding to the functions of using CS, teachers used CS for constructing and transmitting knowledge such as introducing new introduce new vocabulary and new language expressions, explaining grammar points, and explaining content. CS used by the teachers in this research also function as a tool to manage the class or classroom management. The teachers used CS when giving instruction and repeating questions. The use for CS was meant to facilitate students understanding in the classroom. The last function was for maintaining interpersonal relation between teachers and students through humor to maintain a close and friendly atmosphere for the students.

The recommendations from this research are that teachers need to be aware of the functions and reasons on the use of CS so that CS can be used as a great tool to facilitate students learning. CS is not an escape for teachers whose language proficiency is low, but it is a teaching and learning facilities when it is used correctly and appropriately can help students learn better and help teachers teach more effectively. In foreign language classes, code switching is encouraged to be used since it can promote students' learning. However, precautions should be taken when using L1 in the classroom so that it may not overtake the target language.

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