



The Influence of Teachers' Code Switching on Students' Understanding of Their Messages

Ari Putri Haryanti[✉], Januarius Mujiyanto, A. Faridi

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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Abstract

In Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject that is learnt by students for the first time in junior high school. Although the teachers are expected to use English in the classroom, sometimes students do not understand the explanation. Code switching becomes a natural part of classroom interaction in foreign language classroom. Therefore, this study aimed to explain the use of code switching, students perceived the teachers' code switching, the students respond to the teacher's code-switching practices and the influence of teachers' code-switching practices on students' understanding in the teaching learning process. It was conducted at SMP N 1 Comal. The method used in this research was qualitative study. To get the data, researcher used observation, video recording, questionnaire and interview. The results of the study showed that first there were six functions of code switching in the foreign language classroom, those are to explain grammar, to manage classroom, to index a stance of empathy or solidarity, to translate words, to help students when they have difficulty in understanding and to emphasis some points. Second, the students preferred a combination of Indonesia and English in the classroom. Third, there were five responses from students in the teaching learning process, those were specific response, choral response, open-ended or students initiated response, silence and laughter. Fourth, teachers believed that code switching had positive influences in teaching English for their students.

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[✉]Correspondence Address:
 Kampus Pascasarjana Unnes, Jl. Kelud Utara III Semarang
 5023 Indonesia
 E-mail: arput.haryanti@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

English is one of the International languages that is used by many countries as a main tool of communication. It also plays an important role in some fields such as technology, knowledge, art, international relationship, education, etc. To face the globalization era, people should master English as an international language. Considering the importance of English, Indonesia government put an attention of English as one of the compulsory subjects in every formal education.

In 2013, the government created a new rule that English is no longer a compulsory subject in elementary school in Indonesia. In this case, English in Junior High School is the first level for the students to get the English lesson. Even though the students spend a long time in language classes, they do not achieve a desirable level in various language skills. It is because English is seen as a foreign language (EFL) in which it is not widely used by learners in their immediate social context (Saville-troike, 2006, p. 4). Besides in the English classroom, students rarely use English for communication or interaction with others and they tend to use Indonesian language or their local language to communicate inside or outside the classroom. In addition, our society cannot encourage students to use English as a communicative tool. As a result, many of them still have some difficulties when they have to communicate by using English.

Considering the ability of students in English, the role of the teacher becomes important in the classroom. The teacher should use a strategy to make the communication run smoothly. The teacher as a key role in the classroom should have good interaction and competencies which potentially support and help the students to improve their skills in learning English (Febriana & Faridi, 2016, p.32). Teachers should make sure the students understand the explanation of the teacher in the classroom. The point is although the teacher is expected to use English in the classroom; sometimes the students do not understand the

explanation of the teacher. In some cases, the teachers have to switch from the target language to the first language to make the teaching-learning process effective. This is the most common phenomenon in the foreign language classroom.

Because another language presents in the classroom besides English, it is a situation that leads the codes are switched. In the foreign language classroom, code-switching is naturally occurring to make the teaching-learning process run smoothly. Code-switching refers to the mixing of two or more languages in discourse by bilinguals (or multi-lingual). It is used by the teacher as a communicative strategy to make sure the students understand the instruction or the explanation of the teacher. The teacher must be able to convey instructions with clear language that can be understood by their students. As teachers, they have to have a communicative competence in the teaching-learning process. Communicative competence can be defined as the knowledge of how to use one's linguistic system appropriately in a situation. It is used by the teacher to focus on exploring alternate ways of using what the students do not know for the transmission of a message.

Several previous studies have become the background for this study. Tobing & Rahmina (2016), Kustati (2014), Nurhayati (2014), Bawono & Rini (2014), Fatimah (2017), Hartati et.al (2018), Fitriyani (2013), Hede & Mardijono (2015), and Itmeizeh et. al (2014) conducted a research in the ESL/EFL classroom. The purpose of their study was to investigate the types and functions of code-switching. There were three types of code switching found in the teachers' interaction with students namely: inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching, and tag switching.

Other previous studies related to code-switching in ESL/EFL classroom. Febriana (2017), Margana (2013) Stylianou-Panayi, (2015) Marsakawati (2017) Pagano (2010) agreed that code-switching could be one of the strategies to make students understand better. Using code-switching can make students' better

comprehension and efficiency of the subject. Furthermore, Ahmad (2009) and Yatağanbaba & Yıldırım (2015) added that code-switching could be a positive strategy due to the various functions it had for learners with low English proficiency. Although the teachers had high English proficiency levels, they did not maximize the target language in their classroom interactions because it was strongly believed that teachers' code-switching was an effective teaching strategy when dealing with low English proficient learners.

Most of the previous studies that related code switching the types and functions of code-switching. In addition, some studies proved that code-switching could be a positive strategy by teachers in EFL/ESL classroom. From those previous studies above, the researcher did not find students' perception and students' responses related to teachers' code-switching. Responses from students are expected to make sure students understand teachers' instruction. However, according to Nugroho (2010), in the classroom interaction, the teacher is dominating because it is difficult for teachers to get students' oral responses. He explains that the factors leading to student reticence in the classroom are low English proficiency of students, students' lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes and being laughed at, teachers' intolerance of silence, the uneven allocation of turns because teachers tend to ask brighter students to answer questions, and students' not being able to understand teachers' instructions.

In order to deal with the condition and situation mentioned above the use of code-switching in the classroom especially for teaching English to the students need to be investigated. Regarding this, this study would focus on the code-switching that is used by the teachers in the teaching-learning process and how code-switching practices influence students' understanding of the teachers' messages. In addition, this study also would like to investigate the perception of students toward the use of code-switching in the classroom and to find out whether or not incorporating Indonesian in the

classroom gives benefits for students in learning English.

The results of this research are expected to enrich the study on code-switching and to give a significant contribution of the theory of the implementation of code-switching in the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, it is expected to broaden the influences of the implementation of code-switching in the teaching-learning process especially who conduct the instruction in the bilingual setting.

METHOD

This research belongs to case study design. The aim of the study was to investigate code-switching in the English classroom. This research was conducted in the natural classroom setting where human behavior and events occurred and the analysis was interpretative. The subjects of the study were the English teachers and students of SMP N 1 Comal. The researcher was a main role of this research as data collector, observer and interviewer. The unit analysis of this study used code-switching utterances of the teachers.

This study concerned on the classroom interaction of teaching-learning process. The data was collected through observation, video recording, interview and questionnaire. The procedures of analyzing data were identifying the data, classifying the data, reducing the data, tabulating the data, codification of the data, interpreting the data and concluding the data.

To avoid the subjectivity, two techniques of triangulation are suggested to be in this research were methodology triangulation and investigator triangulation. For methodology triangulation, I employed some instruments such as observation sheet, video-recording, interview and questionnaire. Meanwhile, for investigator triangulation, there were were three other researchers that help me in conducting this research

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this part, the researcher presented the results of the teachers' code-switching in the English classroom.

Results

The Use of Teachers' Code-Switching in the Classroom

The first objective of this study was to explain the use of code-switching in the classroom. In order to examine the use of code-switching done by the teachers, the researcher observed the classroom activities for eight times. This observation would be supported by the teachers' interview about the use of code-switching in the classroom. It was expected to explain the teachers' code-switching in the teaching-learning process.

The following description is about the finding of the use of teachers' code-switching in the classroom. There are six functions of code-switching in the foreign language classroom, those are to explain grammar, to manage classroom, to index a stance of empathy or solidarity, to translate words, to help students when they have difficulty in understanding and to emphasize some points. The findings realized that the teachers switched the code 215 times through eight classroom

The first function was to explain grammar. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that the teachers used code-switching to explain grammar in some areas such as to ask questions, give information and give instructions. In the explaining grammar, the teachers usually switched the codes for the students. The teachers usually explained grammar in Indonesia to make students' understanding better. Because of the purpose was to make students understand the materials especially grammar, the teachers used Indonesia more than English in the teaching-learning process. This was similar with what one of the teachers said in the interview, she said that "When I explain the materials especially for grammar, I always use Indonesia."

The second function was to manage classroom. The teachers used code-switching in the teaching-learning process mainly to manage the classroom. In the classroom interaction, the teachers need to make sure the communication between teacher and students run smoothly. The teacher should manage the classroom properly. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that the teachers used code-switching to manage classroom in some areas such as to ask questions, give information, give instructions, praising/encouraging, joking, criticize students and use students' ideas.

The third function was to index a stance of empathy or solidarity. In the classroom interaction, the teachers also used code-switching to show their empathy or solidarity. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that the teachers used code-switching to index a stance of empathy or solidarity in some areas such as to ask questions, give information, give instructions, praising/encouraging, joking and criticize students.

The fourth function of code-switching was to translate words. In foreign language classroom with low English proficiency of students, translating words was one of the common duty for the teachers to make students able to understand the meaning of the words. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that the teachers used code-switching to translate words in some areas such as to give information, use students' idea and repetition. This was similar with what one of the teachers (T3) said in the interview, he said that "I think when I teach use English, my students do not understand the meaning but when I use Indonesia they more understand. It is different when I use with English." In addition, he said that when he used English and then translate them into Indonesia, it would help the students mastered the language.

The fifth function of code-switching in foreign language classroom was to help students when they have difficulty in understanding. In the explaining materials, the teachers usually switched the codes for the students. The teachers usually explained materials in Indonesia to help

students to understand the lesson. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that the teachers used code-switching to help students when they have difficulty in understanding in some areas such as to ask questions, give information, give instructions, praising/encouraging, joking and criticize students.

The last function of code-switching in foreign language classroom was to emphasize some points. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that the teachers used code-switching to emphasize some point in some areas such as to ask questions, give information, give instructions, praise/encourage, joke and criticize students.

Students' Perception of Teachers' Code Switching

Students of SMP N 1 Comal used Indonesia and Javanese as their daily communication. They only used English in the teaching-learning process. Because of those factors, students seemed to be aware that their ability in English is relative low. The teachers also agreed with that. In the interview, some teachers also emphasized the students' English ability was relatively low. The reason was that some of the students did not get English in their Elementary school. The English teacher used code-switching to help the students understand better. Based on the observation, all the teachers used to switch the code in the teaching-learning process although the amount of the codes switch was different between one and another.

Students' Responses to Teachers' Code Switching

The third objective of this study was to explain the students' responses of the teacher's code-switching in the classroom. The following description is about the finding of the use of teachers' code-switching in the classroom. The findings realized that the teachers switched the code 215 times through eight classroom observations. From 215 times code-switching,

there were five responses from students in the teaching-learning process, those were specific response, choral response, open-ended or students initiated response, silence and laughter.

The first response for teacher talk was specific response. In this case, students responded to the teacher within a specific and limited range of available or previously shaped answers. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that there were five points when the students gave specific response for the teachers, those were when the teachers asked questions, gave instructions, praised/encouraged, criticized students and repeated something.

The second response for teacher talk was choral response. Choral response was response by total class or part of class. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that there were five points when the students gave choral response for the teachers, those were when the teachers asked questions, gave information, gave instructions, criticized students and repeated something.

The third response for teacher talk was open-ended or student initiated response. In this case, students responded to the teacher by initiated giving their own ideas, opinions, reactions or feelings. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that there were three points when the students gave specific response for the teachers, those were when the teachers asked questions, gave instructions and repeated something.

The fourth response for teacher talk found in this study was silence. In the classroom interaction, there was a period quiet called silence. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that there were seven points when the students gave choral response for the teachers, those were when the teachers asked questions, gave information, gave instructions, praised/encouraged, used students' ideas, criticized students and repeated something.

The last response for teacher talk found in this study was laughter. There were two situations when the students responded to the teacher by laughing, those are when the teacher

joked and when the teacher praised or encouraged someone.

The Influence of Teachers' Code Switching

Based on the classroom observations, the teachers switched the codes from English to Indonesia and vice versa in the teaching-learning process. Some teachers used to switch the codes in explaining something assuming the students did not understand. Once the teacher asked questions, students remain silent while others murmured among themselves. Then most of them switched to Indonesia after assuming that students did not understand the language rather than elaborating more or rephrasing the questions in the English language for them to understand the questions asked in the English language.

According to the result of teachers' interview, English teachers of SMP N 1 Comal believed that code-switching had positive influences in teaching English for their students. Usually it was used by the teacher as a communicative strategy to make sure the students understand the instructions or the explanations of the teachers. By using code-switching, the teachers would be able to convey instructions or explanation that can be understood by their students. It was used to help the students understand of the subject matter, poor background of the students' language and to make difficult vocabularies to be understood by students.

Discussion

The Use of Teachers' Code-Switching in the Classroom

The use of code-switching in the classroom was unavoidable in the foreign classroom. During classroom observation activities in SMP N 1 Comal, the English teachers were observed that they taught using the English and Indonesia in English classroom. During the classroom observations, it found that there were six functions of code-switching in the foreign language classroom, those are to explain grammar, to manage classroom, to index a

stance of empathy or solidarity, to translate words, to help students when they have difficulty in understanding and to emphasis some points.

Students' Perception of Teachers' Code Switching

Related to students' perception of teachers' code-switching, students perceive that the use of Indonesia in the classroom helps them to communicate with their teachers. Students also agreed that the use of Indonesia in the classroom was very helpful to make them understand the materials better. Based on the result of the questionnaire, many of the students preferred a combination of Indonesia and English in many situations such as explaining materials, explaining grammar, teacher's instructions, informing a test and etc. Overall, students were more comfortable if the teachers use both languages, not only English or Indonesia. This result indicated that they were afraid if they did not catch the meaning properly. They took less risk for misunderstandings in some situations by using Indonesia as a tool of communication.

Students' Responses to Teachers' Code Switching

Response was a reaction to a question, experience, or some other type of stimulus. When the teacher switched the code from English into Indonesia, students would give some responses. Students of SMP N 1 Comal responded well related to the teachers' code-switching.

In the classroom interaction, the core of interaction between teacher and student was liveliness. In order to achieve effective learning, the teacher should have the ability to manage the class well. Teachers must be able to convey instructions with clear language that could be understood by their students. One indication that the students understood the instructions was when they responded the instructions correctly. Meaningful and understandable instructions would lead the students to respond to their

teacher. It could be considered as the starting point of effective teaching and learning process.

However, it seemed like most of the teachers switched the code into Indonesia assuming the students would not understand if they were using English. In many cases, they did not even try to speak in English. They explained the materials directly in Indonesia. Actually, the teacher could do some strategies to deal with it. When the teacher asked the students to do something, she would give times for students to think. The teacher also could ask the students "Do you understand?" or "Do you understand what I mean?" to asked some responses from the students.

The Influence of Teachers' Code Switching

Related to the influence of code-switching on students' understanding of learning English, they believed code switching had positive influences on the students. Teachers of SMP N 1 Comal stated that code-switching made their teaching-learning process run smoothly because Indonesia is their mother tongue language. Most of them switched between English and Indonesia language to make students understand the materials.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

From the findings and discussions, firstly the researcher explained teachers' the use of code switching in the teaching learning process. Through observing the classroom activities, it revealed that the teachers used code switching to index a stance of empathy or solidarity in some areas such as to ask questions, give information, give instructions, praising/encouraging, joking and criticize students.

Secondly, the researcher explained students perceived the teachers' code switching in the teaching learning process. Based on the result of the questionnaire, many of the students preferred a combination of Indonesia and English in many situations such as explaining materials, explaining grammar, teacher's

instructions, informing a test and etc. It was because students were aware their ability in English was relative low so that code switching was needed as a tool to make them communicate and understand.

Thirdly, the researcher explained students' responses to the teachers' code switching. Based on the observations, there were five responses from students in the teaching learning process, those were specific response, choral response, open-ended or students initiated response, silence and laughter.

Fourthly, the influences of teachers' code switching in the teaching learning process since the researcher wanted to know the influence of code switching in the classroom interaction. The teachers claimed that code switching had a positive influence for students. By using code switching, the teachers would be able to convey instructions or explanation that can be understood by their students.

Sugesstion

This study merely explains the use of code-switching, students' perception of the teachers' code-switching, the students' response to the teacher's code-switching and the influence of teachers' code-switching practices. This study was already shown that sociolinguistic study can be conducted in a classroom setting. Therefore, the researcher suggests to the further researchers who are interested in to describe code switching deeply particularly about a sociolinguistic study to use the similar theory or combination theories. Moreover, the researcher suggests to the further researchers to analyze other elements or to analyze the same discussion by a different issue.

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