

**CODE SWITCHING IN THE ENGLISH CLASS ACTIVITY IN THE SUBJECT  
“ENGLISH FOR A GROUP ACTIVITY” IN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY  
PROGRAM, UNIVERSITY OF BANTEN JAYA BANTEN**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Code-switching is a phenomenon that exists in bilingual societies where people have the opportunity to use two or more languages to communicate. Being able to speak more than one language, bilinguals can code-switch and use their languages as resources to find better ways to convey meaning. Code-switching occurs in English Study Program, Faculty of Lecturer Training, University of Banten Jaya, Serang, Banten. Therefore, the aim for this paper was to investigate when and why the lecturer in the class “English for a Group Activity” used code-switch when teaching L2 English. It has also looked into what language the learners preferred in different classroom situations. A lecturer were interviewed and 32 learners taking the class. The results showed that the lecturer generally tried to code-switch as little as possible but that they did code-switch in some of those situations where the learners preferred either a combination of Bahasa Indonesia and English or only Bahasa Indonesia. Two of these situations were grammar instructions, where a majority of the learners preferred a combination of English and Bahasa Indonesia, and one-to-one situations, where a majority of the learners preferred Bahasa Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *code-switching, second language learning, upper secondary school, grammar teaching, learners’ preferences*

**INTRODUCTION**

English is one of required language in language in English Education Study Program in the Faculty of Teacher Training in University of Banten Jaya. Most of them are required to speak English in some situations, even they also have to speak English in the classroom. Similarly, the lecturer also speak English with them. It should be done for making them used to speak English fluently as they will become a teacher after being graduated. Therefore, some learners in the Study Program are

bilinguals; they can speak English and Bahasa Indonesia. English for a group activity is one of the subject that they have to take is “English for a group Activity” that is as the continuation of the first subject “English for Daily Activity.”

Actually, in Indonesia, English itself is as the foreign language; many of Indonesian people cannot speak English. However, since the ASEAN Economic Community started in 2016, some Indonesian people should be able to speak English to anticipate some activities

related to business. Since then, some primary schools in Indonesia started to teach English to the pupils since the fourth grade. There have been different reactions to this new guideline and whether learners benefit from a teacher who only speaks English or if code-switching into Bahasa Indonesia is a useful resource in the learning of a foreign language.

Code-switching is a phenomenon that exists in bilingual societies where people have the opportunity to use two or more languages to communicate. Being able to speak more than one language, bilinguals can code-switch and use their languages as resources to find better ways to convey meaning. Besides, there are so many English course that force the students to speak English with native speakers of English. Then, since Junior High School, the new syllabus was being discussed for making it more communicative, and more specifically the instruction that “teaching should as far as possible be conducted in English.”

Even, there is a rule in the English Education Study Program, University of Banten Jaya, Banten for making the learners to speak English. Some of the lecturers also said that they never use Bahasa Indonesia and that this works well

for their learners on the one hand, and the lecturers said that it is important and necessary to use English in different situations, for example to make sure that the learners have understood on the others. The lecturers who were native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia code-switched elements of their teaching since they found it to be helpful when teaching the learners English. However, when and why a lecturer would code-switch could vary and that is what this paper will look into.

Code-switching is a phenomenon that exists in bilingual societies where people have the opportunity to use two or more languages to communicate. Being able to speak more than one language, bilinguals can code-switch and use their languages as resources to find better ways to convey meaning. Code-switching can also be defined as: “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence, or constituent ”(Jamshidi & Navehebraim 2013, Wardaugh, 2006: 88). There are several functions of code-switching such as filling linguistic gaps, expressing ethnic identity and achieving particular discursive aims (Bullock & Toribio 2009:2). These different functions can be divided into two dominant approaches; the sociolinguistic approach and the grammatical approach (Auer

1998:3; Hamers & Blanc 2000:260). The *sociolinguistic approach* to code-switching focuses on variables such as: “the topic of conversation, the participants, the setting, the affective aspect of the message” (Hamers & Blanc 2000:266). This type of code-switching can be used as a marker of ethnic group membership and identity and has been found to pass down to younger generations even though they might be taught only English as they grow up (Hamers & Blanc 2000:266, 267). Hence, factors regarding differences in linguistic behaviors between e.g. individual conversations, social classes and ethnic groups are relevant to our understanding of code-switching (Gardner-Chloros 2009:97). Code-switching and gender is also a part of the sociolinguistic approach.

The *grammatical approach* can be divided into three subcategories (Hamers & Blanc 2000:259, 260): *extra-sentential* code-switching, where a common feature is to add a tag question like in “Nanti datang hari Selasa, right?” (You will be coming on Thursday, right?); *intersentential* code-switching i.e., where the switch occurs at clause/sentence boundaries like in “I’ll start a sentence in English dan berakhir memakai Bahasa Indonesia” (I’ll start a sentence in English and finish it in Spanish); and

*intrasentential* code-switching, which occurs within clauses or within words e.g. by adding a Bahasa Indonesia plural ending to a word that has been code-switched: “Bagaimana kabar hubbie lu?” (How is your husband?). There seems to be a thin line between the last two types of code-switching. For instance, the sentence used above to exemplify intersentential code-switching in Hamers & Blanc (2000:259) is used to illustrate intrasentential codeswitching in Zirker (2007:11).

There is also a distinction made between code-switching as an asset for bilinguals with a high competence in both languages and code-switching as a reparation tool for insufficiency in the L2, so called *restricted code-switching* (Hamers & Blanc 2000:267). Song & Andrews (2009:59) describe restricted code-switching as “an attempt to keep the conversation flowing without having to pause or abandon the message”.

When learning a language it is important not only to learn isolated areas of a second language (L2) but to be able to use those areas simultaneously when talking, reading, writing or listening in your second language (Cook 2001:407). However, when lecturers’ code-switching is planned ahead it can contribute to a

more efficient understanding of a specific topic or be a part of the (L2) learning (Cook 2001:413). One example could be when explaining a grammatical function in the L1, Bahasa Indonesia, and then applying that explanation to L2 English writing. While focus on input and output in the target language is an important aspect of language acquisition, it has been pointed out that the use of code-switching in the language classroom does not prevent learners from acquiring their L2 (Cook 2001:404). According to Cook (2001:405) it is important not to prevent learners from using their first language but to encourage them to use the second language in as many situations as possible and to find out when and why code-switching should occur. This comfortable atmosphere that code-switching can contribute to is important in the lecturer-learner relationship since it gives them an opportunity to communicate in a more informal way where the risk of misunderstandings due to L2 shortcomings can be avoided (Simon 2001:317). In formal situations code-switching can be used to make the teaching more effective.

Code switching also leads to more efficient teaching for the simple reason that the learners understand faster and more thoroughly. Hence, lecturers' code

switching is an important tool for explanations and instructions (Cook 2001:418). Grammar and vocabulary learning can also be facilitated by code-switching (Cook 2001:414; Jingxia 2010:21; Kumar & Arenda 2012:61; Lin 2013:205). Kumar and Arenda (2012) found that grammar instruction was the area that contained the largest amount of code-switching. When code-switching, L2 lecturers were able to draw upon learners' L1 grammar knowledge, which agreed with what Cook found in her study from 2001. It showed that explicit grammar teaching could be conveyed more thoroughly in the learners' L1; even learners with a high L2 proficiency level absorbed information about grammar better if it was in their L1 (Cook 2001:414). The main argument for avoiding code-switching is that the learners miss out on input in the target language and are deprived of genuine L2 interaction (Cook 2008:181). In groups with more than one L1, the lecturers should ideally be able to relate to all L1s. Since this is not possible, code-switching should be avoided and the target language be used consistently instead (Cook 2008:181). One method that avoids the L1 is the teaching method Communicative Language Teaching (Song & Andrews

2009:35). It focuses on target language communication rather than teaching the linguistic systems of a language. Through participation in communicative activities the L2 learners are using the target language and the purpose is to use the target language in order to acquire it. Consequently, code-switching should be kept to a minimum in the L2 classroom (Song & Andrews 2009:36). To sum up, there seems to be an agreement on the effects of code-switching in research from the 1990s until 2013. Both the sociolinguistic approach focusing on e.g. the topic of conversation, the participants and the setting, and the grammatical approach focusing on grammatical functions of code-switching e.g. intersentential and intrasentential code-switching can be applied in second language learning to facilitate the learning outcome. However, the strongest argument against code-switching is that the learners miss out on target language input.

## **METHOD**

In order to study the extent to which lecturer code-switch in the classroom and learners' attitudes towards it, both lecturers and learners have been consulted. The Method used in the research is Qualitative descriptive (Cresswell, 2014: 250). The

following section will describe how the data used in this study was collected and who the participants were and how they were selected. The participants in this study were both lecturers and learners, in the subject "English for group Activity" in Faculty of Teacher Training, English Education Study Program, University of Banten Jaya. A lecturer was interviewed and her mother tongue was Bahasa Indonesia. He taught "English for a Group Activity" and 32 learners filled out a questionnaire, 6 male and 26 were female. Among these learners, 11 had a different mother tongue than Bahasa Indonesia, such as Sunda and Serang Javanese.

The lecturer was informed that the purpose of the present study was to research code-switching in the English classroom. In order to find lecturer who were willing to participate in the interviews and asked her in person. The questions were prepared in both Bahasa Indonesia and English but the lecturer chose to speak Bahasa Indonesia during the interviews. The lecturer was asked about their own attitudes to and use of code-switching in the L2 English classroom. The interviews were semi-structured, that is they consisted of questions prepared. After the interviews, the writer asked the lecturer if he would let

the writer distribute a web-based questionnaire in the class. This question was asked after the interview so as not to influence their answers to the interview questions. In the results and analysis section, the lecturer has been given fictional names in order to make it easier for the reader to keep them apart and follow the individual views.

The purpose of the questionnaires was to enable a comparison of lecturer's code-switching behavior and learners' code-switching preferences. The questionnaire investigated learners' attitudes towards code-switching in different classroom situations and also included some background information. The questions were of the multiple-choice type allowing the learners to choose only one answer per question. It took the learners approximately three to five minutes to fill out the questionnaire, which was internet-based and filled out on the learners' computers in class.

all questions which will be indicated in the legends as  $N=x$  where  $x$  represents the number of learners who responded to that specific question. Further, it is important to consider the fact that the learners have accounted for what they believe to prefer in certain classroom situations. However, this might not be

what they actually prefer since it is always problematic to self-evaluate.

The main purpose of the interviews was to look into the lecturer's general views on code-switching and also to find out when they code-switched and whether he had a specific purpose in doing so. He also gave their opinion on the fact that teaching should be conducted in English as far as possible.

The lecturer held the same opinion regarding code-switching when teaching English, namely that Bahasa Indonesia does not belong in the class "English for a Group Activity". However, he gave somewhat different explanations as to why he held that view. The writer as the lecturer reacted with a firm *No! Bahasa Indonesia should not exist in the "English for a Group Activity"*. This was his immediate reaction to code-switching in the classroom. The lecturer explained that *English is the target language and I normally tell the children that when they enter the classroom English is the only language allowed.*

*The lecturer* made it clear that he only allows English in her classroom and explained that some learners find it hard but that he usually explains to them that they can speak Bahasa Indonesia during breaks and in all other classes. He tells her

learners that in her classroom they have to speak English. This rule is like a law with no exceptions besides translation exercises. He was positive towards code-switching, did not give a direct answer as to what her general view of code-switching was but explained that:

*English should of course be spoken as much as possible but the truth is that it is not my mother tongue. Neither is it the learners' mother tongue. Therefore it is my opinion that you can never be as clear in your second language as you can be in your first.*

The lecturers also gave her thoughts on when and why he code-switch which showed that her code-switching habits are connected to what is being taught. Their code-switching has to do with efficiency in their teaching and how to make it easier for the learners to understand what they are teaching. The writer's reasons for code-switching often seemed to originate in the fact that he never quite felt that he could be himself when he taught. Sometimes he code-switched in order to fully feel that he was being himself. The writer argued that since he is a lecturer of two foreign languages he finds it difficult because sometimes he feels like he is never quite himself. He tries to speak English but it often feels as if he has to pressure himself not to switch too much. The lecturer code-switches parts of, or all grammar teaching even though he initially

said that Bahasa Indonesia does not belong in the "English for a Group Activity". This could indicate that he looks at Bahasa Indonesia as functional in some situations but that he tries to avoid code-switching in general. He code-switches to a great extent when they teach grammar and he explains that he always speaks Bahasa Indonesia when teaching grammar. He tells her learners that when they learn grammar they will only speak Bahasa Indonesia.

Her reason for code-switching when teaching grammar is that the grammar functions in English are very much alike those in Bahasa Indonesia and he wants to make use of all the grammar knowledge and terminology that the learners hopefully possess in their mother tongue. If grammar teaching were conducted in English the learners would for example have to learn a completely new set of terminology. He is the only lecturer who is very clear that all her code-switching is well prepared and her switching to Bahasa Indonesia only occurs in three specific situations. When he teaches grammar, explains the content and purpose of the syllabus and also when he gives instructions to the national test since he thinks that this is the best way to make sure that all learners understand. If he needs to switch to Bahasa Indonesia at any other point in her teaching, maybe to

explain a grammatical term, even though he is not teaching grammar explicitly at that moment, he always starts with the phrase *I am going to switch to Bahasa Indonesia now* and then he continues the explanation in Bahasa Indonesia.

He code-switches when he teaches grammar but tries to say everything first in English and then in Bahasa Indonesia to make sure that everyone has understood. He sometimes code-switches when using grammatical terms that the learners seem to struggle with; otherwise he does not have any specific topic areas where he deliberately code-switches. It seems as if they look at code-switching in two different ways: one sort of code-switching that should be banished from the English classroom and one sort that fills an important function. He has her focus on social functions and her code-switching is often done for her own sake rather than to make it clearer for the learners. When it comes to one-to-one situations inside and outside the classroom, the lecturer often code-switch but overall, they try to code-switch as little as possible. He is very firm on the fact that the three situations that he mentioned earlier, teaching grammar, explaining the syllabus and giving instructions to the national test, are the only ones in which he code-switches and

that all her one-to-one conversations are in English. He explains that when he is outside his classroom he always speaks Bahasa Indonesia. Bella finds the learners to be uncomfortable or slightly embarrassed if he tries to speak English with them in one-to-one situations and therefore he chooses to speak Bahasa Indonesia. He also points out a number of other situations where he might speak Bahasa Indonesia. Sometimes he has the same learners in more than one subject and if he is talking to a learner about both English and history he speaks only Bahasa Indonesia. If he has a weak learner it could be necessary to explain something again to that learner in Bahasa Indonesia, but then he only speaks to that learner. He is also a mentor and if a learner in his English class addresses him in the role of his or her mentor he allows them to speak Bahasa Indonesia. He also speaks Bahasa Indonesia when he talks to learners one-to-one but does not give any explanation as to why.

When it came to the planning of and the purpose with their code-switching, the lecturer pointed out that he had a clear purpose with their code-switching. Sometimes he is too tired and accidentally switches and he also switches when he gets angry. Furthermore, he explains that



he often switches to Bahasa Indonesia when he talks about sensitive subjects. If there is a conflict in the classroom that needs to be sorted out, he lets his learners switch to Bahasa Indonesia to avoid that they express themselves in a way that is not intended.

This section will present the results of the questionnaire. The main purpose of the questionnaires was to see what language the 32 learners preferred in specific classroom situations. A majority of the learners (54%) preferred a combination of English and Bahasa Indonesia when learning grammar. Bahasa Indonesia was in fact the least preferred language alternative (13%) whilst one third of the learners preferred only English. Consequently, The lecturer's decision only to speak Bahasa Indonesia when teaching grammar is only desired by about one in ten learners. The lecturer code-switched parts of their grammar teaching if he found it necessary which is more in line with the majority of the learners (54%) who preferred a combination of English and Bahasa Indonesia.

When the learners were informed about a test almost half of them wanted their lecturer to speak a combination of English and Bahasa Indonesia. Once again, Bahasa Indonesia was the least favored

alternative chosen by only one fifth of the learners. The group who wanted their lecturer to speak only English represented little over one third of the learners. If the learners were to ask their lecturer a question in Bahasa Indonesia, only one fifth of them would have wanted their lecturer to answer them back in Bahasa Indonesia. Little over half of them wanted their lecturer to use a combination of both English and Bahasa Indonesia and about one quarter of the learners wanted their lecturer to speak only English. Consequently, it seems as if many of the learners want their lecturer to use English, at least in combination with Bahasa Indonesia, even though they ask their question in Bahasa Indonesia.

A majority (73%) of the learners preferred English to be spoken. This could indicate that there is less risk for misunderstandings in these situations or that misunderstandings related to general instructions are less severe than those connected to other situations such as grammar instructions and test instructions. When the learners got their results on a test, about half of the learners (53%) wanted them in English. About a quarter of the learners wanted their results in Bahasa Indonesia or in a combination of both English and Bahasa Indonesia.

In one-to-one situations where the learners' grades were discussed, half of the learners preferred the lecturer to use Bahasa Indonesia only. This was the situation where Bahasa Indonesia was most popular among the learners and it is interesting to note that the lecturer actually claimed that he does code-switch in one-to-one situations. One quarter of the learners preferred English in one-to-one situations and the remaining quarter wanted a combination of both.

In situations where the lecturer explains something that the learners do not understand at once, little over three quarters wanted their lecturer to explain again in English but in a different way. Only 10% each wanted their lecturer to speak either English or Bahasa Indonesia. This is in line with the writer's way of avoiding code-switching in situations where the learners require further explanations and continue to explain *until* they understand. Cook (2008:181) points out that code-switching is not helpful to learners with a different L1 from the majority of the class there were actually four learners who claimed that they understood less when their lecturer spoke Bahasa Indonesia. According to the writer this is one important reason as to why he avoids code-switching as much as

possible. Originally there were two more alternatives to this question: "Mainly Bahasa Indonesia but sometimes English" and "Only Bahasa Indonesia". None of the 32 learners chose any of these alternatives, which further indicates that the lecturers had succeeded well with their intention to code-switch as little as possible. Lecturer's language in the English classroom (N=32). To conclude, many of the learners preferred a combination of Bahasa Indonesia and English in many situations, mainly those who could be seen as a little more complex than others. Grammar instructions and test instructions are examples of such situations while more general instructions were preferred in English. Their lecturers try to code-switch as little as possible and their view on themselves as mainly English speaking seems to correspond to the learners' opinion. A majority of the learners (88%) wanted their lecturer to make them to speak more English. Even though many of them might have chosen Bahasa Indonesia or a combination of Bahasa Indonesia and English in some of the situations in the questionnaire this last result would indicate that they want to be encouraged to speak English rather than fall back on Bahasa Indonesia or a mixture of Bahasa Indonesia and English.

## DISCUSSION

The lecturer said initially in the interviews that he did not believe that codeswitching had a place or function in the English classroom. Later on in the interviews it became clear that they did not only use code-switching when teaching English but also believed it had an important function and regarded it as an important tool. The lecturers seemed to take a somewhat defensive position in the interviews and my own analysis of their behavior was that they were afraid of giving the “wrong” answer. None of the lecturers mentioned what the commentary material says about this specific instruction. This does not mean that none of them have read it, but what it does show is that they do not refer to it when trying to defend their code-switching. The commentary material clearly allows the lecturers to code-switch if they find it is necessary and fills an important function in their teaching. The lecturers are all very experienced, having taught for more than 5 years. It rather seemed to me that he was the lecturer who was most comfortable in his answers and that he has found his way of teaching English and that this way worked well both for her and her learners. However, when they were interviewed about their own methods and teaching routines, they

were much more careful to express the necessity of code-switching.

Regarding the learners, they seemed to realize that they should speak as much English as possible and if they asked a question in Bahasa Indonesia only one fifth would want their lecturer to answer them back in only Bahasa Indonesia. In the more informal situations where one learner asked another for help, they seemed to code-switch to a larger extent. However, in the more formal situation of asking the lecturer for help they spoke English. In the situation where a learner did not understand something at once more than three quarters of the learners wanted their lecturer to explain again in English but in a different way. Even though this might be a situation where it would be easy for the lecturers to code-switch the learners’ answers indicate that the lecturers should not. Furthermore, almost nine out of ten learners wanted their lecturers to make them speak more English in class. This would indicate that even though many learners, in different situations, would prefer their lecturer to speak Bahasa Indonesia there seems to be a consensus among them that English is what they should speak even though they sometimes might *prefer* Bahasa Indonesia. Since the lecturers seem to be intent on code-

switching as little as possible this agrees with the learners' wish to be made speaking more English.

## CONCLUSION

One of the aims of the present study was to investigate when and why lecturers code-switch and the results indicate that most of the code-switching done by a lecturer in this study is both well prepared and has a clear purpose. The lecturers tended to code-switch in those situations that are most represented in earlier research such as grammar instructions and in one-to-one situations. It is not very likely that their code-switching pattern is due to them having read this research but it does show that the lecturer's experiences conform to what researchers have found in the lecturer's teaching. The lecturers generally code-switched in order to clarify their teaching whilst one of the lecturers mainly switched for social reasons or due to his shortcomings in L2 proficiency. When it came to the learners, they preferred a combination of Bahasa Indonesia and English in situations such as grammar explanations and test instructions. In one-to-one situations and grade discussions he preferred Bahasa Indonesia. Moreover, they tended to want their lecturer to make them speak more

English. There was a consensus between the lecturer's and the learners' views when it came to in what areas the lecturers code-switched. A remarkable fact though, is that none of the lecturers claimed to ask the learners about what language they prefer in different situations. Although experience is an important asset when being a lecturer, much can be learnt by asking the learners what they prefer and taking their opinions into account when planning to use code-switching in one's teaching.

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