

# CODE MIXING AND CODE SWITCHING IN THE CLASSROOM INTERACTION

By  
**Meristika Moetia** \*  
**Usman Kasim**  
**Siti Sarah Fitriani**

*Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh*

## ABSTRACT

This case study was carried out based on the issue of using code mixing and code switching in teaching English that specifically to find out the frequent type of code mixing and code switching and to observe the benefit and drawback of using them in the English foreign language classroom interaction. In collecting the data for this study, observation sheet and interview guide were used as the research instruments. The teacher and 28 students were observed in one meeting by using a video recorder to record all conversations and interactions in the classroom. The teacher-interview session was done right after the observation, and this interview was also recorded by using an audio recorder. All the results were then transcribed and analyzed by using the pattern which is proposed by Musyken (2000) and Poplack (2000). The result revealed that the English teacher and students used two types of code mixing and three types of code switching in their classroom interaction. From the result of interview with the teacher it was found that the teacher did these kinds of codes to cover up the lack of target language proficiency of students and to make the process of transferring knowledge run smoothly and effectively in the class. Besides, she also admit that excessive mixing and switching in Bahasa Indonesia and less in English could make students hard to read and spell English words well and make them unaware and lazy to use English during the process of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Keywords: *code mixing, code switching, EFL classroom interaction*

---

\* Corresponding author: [meristika.moetia@gmail.com](mailto:meristika.moetia@gmail.com)

## **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is included as bilingual or multilingual societies which means people in this country share a common range of many languages. When people master or use two or more than one language, it is called bilingual or multilingual. This happens when people are in the place where their mother tongue is not the only language that is understood by most people. Bilingual and multilingual can also be triggered by the education which requires them to speak in another language besides their mother tongue. Bilingualism and multilingualism cause this phenomenon which is called code mixing and code switching. Yao (2011) states that the phenomenon of mixing and switching more than one languages within the same utterance or conversation is known as code mixing and code switching.

Previous studies have shown that it is seldom to find English classroom that use a single language in the teaching and learning process. Even in English foreign language classrooms, code mixing and code switching of English and other mother tongues which are used by both the teacher and students can also be found. Based on the preliminary observation conducted by the researcher toward EFL classroom interaction, a tendency of bilingual and multilingual in mixing and switching the codes used by the teacher and students occurred in the classroom interaction, specifically at Senior High School 11 in Banda. Multilingualism in the aforementioned school where the English teacher used three languages namely English, Indonesian and Acehnese in teaching English as a foreign language was found in this school. Code mixing and code switching cannot be ignored in the class if the teacher and students share the same languages to interact in the teaching and learning process.

Hence, the use of code mixing and code switching in the EFL classroom activity has recently been a considerable topic debate among experts in sociolinguistics. When the researchers address the issue of using or the role of the mother tongue and the target language, there are two different language attitudes toward these, i.e. target language exclusively and the opposition. Studies by Chambers (1992), Halliwell and Jones (1991), and MacDonald (1993) describe that the use of both of these codes is not necessary for students in the EFL classroom to understand everything taught by their teacher, and mixing and switching to first language undermines the teaching and process of learning. Lightbown (2001) added when the teacher creates a natural

environment of foreign language for students since the teacher is the sole of linguistic models for their student, code mixing and code switching will give negative transfer in foreign language learning. Therefore, Fillmore and Snow (2000) believe that students who are used to listening the teacher speak the first language (L1) tend to ignore the target language (L2) and this is not fully advantage from valuable input of target language.

On the other hands, researchers who support the use of code mixing and code switching including Cook (2001), Levine (2003), Chen (2004) and Jingxia (2010) argue that the use of both of these codes as a strategy in teaching and learning can make the first language encourage the learning of the target language and this L1 should have contribution in EFL classrooms. Jingxia (2010) on his study added that the use of code mixing and switching is a good and effective strategy for English foreign language teaching and learning. Letting students use their first language in EFL classroom interaction is a humanistic approach, which allows them to speak what the students really want to speak.

To face the conflicting opinions, the researcher of the present study holds positive attitude toward using of L1 in the EFL class. Accordingly, previous studies of code mixing and code switching have emphasized the investigation related to the positive and negative impact of using both of these codes to the students in EFL classrooms. Hence, in order to expand the study about teacher and students' code mixing and code switching in the EFL classroom, this study focused on investigating the types of code mixing and code switching in the use of English and Indonesian in the teaching and learning process. This case was investigated through a sociolinguistic approach, in which this study intended to find out the different types of codes in teaching and learning interaction.

### **Research Questions**

1. What types of code mixing and switching are found in the EFL classroom interaction at SMA 11 Banda Aceh?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the types of code mixing and switching frequently used by the EFL teachers' and students in the classroom interaction.

### **Research Significance**

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the theories of references that deal with code mixing and code switching for other researchers interested in the field of sociolinguistics. Practically, this study can give language users deep information about the types of code mixing and code switching which are frequently used by the teacher and students in the classroom interaction.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In sociolinguistics, the phenomenon of using more than one languages, in a personal or social group, is generally called bilingualism or multilingualism. People who can use or speak more than one language tend to use certain codes to communicate in the certain community or society, which in sociolinguistics is called code mixing and code switching. The use of more than one languages at one certain time in sociolinguistics is named code mixing and code switching. Code mixing and code switching are phenomena which occur regularly in bilingual and multilingual communities reflecting the social memberships of group.

Code mixing and code switching is useful to help the teacher and to know background knowledge of the students and facilitate them learn the target language in a less stressful and a efficient way for instance to translate, using the certain code, to understand the procedures and directions, to clarify, and to check for comprehending (Ruiz, 2014). In order to get a clear understanding of code mixing and code switching, it can be seen according to its types.

#### **Types of code mixing**

Muysken (2000) divides the three kinds of code mixing such as insertion, alternation and congruent lexicalization.

#### ***Insertion***

In this part, the mixing of two or more than one language into a structure of the other language usually consists of words and phrases, for example English into Indonesian by Aslam (2011):

*“Jangan suka nge-judge gitu dong, orang kan beda-beda”*  
(Don't judge people like that, everyone is different)

The word "judge" in this sentence is the English word inserted into the Indonesian utterance.

### ***Alternation***

Alternation refers to the use of one language between structures from other languages in terms of clause, for example in Swahili - English by Poplack in Deuchar (2005, p. 610):

*Why make Carol sentarse atrás pa' que everybody has to move pa' que sesalga?*

(Why make Carol sit in the back so that everybody has to move for her to get out?)

The clauses "*sentarse atrás pa' que* and *pa' que se salgaare*" in Swahili is alternated into the English utterance.

### ***Congruent lexicalization***

Congruent lexicalization is the use code mixing in terms of lexicals' inventories different into a shared of grammatical structure. The example of this type is taken from Bogaerde & Baker (2006) in Dutch.

***Gee mi een hug***

(Give me a hug)

Bogaerde and Baker (2006) say that the last type, congruent lexicalization, is mostly show in mixing between dialects and languages, which are close to each other in grammatical structure.

### **Types of Code Switching**

There are three types of code switching – i.e. intersentential, intrasentential and extrasentential (Poplack, 2000).

#### ***Inter-sentential***

This level involves a transform of languages within a conversation on a sentence level; it can be seen in the example below a change of language from English to Spanish.

"Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English *y termino en Espanol*. (The name of the book by Poplack, 1980)

*(Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English 'and finish in Spanish).*

In the excerpt above, the speaker started speaking in English and then he did code switching in term intersentential to happen in Spanish “*y termino en Espanol*” in the same utterance.

### ***Intra-sentential***

This type includes a same switch in the level of a word or phrase, for instance:

"Otherwise, *yu bai* go *long kot*." (Weinreich, 1968, as cited in Romaine, 1995)  
*(Otherwise, 'you will go to court).*

In this statement, “*yu bai*” and “*long kot*” are the term of intrasentential code switching from other language that speaker switched into English. It could be seen that these two languages have the same grammatical rule in the sentence above.

### ***Extra-sentential***

Extrasentential takes place when a word or phrase, a tag statement, is switched from one language to another language, for example:

"The proceedings went smoothly, *ba*?" (Bautista, 1980, as cited in Romaine, 1995)  
*(The proceedings went smoothly, 'didn't they').*

In this utterance, a tag element “*ba*” from other language is switched by the speaker in the English utterance precisely at the end, which is purposed to emphasize the sentence as a term of confirmation question to the listener. Thus, this kind of sentence that has tag element at the end is called extrasentential code switching according to poplack (2000).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that code switching is used for cases in which the two codes maintain their monolingual features, while code- mixing is used for cases where there are some convergences between the two or more than one language (Muysken, 2000).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used a qualitative research method as specific design of this study. In a qualitative study, the researcher relies on the views of participants and collects data largely consisting of words, and then these words are described and analyzed. Thus, this study was designed based on the case study in SMA 11 Banda Aceh. The reason for choosing this school was based on the preliminary observation conducted by the researcher who also teaches in this school as a course teacher.

### **Population and Sample**

This research was conducted in SMA 11 Banda Aceh, located at Kp. Blang Cut, on Jl. Paya Umet, Lueng Bata, Banda Aceh. There were five teachers who taught the English subject and all of them are civil servants at this school. One of the seven classes (i.e. X-1) in second years and an English teacher who taught that class was selected as the sample. This teacher was selected to be the subject of this study for her performance and qualification in teaching English and as well as the students in the class (X-1).

### **Research Instrument**

The researcher obtained the data by using these instruments: observation sheet. It is to obtain the data required in accordance to the objectives and standardize the implementation of the situation.

### **Technique of Data Collection**

To collect the data, the researcher observed the teacher and the students' interaction during the teaching and learning activity in order to find out the types of code mixing and code switching. Then, the researcher recorded the classroom activity for one meeting by using video recorder from smartphone iPhone 5S device.

### **Technique of Data Analysis**

In this research, these three stages were carried out by the researcher to analyze the data collected from the observation and interview. Miles and Huberman (1994) added that a qualitative analysis includes of three current steps: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. The data from observation was transcribed and analyzed based on the theories to the types of code

mixing and code switching proposed by Poplack (2000) and by Musyken (2000); and also to the theories of experts' previous studies related to the benefits and drawbacks of using these both codes.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Types of Teacher's Code Mixing and Code Switching in the Process of Teaching English at SMAN 11 Banda Aceh

Based on the data analysis from video recording in the observation, it shows that both teacher and students did use two languages to communicate in classroom activity.

#### *Types of Code Mixing*

The following transcriptions are the examples of transcribed code mixing conducted by teacher and students in one meeting of observation.

#### a. Insertion

Firstly, in explaining the topic of learning, the teacher mixed Bahasa Indonesia with English when she was explaining how to create a sentence in the past form. The mixing occurred directly right after she said in Bahasa Indonesia:

Teacher : Kalau missal nya kita mau **make** kalimat sudah beralalu, **you should change** verbnya itu menjadi **verb** bentuk kedua ya,/ contoh: kalau **verb** satu nya **eat**, **verb** kedua nya itu **ate**, tapi tidak semua kata kerja nya itu selalu berubah di yang kedua, ada juga yang cuma di tambah "ed" **in the end** dari kata kerja nya, contoh **play**, jadinya **played**, **understand**?/ Look kamus nya coba, ada **irregular** ada **regular**, nah di situ ada diexplainkan"/ (10:40)

In this excerpt, the teacher wanted to explain the correct verb that is suitable to the formula of past form. She used native language and then mixed with English words when it came to explain and give the example of the changing verb 1 to verb 2 like the word "eat" become "ate" and the verb "play" become "played". She also mixed English words "irregular" and "regular" in giving instruction to her students to look up in dictionary.



### **b. Alternation**

In this conversation, code mixing happened when the teacher tried to make a student continue what she wanted to say by pointing the word that was already said by the student in Bahasa Indonesia.

- Student : I enjoyed my holiday with my cousin and //  
Teacher : Don't be afraid, relax, just with your cousin?/ Sepupu aja ya?  
Student : **Shopping** aja miss/ habis tu **travel with my cousin**: (70:08)

This example above happened in the situation where the teacher noticed that her student was nervous during the performance. Here, the teacher spoke two languages -Bahasa Indonesia and English -to build a good atmosphere during the conversation and the alternation “**shopping**” and “**travel with my cousin**” mixing was purposed to help or encourage the student to continue talking.

### **Types of Code Switching**

The result of data collection shows that the teacher and students did code switching either English to Bahasa Indonesia or Bahasa Indonesia to English in terms of tag elements and sentences.

#### **a. Intersentential**

The switching of this type occurred in the teacher and students' statement below:

- Teacher : **And then what else? So/** saya mesti menjaga nenek saya di rumah sakit sepanjang liburan kemarin (20:01)  
Student F : I had to keep my/ grandmother/ (laughing) in last holiday//  
Teacher : **Please you can compose**, di karang karang aja/ gak usah betol betol kali juga pun gak apa apa/ (30:08)

In the conversation between the teacher and student above, intersentential code switching happened in terms of English “**Please you can compose**” then the teacher switched it in Bahasa Indonesia. When the teacher gave an example of sentence to the student in Bahasa Indonesia, it is aimed at persuading the student to compose the sentence by herself in target language. This code switching here could make the

student less intimidating about the mistake that she was going to face while she spoke in front of the classroom.

In the conversation between the teacher and student above, code switching happened when the teacher gave an example of sentence to the student in Bahasa Indonesia and then persuaded the student to compose the sentence by herself in English. Here, the teacher spoke English first and then she switched to another sentence by using Bahasa Indonesia.

### **b. Intrasentential**

In this statement, code switching happened at the beginning of learning activity while the teacher was reviewing the previous topic the students had learned. Here, the teacher switched from English to Bahasa Indonesia twice.

Teacher : *Very good/ but still* kurang lengkap, *who's else still remember?/* atau pada udah lupa semua, because *kelamaan* liburan.(8:22)

In this excerpt the teacher did the switching in terms of intrasentential “*Very good/ but still*” and “*who's else still remember*” in a single utterance which was obviously to make her students understand what she asked them about previous learning material that was already taught and learned.

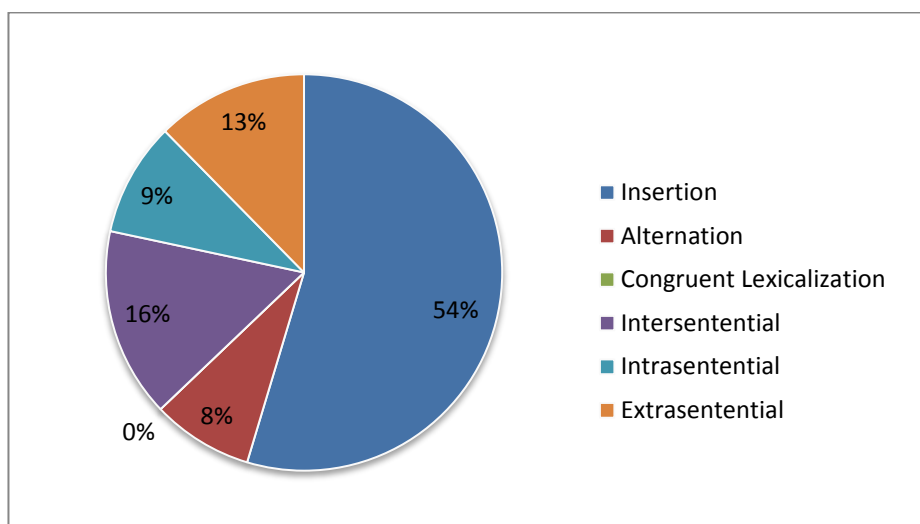
### **c. Extrasentential**

The use of tag element here from the student was to get the confirmation about his/her answer, and the second tag element from the teacher was to give feedback to the student who asked.

Teacher : Jadi keep aja, *okay?/* (29:03)  
Students : I do not miss, *ya?/*(42:16)

In the first statement of the teacher, it was found that teachers code switching “okay” in English at the end of the sentence that this word was included as tag element in type of code. Extrasentential code switching of “okay” in this question was purposed to emphasize the word “keep” as the vocabulary that the students should use in order to say “menjaga” in bahasa Indonesia to target language.

## Discussion



**Figure 1. Type of code mixing and code switching that frequently used by in the EFL classroom interaction**

From the data above, it shows that both the teacher and students did 62% of code mixing, which consisted of 54% (52 times) of the insertion type and 8% (8 times) of the alternation type. As for code switching, based on the calculation the researcher found that the use of code switching by the teacher and students in the classroom was about 38% which consisted of 16% (15 times) of the intersentential type, 9% (9 times) of the intrасentential one and 13% (12 times) of the extrасentential one. Based on the percentages of occurrences, it can be concluded that the teacher and students commonly used code mixing in terms of insertion during teaching and learning activities. The teacher's does of code mixing in terms of insertion was useful to explain the learning material, to explain certain grammatical points, and mostly to clarify and give instruction. It would be possible that that if the teacher did not mix it, the students would hardly understand what their teacher said, and thus the insertion of code mixing was needed in order to avoid misunderstanding during the classroom interaction.

However, the teacher did not deny that this code mixing and code switching will affect students' capability to speak the English effectively, since the teacher still mixed and switched two languages, either from Bahasa Indonesia to English or vice versa.

Relating to these arguments, the researcher agrees that the use of code mixing and code switching is allowed as a strategy in teaching the target language as long as the frequency of these codes is minimized. Since the goal of English teaching is that students can speak and comprehend English, then English should be more dominant in EFL classes.

Overall using code mixing and code switching in teaching and learning language allows the discourse to flow communication continuously and negotiation problems of language. Thus, it can also allow the students who have lower ability to develop the target language (L2) proficiency quite faster. Code mixing and code switching are beneficial when planned and used strategically, but that maximizing L2 input is still needed as a central aim of EFL classrooms.

The objectives of this study concerning the types of code mixing and code switching as well as the benefits and drawbacks of using code mixing and code switching in EFL classrooms have been discussed in Chapter Four, and it can thus be concluded that the type of code mixing mostly used by both the teacher and students in the classroom was insertion, while the type of code switching that was often used by the teacher was intrasentential.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusion**

This finding indicates that code mixing and code switching can be a good strategy to highlight significant information, whether it is a grammar rule, clarify and convey the information for students in an efficient way. From this study, it could be sum up that code mixing and code switching are pure and creative and could be a strategy that the teacher uses for facilitating students with low English proficiency in the English foreign language classroom, but they should not be dominantly used during teaching and learning language since using too much code mixing and code switching could give a negative effect to students' ability to use the target language effectively.

### **Suggestion**

This study is not without limitation, this study has limitation with regard to the number of samples involved; there was only one teacher who was observed. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers

take more research samples, which will consequently result in richer, more comprehensive data for analysis.

## REFERENCES

- Aslam, S. (2011). *Code-mixing as a communicative strategy among the university level students in Pakistan*. (Published Doctoral Dissertation). The University of Punjab, Lahore Pakistan. Retrieved from <http://www.languageinindia.com>.
- Bogaerde, B. V., & Baker. (2006). *Code mixing in mother-child interaction in deaf families*. (Published Doctoral Dissertation). Universities van Amsterdam, Hogeschool van Utrecht. Retrieved from [http://www.nias.knaw.nl/language\\_genesis/new\\_0/naam](http://www.nias.knaw.nl/language_genesis/new_0/naam).
- Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review Journal*, 57(3), 402-423.
- Chambers, G. (1992). Teaching in the target language. *Language Learning Journal*, 6, 66-67.
- Chan, L. (2004). *English-Cantonese code mixing among senior secondary school students in Hong Kong*. (Unpublished Master Theses). University of Hong Kong, Taipe.
- Deuchar, M. (2005). *Minority language survival: Code mixing in Welsh*. Somerville: Cascadilla Press.
- Fillmore, W., & Snow, C. (2000). When does teacher talk work as input? In S. M. Gass and C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 17-50). Rowley, MA: Newbury.
- Halliwell, S., & Jones, B. (1991). *On target*. London: Centre for Information on Language Teaching.
- Jingxia, L. (2010). Teachers' code switching to the L1 in EFL classroom. *The Open Applied Linguistics Journal*, 3(1), 10-23.
- Levine, G. S. (2003). Student and instructor beliefs and attitudes about target language use, first language use, and anxiety: Report of a questionnaire study. *Mod Lang Journal*, 8(7), 343-364.
- Lightbown, P. M. (2001). L2 instruction: Time to teach. *TESOL Q Journal*, 3(5), 598-99.
- MacDonald, C. (1993). *Using the target language*. Cheltenham: Mary Glasgow.
- Muysken, P. (2000). *Bilingual speech: A typology of code-mixing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: Method sourcebook*. London: Sage.

- Poplack S. (ed.). (2000). *The English history of African American English*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Romaine, S. (1995). *Bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ruiz, K. M. (2014). *Code switching: A tool in the classroom*. (Published of Master Theses). State University of New York Collage, New York. Retrieved from:<http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/>.
- Yao, M. (2011). On attitudes to teachers' code-switching in EFL classes. *World Journal of English Language*, 1(1), 19-28.