LINGUA LITERA

Journal of English Linguistics and Literature

Code-Switching as a Sociolinguistic Marker in EFL Classroom Interaction

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Abstract

Code-switching is a language alternation used by students speaking English as second or foreign language in communication. It is effectively used to create a communicative interaction in natural settings of foreign language, that is, classroom settings in Indonesia. However, Indonesian teachers teaching English consider switching codes as language competence failure. This study proved that using Indonesian while expressing ideas in English was effectively used to meet sociolinguistic functions- equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control. In addition, it was a communicative strategy used by EFL learners to overcome communication difficulties to achieve an intended communication. Therefore, this paper places a great importance of utilizing code-switching for classroom interaction for beginners as proved by this study. By the findings of this study, it is expected that code-switching is not considered as a communicative competence failure in learning English as a foreign language, but as communication strategy a continuity of the speech.

Keywords: Code-Switching; Sociolinguistic Marker; EFL Classroom Interaction.

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I.   Introduction

Language choices used by some bilingual or multilingual learners in learning a foreign language are the target language or foreign language and the first language or mother tongue. The learners switch foreign language codes they learned into their first language to overcome communication difficulties. This may be faced by students who rarely use and who have limited exposure to foreign language. In other words, code switching occurs commonly among students speaking English as the second or a foreign language.

Code switching is also a phenomenon in Indonesia since English is learned as a foreign language. In English as foreign language (EFL) interaction in Indonesia, using Indonesian while talking in English is frequently done by some students due to purposes to achieve the communicative functions. The use of Indonesian in the form of code switching may be an effective strategy to make the communication run well in the classroom. As a strategy, Indonesian serves its function as a mean of communication among students.

However, using Indonesian in EFL classroom interaction is not favored by many teachers who apply communicative language teaching. Some teachers think that the students' ability in speaking is less developed whenever they use Indonesian. The students, who engage themselves in code switching, are questioned about their English abilities. Therefore, this paper reports the research findings about the sociolinguistic functions and some influential factors of using Indonesian by students in EFL classroom interaction.

II. Review of the Related Literature
2.1 Code switching

Code switching, the change of one language to another within the same utterances or in the same oral/written text, is a common phenomenon and has been long stigmatized in the EFL classroom since language classroom is a social group (Crowl and MacGinitie, 1984; Ramirez and Milk, 1986; Judy, 2005). Moreover, Sert (2005) states that in the context of EFL classroom, code switching is defined as the languages between which alternation is performed. The alternation is the native language of the students and the foreign language.

Holmes (1992: 20) supports by stating that as such alternation naturally occurs in any bilingual or multilingual community, it also naturally occurs in the EFL classroom since language classroom is a social group. Therefore, a phenomenon, the change of one language to another, related to naturally occurring daily context of any social group could be applicable to any language classroom. From the view points above, as English is learned in the context of EFL classroom interaction in Indonesia, the change into Indonesian while speaking in English naturally occurs.

2.2 Code-Switching As a Sociolinguistic Marker in EFL Classroom

Communicating in English as a foreign language for Indonesian students in the classroom makes them use Indonesian or switch into Indonesian while speaking in English. This is due to the fact that the students do not have enough exposure to English. This is in line with Krashen (1988) who states that a high amount of the first or native language influence is most in the situation in which natural appropriate intake is scarce. With the scarce of exposure, students are expected to express their ideas in the target language. In this condition, of course, code-switching naturally happens as a communication strategy. In other words, Indonesian functions as one of the communication strategies for the students due to the scarce natural exposure of English.

As one of the communication strategies, the use of L1 while communicating in English (L2) in EFL classroom is in the form of code-switching or language switch (Odlin, 1989; Thornbury, 2005; Sert, 2005). Furthermore, it is supposed as communication strategy if it is viewed as a socio-linguistic tool (Skiba, 1997). As a socio-linguistic tool, it provides a social competence for students involving three major skills: (a) a skill to establish several communication purposes, (b) a skill to adapt or to change languages according to the expectations or needs of listeners or situations, and (c) a skill referring to interpersonal communication (Sanger and Spilker, 2006). In sum, sociolinguistically, code switching is viewed as a communicative strategy in the classroom.

Classroom interaction, which is the form of cooperative, collaborative, and interactive interaction among the students in the classroom is the priority in communicative language learning (Brown, 2001). Communicative activities, such as talk show, role play, debate, or discussion in English, are the activities where code switching is frequently done by students. In these activities the students have to act as relatives, friends, officials, or superiors depending on the location, such as church, home or place of work and the topics (Thornbury, 2005). The implication is that to act on those roles the students should consider the social values in certain community where they are acting. Since a different community has social

values associated with its code, the students have to consider one code more appropriate than another (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972).

Dealing with the implication above, teachers needs to realize three functions of language in which code switching could exist. The first function is to convey information which students need to exchange or receive information. Another is to regulate behavior in which students switch into their own language to tell something forbidden. The other is to establish and to maintain social relationship in which some cultural expressions in opening talk are best expressed in their language (Tay, 2001). Briefly, these three functions also exist in the language classroom interaction.

In relation to those three functions of language, Skiba (1997) states some possible reasons for code switching the classroom. First, the students may not be able to express themselves in the learned foreign language, so they switch to native language for a continuity of speech. Second, switching commonly occurs to express solidarity. Third, it occurs when the speaker wishes to convey his attitude to others, such as upset, tired, or distracted. Finally, it is to attract personal intention and to build intimate relationship among the students.

Moreover, Sert (2005) states that there are three functions of the use of students' native language code while speaking in the learned code. They are equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control. Equivalence means that the students make the equivalence of their native language of a certain lexical item in target language. This is an alternation chosen by students to continue communication. Floor-holding is to avoid the loss of fluency in long term while communicating in target language. Reiteration is done by students when the idea has been transmitted to into target language, but it is not understandable. Therefore, the idea is repeated in their native language. The aims are to make other students understand and to let teachers know that the students really understand the contents of the lesson. Conflict control is to avoid misunderstanding of the certain ideas produced in target language. In brief, the functions of native language- equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control- are to make the communication run well.

Djiwandono (2002) in his study about the role of Indonesian in role-play activities in English language class found three functions of using Indonesian. First, Indonesian is as a repair device. This was done by the more proficient learners to prompt, to give clues, to help, to explain, and to correct errors to the low ones. Second, Indonesian is as a means of support for less proficient learners. The expression " *ulang....*" *"apa/"* *"ulangi pertanyaannya"* are requested for repetition by less proficient learners or more proficient learners to understand what less proficient learners have said. Third, Indonesian is as the language for self-talk. It is an Indonesian leaner affective strategy to reduce anxiety by producing private speech. In sum, Indonesian plays an important role in order to make the communicative purposes on in role-play activities achieved.

Since language classroom is a social community, using Indonesian while speaking in English is a natural occurrence due to its functions. The reasons for this vary according to students' needs, intentions or purposes. Consequently, the main purpose is to make the communication run well and to make the intended message understandable. The four functions of code switch Found by Skiba (1997) - the continuity of speech, the solidarity, the attitude and intimacy-, stated by Tay (2001) – the information, behavior regulation , and social relationship establishment and maintenance and found by Djiwandono (2002) have been included in the four functions found by Sert (2005)- equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control. In other words, this study is to find out whether the four functions found by Sert (2005) are also used by STBA (Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing) Prayoya Padang students in their classroom interaction.

2.3 Linguistic Forms of Code-Switching in EFL Classroom

In relation to the functions of using students' L1above, the linguistic forms of L1 used by students are commonly in the forms of, sounds, words, phrases, simple, or complex sentences while a speaker is basically using another language (Martin, et al., 2003; Fasold, 1984). The use of L1 could be in the midst of conversation in different numbers of forms, including alternation of words, phrases, sentences, or long narrative and phrases between languages (Skiba, 1997). Furthermore, the use of L1, called code-switching, can be evidenced in at least three ways: (1) by borrowing and loaning words, (2) through interaction between patterns of word level grammar of the two languages within and between utterances, (3) switching language codes at conversational/discourse level, within ad across turn-takes (Martin, et.al., 2003). In brief, this mixture of linguistic elements of two or more language systems is at various levels: phonological, lexical, and grammatical.

At phonological level, phonetic and phonemic of L1 are frequently used by students while speaking in English due to the difficulty in pronouncing it in English (Odlin, 1989). According to Judy (2005), in lexical level, some borrowing words which are concerned with a matter of familiarity with a certain number of words or phrases or with the word order patterns of two languages. At grammatical level, tense, and the patterns of clause which make difficulty in speaking have students switch to their L1.

2.4. Panel Talk

Panel discussion is one of the useful activities toward student autonomy in speaking English as foreign language (Thornbury, 2005). He further adds that this activity is suitable for the increased automaticity of students' language production. This activity adopts the format of television debate in which people represent various shade of opinion on a topic under a guidance of a chairperson. This activity, then, can be organized as follow: (1) students in a group of five choose one of the topics from the list, (2) they discuss each student' role (e.g. police officer, psychiatrist, single parent, social worker, etc) and arguments. Each of them will talk as his own rules, (3) During the talk other students who are not the members of the group will be invited to have questions to panelists led by the chairperson.

Another form of panel talk, called talk show, has been conducted by (O'malley, 1996). In this activity, teacher describes the major components of the discussion and videotapes one of the more popular talk show. Students as panelists then choose biography of a famous person whose life they wish to portray in their show. To do this, they are required to read at least three resources for the famous person they have chosen. In a small group discussion, they brainstorm to select a theme for panel talk, practice it in small group, and write suggestion for changes as they watch each other. As they have enough preparation, on the show time, they act the person of their chosen biography by dressing their character. This discussion is videotaped for students to review and to evaluate their performance.

Notion and Thomas (1988) recommend that before the talk, other students should know the topic of the talk so that they can prepare some questions to the panelists. They also suggest that the topics discussed are problem-solving topics closely associated with students' lives to encourage all students talk. In this decision making activity, each panelist may at as himself or as others.

Based on the points of views mentioned above, in this research the panel talk was done in some ways. Each student brought an interesting topic from newspaper, magazine, or television news and told it orally to the whole class. After listening to each student topic, the whole students chose six topics to be talked. In a group of five, they chose one of the topics and discussed each student' role depending on the topic. To do act well on the role, they were required to read at least three resources for the famous person they have chosen at home.

During the discussion, next meeting, other students who were not the members of the group were invited to have questions to panelists led by the chairperson.

III. Review of the Related Studies

The Functions of L1 in speaking L2 in the EFL classroom have been studied by some researchers. Ruan (2003) did a study of young chiness/English bilingual student's patterns of language use and found that students switched languages during their speech in order to realized social function, pragmatic function, and meta-linguistic function. Djiwandono (2002) in his study in Universitas Katolik Widya Karya about the role of Indonesian in role-play activities in English language class found three functions of using Indonesian: as a repair device, as a means of support for less proficient learners, as the language for self-talk.

Due to the functions of L1 in speaking L2 in the EFL classroom, other researchers have done some studies about the L1 linguistic forms used while speaking in L2. Huguet et. al. (2000) has done a correlation study about the relationship between linguistic knowledge of the languages used by bilingual students who were able to use France and Catalan. They found that the students who had the higher exposure to Spanish switched to Spanish more and vice versa. Marthin, et al, (2003) who conducted a research in the classroom of language change in young Punjabi/English children proved that the use of Punjabi while speaking in English in several forms of vocabulary, words, and grammar. Judy (2007) did a study to 52 tertiary students in Hongkong found that linguistic units of Hongkong language used by students while speaking in English were letters of the alphabet, short forms, proper nouns, lexical words, phrases, incomplete/ minor sentences, single full sentences, and two-sentence units.

Although the study above have explored the functions of L1 and the linguistic forms of L1 used by bilingual students in classroom interaction, this study conducted to find out the sociolinguistic functions and some influential factors of using Indonesian by students in EFL classroom interaction by some reasons. First, the study by Ruan was done to the students from interracial marriage family with one of parent a Chinese and the other an American. Second, the study by Huguet was conducted to the students of culture and education, not to the students of English. Third, Marthin did a research to children at the age of 6-7 living in America in where they have a lot of exposure to English. Fourth, in the study by Djiwandono, it was not clear whether the students performed role-play by preparing at home which facilitated more memorization rather than producing spontaneous speech or 10-15 preparation in the classroom. Moreover, he paired low proficient student with higher one.

Therefore, this study searched the sociolinguistic functions and some influential factors of using Indonesian by students in EFL classroom interaction in the context of English learned as the foreign language. the activity used, panel talk, stimulated students to have spontaneous speech due to the spontaneous questions from the teacher and participants.

IV. Methods of the Research

This research was conducted in STBA (Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing Prayoga) Padang at English Department. This college is chosen because students learn English as a foreign Language, and during their interactions, Indonesian is frequently used to serve communicative functions.

The participants were the fifth semester students (42 students) classified into two classes and took English Proficiency IV course. This course aims at improving students' ability in four skills of English- listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These four skills are learned integratedly. This was based on the consideration that their English has been fluent since their speaking ability has been trained in some courses: English Proficiency I to III from the 1st semester to the 3rd semester, pronunciation in the 1st semester, and Speaking I to

II in the 2nd semester to the3rd semester. In other words, these students were assumed to be able to produce spontaneous speaking with a 10 only minute preparation. In this panel talk, student presented their papers, and spontaneous questions and answers were about the topics talked.

The data were obtained from two parallel classes taught English Proficiency IV by researchers. Each class consisted of about 20 students. Therefore, in each class, there were four groups. Each group consisted of five students, since English Proficiency IV was in two credits, carried out for 90 minutes per meeting in each class. In 90 minutes, all four groups had the opportunity to conduct the panel talks. To get more comprehensive data, each group conducted panel talk twice. It was expected that with suggestions form the researcher and other students, the second talk would be better than the first one.   The instruments of this research were tape recording, field notes, and question sheet guide. The tape recording was to record students' conversation during panel discussion to get the code-switching. Field notes were to record the sociolinguistic functions. Researcher's question sheet guide (for researcher only) was find out factors influencing them to switch into Indonesian

In this descriptive study, eaves dropping and selective listening techniques were used to collect the data. According to Samarin (1967) these two techniques are to record whatever people say to each other as a part of normal intercourse. Moreover, Samarin states "Selective listening is very effective technique for collecting many particular linguistic elements. These techniques were applied during panel discussion in which researcher acted as participant observation. The students' conversations were recorded for 90 minutes for 12 weeks. The Field notes were taken during observation to collect the data about the sociolinguistic functions of Indonesian used by the students.

The collected data were then analyzed by using discourse analysis method with the classroom discourse analysis technique. This idea is based on Larsen (1991) who state " Classroom discourse analysis deals with the interactions   between a teacher and his or her students and among the students in L2 classroom setting". Some steps, which were adapted from Ruan (2003: 3), were conducted in this analysis. First, utterances containing language switch into Indonesian were selected from tape recording, field notes, and from interview. Second, each language switch were coded and labeled according to its sociolinguistic function and the influencing factors. Third, all codes and labels were grouped together in the same label with careful examination. Finally, each sociolinguistic functions and influencing factors were reexamined to ensure that it truly supported the intended data.

Based on methods and technique of data analysis above, the research procedures in each class were conducted in six steps. First, all students chose six topics after listening to each other's topic. Second, each group of six or seven students chose one of the six topics. Third, they were assigned to read some biography of a famous person whose life they wish to portray in their talk. Fourth, next meeting, the students' panel talk was carefully observed and recorded. At the end of each talk, students who switch into Indonesian were interviewed to know reasons for using Indonesian. Fifth, utterances containing language switch into Indonesian from tape recording were coded and labeled according to sociolinguistic functions and the influencing factors. Last, all codes and labels were grouped together in the same label with careful examination.

V. Findings

The findings from recording and field notes indicated that the sociolinguistic functions of code-switching were equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control. Equivalence helped students to make the equivalence of Indonesian words of a certain lexical item in English to continue communication. Floor-holding is a strategy to avoid the loss of fluency in long term while communicating in English. Reiteration functions to transmit ideas

which were confusing and understandable. In this panel talks, students restated their ideas in Indonesian. Conflict control was to avoid misunderstanding of the certain ideas produced in English. In brief, the four functions of native language- equivalence, floor-holding, reiteration, and conflict control- were to make the communication run well. These findings were in line with the sociolinguistic functions stated by Sert (2005).

The findings from the interview revealed that there were three reasons for code switching the classroom. First, the students were having difficulties in express their ideas in English. Therefore, they switched to Indonesian as their native language for a continuity of delivering ideas. Second, switching commonly occured to express solidarity to attract personal intention and to build intimate relationship among the students. The Indonesian words , such as *betul?* and *Alhamdulillah* (copying the way of the TV entertainers' expressions) were uttered to warm the talks and to regain attentions form friends. Third, it occured when the speaker wished to convey his attitude to others, such as upset, tired, or distracted. The expressions, such as *Please tolong dengarkan, matilah lupa gua, apalagi ya* were examples of upset and distracted. These findings were corresponded to the functions of code-switching stated by Skiba (1997).

VI. Conclusion

In relation to the findings above, EFL teachers need to realize the sociolinguistic functions and reasons of code switching. As classroom is a social community, code switching naturally occurs to convey information which the EFL Learners need to exchange or receive information. Some information cannot be expressed in English, target language, due to cultural values. Another is switching into Indonesian to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. The other is to establish and to maintain social relationship for some cultural expressions which are best expressed in Indonesian. It is strongly suggested that EFL teachers deeply consider the value of code-switching in EFL class for beginners.

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