

Teachers' Beliefs and Perceptions of Code Switching in English as Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract. In Indonesia, the use of only English as a medium of instruction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is highly demanded. The present study investigates how code-switching is perceived by High School teachers in Kupang city, East Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia, in teaching English. Specifically, it aims to find out the teachers' beliefs and perceptions towards the use of Indonesian language (L1) as their pedagogical instrument in teaching English in EFL classrooms. To achieve that goal, 40 EFL teachers were asked to give their responses to a 24-item of questionnaire which focused on teachers' roles and beliefs of code-switching applied in the EFL classroom. After analyzing the data, it was found that the teachers applied code-switching to serve pedagogical aims and to facilitate the EFL teaching and learning process. As a result, they used code-switching when explaining difficult words, encourage students' participation and managing and organizing the classroom. Another finding was that, the teachers also believed that, the advantages in applying code-switching exaggerated the disadvantages in ELF classroom.
KEYWORDS: *code switching, teachers' belief and perception, Kupang city*

1 Introduction

In English as foreign language (EFL) classroom, Indonesian teachers face several challenges in classroom interaction. Teachers in EFL classroom use more Indonesian language than English as a medium of instruction. Nowadays, Indonesian EFL classroom facts say that, the demanding of using only English as a medium of instruction is highly increased. However, the actual practices are different. The EFL teachers may switch from English to Indonesian (or vice versa) during their teaching practice. This practice is known as code switching and it is done to facilitate teaching and learning interaction among classroom participants.

Code switching (CS) is a natural part of being bilingual and it is a common phenomenon used by those who have developed two or more languages [1]. This phenomenon is also known as code alternation or code-mixing [2]. CS is used globally in communication

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practice. Moghadam *et al.* [3] state that the use of CS in a conversation is a normal practice in global communication for various reasons and it is usually an unconscious process.

However, the use of CS in EFL classroom has been a subject of controversy. It has been regarded as negative and undesirable behavior where there is a failure in using the target language [4, 5]. CS has also been considered as a sign of laziness of language [6]

In contrast to the above controversies, some researchers [7, 8] have argued that in EFL classroom context, CS is useful in assisting teaching and learning process of English. Code switching can no longer be considered as errors interference, but as bilingual resources [9]. In addition, it helps low proficiency students gaining better comprehensions especially when giving classroom procedures [10]. Code switching should not be considered as a sign of defect in the EFL classroom, yet, it is a careful strategy employed by the teachers [11].

The proposed definition of code switching has been defined by numbers of researchers. For Gumperz [13], CS is the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems. Code switching is also seen as the alternating use of more than one language [14]. Code switching also defines as using more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode [15], in the same conversation or even within the same sentence [16].

Code switching takes a variety of forms. It can occur within a sentence, at the beginning or at the end of sentences. In the level of syntactic, Poplack [17] identifies three different types of code switching, namely tag, intersentential and intrasentential switching. Gumpers [13] also introduces the concepts of CS into situational (participant switch) and metaphorical (topic switch). Another linguist, Lin [18] categorizes code switching into alternational switching and insertional switching.

Code switching has also been observed in English language teaching (ELT) classrooms. Some of these studies were focused on elementary level [19, 20] and some other were in higher education level [11, 21]. In secondary school level, Selamat [22] studied CS on Malaysian ESL (English as Second Language) classroom. She found that teachers and students generally exhibit positive attitudes towards code switching in the classroom and perceive its pedagogical merits as an effective teaching and learning resource. Canagarajah [23] studied CS in ESL classroom in Jaffna. He summarizes the categorization of CS in classroom into classroom management and content transmission. In addition to CS in English classroom, Ferguson [24] reported that, there are three functional categories of CS in the classroom context as for curriculum access, classroom management and interpersonal relation.

This study adopted the similar stance on the issue, particularly, when English Only classroom would only lead to frustration since the input is incomprehensible to the learners [12]. The present study also believes that the application of CS in EFL classroom by teachers would be able to ensure that the transfer of intended skills to the students is done effectively. Thus, the present study aims to investigate how CS is perceived by High School teachers in Kupang city, East Nusa Tenggara province, Indonesia, in teaching English. Specifically, it aims at finding out the teachers' beliefs and perceptions towards the use of Indonesian language (L1) as their pedagogical instrument in teaching English in EFL classrooms. Hopefully, the present study may provide information to EFL educators

regarding the concept of code switching and how it is believed and perceived by EFL teachers in Kupang city High Schools.

2 Methods

To find out the teachers’ beliefs and perception of CS applied in EFL classrooms in Kupang city high schools, the present study used a quantitative research design. In gathering the data, a questionnaire was used. The questionnaire was administrated based on Selamat’s [22] Canagarajah’s [23] and Ferguson’s [24] categories of CS. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part collected teachers’ personal information. The second part measured the teachers’ self-reported frequency in using code switching during EFL classroom interaction. It consisted of 14 items and for each item, the teachers had to choose between 1 (never) to 5 (every time). The third part of the questionnaire consisted of 10 items of five-point (1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree) of teachers’ beliefs in the practice of CS. There were 40 teachers who took part in this study.

3 Results and discussion

The present study aims to find how CS perceived by high school EFL teachers in Kupang city. Based on the result of the distributed questionnaire, it was found that the teachers’ frequency in using CS during EFL classroom interaction was considered as positive. Most of the respondents used it ‘*in most of their classroom interaction*’. The teachers’ response in the frequency of using code switching is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Teachers’ frequency in using code switching

No	I switch English to students’ first language (L1) (Indonesian):	Never (%)	Almost never (%)	Often (%)	Most of time (%)	Every time (%)
1.	To explain the meaning of new words and sentences	0	0	40	57.5	2.5
2.	To explain difficult concepts	0	0	45	50	5
3.	To explain grammar explicitly	0	0	35	62.5	2.5
4.	To check for students’ comprehension	0	0	55	40	5
5.	To introduce unfamiliar materials/topics	0	0	45	52.5	2.5
6.	To explain the differences between the students’ L1 and English	0	0	50	45	5
7.	To draw students’ attention to the correct pronunciation of sounds in English	0	0	46.1	50	5
8.	To organize classroom tasks	0	0	47.5	45	7.5
9.	To maintain classroom discipline and structure of the lesson	0	0	50	45	5
10.	To provide praise/feedback/personal remarks about students’ performance	0	0	55	42.5	2.5
11.	To encourage students’ participation in classroom activities	0	0	55	37.5	7.5
12.	To build/strengthen interpersonal relationships between the teacher and students	0	0	52.5	40	7.5

13.	To reduce students' anxiety in learning English	0	0	45	47.5	7.5
14.	To increase students' motivation and confidence in learning English	0	0	40	52.5	7.5

The Table 1 above indicates teachers' response in the frequency of using CS in classroom interaction. This frequency then categorized into: curriculum access (items no. 1-7), classroom management (items no. 8 & 9) and interpersonal relation (items no. 10-14). In term of curriculum access, about 46.07% of the respondents *often used CS*, half of them (50%) were *used it in most of their teaching time*, while only 3.93% *applied it every time in their daily teaching routines*. In terms of classroom management, 50% of the respondents *often applied CS*, 45% *applied it in most of their teaching practice* and 5% *applied it every time*. For interpersonal relation, 49,5% *often applied CS*, 44% were *applied it in most of their teaching activities* and there were only 6.5% *used it every time in the classroom*. The questionnaire also revealed that none of the respondents said that they were never or almost never used CS in their teaching practice.

The data on the Table 1 above reveals that all the teachers applied CS in their EFL classroom interaction. They used CS for curriculum access such as in explaining meaning of words, sentences or grammar. They also applied CS to deal with classroom management such as when organizing classroom task and maintaining classroom discipline. The teachers also applied CS for interpersonal relation, as to provide feedback, strengthen interpersonal relationship and increase students' motivation.

In relation to teachers' belief in the practice of using CS, most of the teachers also showed positive attitude towards the use CS during their EFL classroom interaction. The Table 2 below shows the responses from the teachers.

Table 2. Teachers' beliefs in using code switching in EFL classroom

No	As an EFL teacher, I believe that:	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Un-decided (%)	Dis-agree (%)	Strongly dis-agree (%)
1.	CS will facilitate the language learning process	75	25	0	0	0
2.	The practice of CS will increase the students' reliance and dependency on the teacher	10	65	25	0	0
3.	CS should be included as an integral part of the EFL lesson	15	75	10	0	0
4.	There should be a strict separation of the mother tongue and English in the EFL classroom	0	0	5	70	25
5.	CS should only be used as a last resort when all other options have been exhausted	20	55	25	0	0
6.	CS is an efficient, time-saving technique	40	60	0	0	0
7.	English is best taught in English-only classrooms	10	35	25	25	5
8.	The use of other languages in the EFL classroom will result in	0	30	25	45	0

	a decline in the standards of English					
9.	The ideal teacher of English is a native speaker	10	20	15	20	35
10.	The more English that is used, the better the results for the learners	70	20	10	0	0

The Table 2 above shows teachers’ beliefs in using CS in EFL classroom. The Table 2 tells that all the teachers (100% of repondents) agreed that CS will facilitate the language learning process and is an efficient, time-saving technique. About 90% of the respondents agreed that CS should be included as an integral part of the EFL lesson and whether the more English used, the better the results for the learners. In the concepts of the practice of CS will increase the students’ reliance and dependency on the teacher and whether CS should only be used as a last resort when all other options have been exhausted, about 75% of the respondents agreed to the concepts.

However, regarding the concept of having a strict separation of the mother tongue and English in the EFL classroom, whether the use of other languages in the EFL classroom will result in a decline in the standards of English and the ideal teacher if English is a native teacher, most of the respondents disagreed to the statements. The percentage of disagreement of those concepts about 95%, 45% and 55% respectively.

Meanwhile, in the concept of whether English is best taught in English-only classrooms, the respondents’ responses were varied. About 45% of the respondents were agreed, 25% were neutral and the last 30% were disagreed.

4 Conclusion

The result of the present study argues that high school teachers in Kupang city applied code switching as a useful strategy in assisting their EFL classroom teaching and learning process. All the respondents agreed that, in the most of their EFL classroom interaction, CS helped them in accessing curriculum (explaining the meaning of new words, phrases, grammar, unfamiliar topics), managing the classroom (maintain classroom discipline) and maintaining interpersonal relation (increase students’ motivation and confidence). They also believed that CS was efficient and able to facilitate them in EFL classroom teaching and learning process.

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