
**AN ANALYSIS OF CODE-SWITCHING IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM
INTERACTION AT SMA SWASTA AL-MAKSUM PERCUT SEI TUAN**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the types and functions of code switching in English learning interactions at Al-Maksum Private High School, Percut Sei Tuan. This research is motivated by the high intensity of language switching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes in Indonesia, where teachers and students routinely switch between English and Indonesian. Using a qualitative descriptive design, research data were collected through video recordings of lessons in grade XI and semi-structured interviews with the in-charge teacher. Data analysis applied Poplack's (1980) typology framework for classifying types of code switching and Gumperz's (1982) functional theory to identify its communicative function. The results of the study found 21 code switching data covering three types of switching: intra-sentential switching was the most dominant with 13 findings (61.9%), followed by inter-sentential switching with 5 findings (23.8%), and tag switching with 3 findings (14.3%). Furthermore, the six functions of code switching according to Gumperz (1982) were all confirmed in the data, with the reiteration function being the most dominant. This study concludes that code switching in the classroom is not simply a language barrier, but rather a systematic, purposeful, and pedagogically motivated communicative practice.

Keywords: Code Switching, EFL Classroom, Learning Interaction, Sociolinguistics.

A. Introduction

English plays an important role in education as an international language used in various fields of science, technology, and global communication. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, interaction between teachers and students becomes an essential factor that influences the success of the teaching and learning process. Classroom interaction allows students to exchange meanings, receive feedback, and practice language use directly in real communication situations (Sari & Putri, 2022). Therefore, effective classroom interaction is necessary to support students' English language development.

However, English learning in the classroom does not always occur entirely in English. In bilingual environments such as Indonesia, teachers and students frequently use more than one language during classroom interaction. This

phenomenon is known as code-switching, which refers to the alternation from one language to another within a conversation or utterance. In EFL classrooms, code-switching is commonly used as a communication strategy to help students understand the material and maintain effective interaction during the learning process (Rahmawati, 2021; Hutabarat & Siregar, 2023).

The use of code-switching by teachers serves several important functions in classroom interaction. Teachers often switch from English to Indonesian when explaining difficult material, giving instructions, emphasizing important information, or managing the classroom. Previous studies have shown that the use of students' first language can help improve comprehension, especially for students who have limited English proficiency (Nasution, 2020; Lubis, 2022). Through code-switching, teachers can reduce communication barriers and create a more supportive learning atmosphere.

This situation is observed at SMA Swasta Al-Maksum Percut Sei Tuan, a private Islamic senior high school in North Sumatra, where English is taught as a foreign language and bilingual interaction is commonly found in the classroom. Based on preliminary observation conducted in an eleventh-grade English class, code-switching frequently occurred during classroom interaction. The English teacher was observed to switch from English to Indonesian while explaining materials, giving instructions, and interacting with students. Most students also tended to respond in Indonesian rather than English, indicating that bilingual communication has become a dominant feature of classroom interaction at the school.

Previous studies on code-switching in EFL classrooms have mostly focused on the university level, while limited studies have specifically examined code-switching in classroom interaction at the senior high school level, particularly in the context of private Islamic schools in North Sumatra. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the types and functions of code-switching in English classroom interaction at SMA Swasta Al-Maksum Percut Sei Tuan, using the theoretical frameworks of Poplack (1980) and Gumperz (1982). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the types of code-switching used in English classroom interaction at SMA Swasta Al-Maksum Percut Sei Tuan based on the typological framework of Poplack (1980),

and to analyze the functions of code-switching used by the teacher to support the learning process based on the functional framework of Gumperz (1982).

a. Code-Switching

Code-switching refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or language varieties within a single conversation or utterance. Poplack (1980) describes code-switching as the alternation from one language to another within a single utterance or conversation by bilingual speakers, emphasizing that it is a systematic and rule-governed practice rather than a product of linguistic incompetence. Gumperz (1982) defines code-switching as the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems, characterizing it fundamentally as a discourse strategy through which speakers signal shifts in communicative intent, social identity, and interactional positioning.

In EFL classroom contexts, code-switching is not considered a deviation from effective teaching practice but rather a purposeful pedagogical strategy employed to facilitate comprehension, manage classroom interaction, and support students' language development (Macaro, 2021). Research consistently shows that teachers in bilingual EFL classrooms make deliberate and context-sensitive decisions about language use, drawing on their understanding of students' proficiency levels and pedagogical goals (Nguyen & Hamid, 2020).

b. Types of Code-Switching

Poplack (1980) identifies three main types of code-switching. First, inter-sentential switching refers to language alternation that occurs at sentence or clause boundaries, where each sentence is produced entirely in one language before the speaker transitions to another language. Second, intra-sentential switching occurs when language alternation takes place within a single sentence or clause, involving the integration of words or phrases from one language into the grammatical framework of another. Poplack (1980) argues that this type requires the highest degree of bilingual competence. Third, tag switching involves the insertion of a short tag, interjection, or formulaic expression from one language into an utterance otherwise produced in another language. Because tags are structurally peripheral, this type does not require a high degree of bilingual competence.

c. Functions of Code-Switching

Gumperz (1982) identifies six functions of code-switching in communicative interaction. Quotation refers to the use of code-switching to reproduce or report the words of another person. Addressee specification refers to the use of code-switching to direct a particular message to a specific individual within a larger audience. Interjection involves the insertion of short exclamatory expressions or discourse markers from one language into an utterance in another language. Reiteration refers to the practice of repeating or paraphrasing a message in another language in order to clarify, reinforce, or emphasize what has already been said. Message qualification refers to the use of code-switching to provide additional information or elaboration beyond what has just been said. Finally, personalization versus objectivization involves using language switching to signal a distinction between a personal, subjective stance and a more objective, institutional perspective.

identified by Poplack (1980) with inter-sentential switching as the most frequent. Munawaroh et al. (2022) found that tag switching was the most dominant type and that code-switching was closely related to classroom interaction patterns. Junaid et al. (2025) demonstrated the value of video recording as a primary data collection tool for analyzing code-switching in naturalistic classroom settings. Maruf et al. (2023) found that teachers employ code-switching both deliberately and spontaneously based on their assessment of students' proficiency levels. Solihin et al. (2024) found that students hold positive attitudes toward teacher code-switching, perceiving it as helpful in facilitating comprehension. Taufiq et al. (2022) found that code-switching functions as a communicative scaffold that enables more meaningful student engagement with lesson content. The present study addresses the gaps in prior research by integrating both Poplack's (1980) and Gumperz's (1982) frameworks within a single analysis, focusing on the EFL classroom at a Swasta Islamic school in North Sumatra.

B. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that descriptive qualitative research aims to describe and interpret phenomena as they occur naturally. This design was chosen because the

study aims to identify and analyze the types and functions of code-switching as they naturally occur in English classroom interaction at SMA Swasta Al-Maksum Percut Sei Tuan.

The subject of this study was one English teacher and the eleventh-grade students of class XI at SMA Swasta Al-Maksum Percut Sei Tuan. The data were collected through two techniques. First, video documentation of one complete English lesson was conducted using a mobile phone, capturing the verbal contributions of both the teacher and students during classroom interaction. The recorded interaction was subsequently transcribed verbatim into a written classroom script. Second, a semi-structured interview was conducted with the English teacher following the video documentation session, using an interview guide organized according to the six functions of code-switching identified by Gumperz (1982).

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three stages: data condensation, data display, and drawing conclusions and verification. In the data condensation stage, all utterances containing code-switching were identified from the transcript and classified according to Poplack's (1980) typological framework. Interview responses were coded according to Gumperz's (1982) functional framework. In the data display stage, classified instances were organized into tables and supported by written analyses. In the conclusion drawing stage, patterns in type distribution and functions were identified and verified against the original data.

C. Results and Discussion

Results

1) Types of Code-Switching Found in Classroom Interaction

Based on the analysis of the classroom interaction transcript, three types of code-switching were identified with a total of 21 instances. The distribution of each type is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Code-Switching Types in Classroom Interaction

No	Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Inter-Sentential Switching	5	23.8%
2	Intra-Sentential Switching	13	61.9%
3	Tag Switching	3	14.3%

Total	21	100%
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(Source: Classroom interaction transcript data, 2026)

Intra-Sentential Switching was the most frequent type with 13 instances (61.9%). Representative instances include: "Sekarang ega coba read paragraph pertama" where English academic vocabulary is embedded within an Indonesian syntactic frame, and "di paragraph pertama dan paragraph kedua itu how many meals in England, bagaimana makanan di inggris, udah?" where an English content phrase is inserted at a point of high semantic weight and immediately followed by its Indonesian translation. These instances reflect the teacher's naturalistic integration of English target-language vocabulary into Indonesian explanatory discourse as a scaffolding tool.

Inter-Sentential Switching was the second most frequent type with 5 instances (23.8%), occurring predominantly at the opening and closing boundaries of the lesson. For example: "So today we are discuss about Vocabulary. Yang artinya kosakata, kamu sudah menerima kertasnya yaa..." Each sentence constitutes a structurally independent unit, consistent with Poplack's (1980) definition of inter-sentential switching as alternation at major sentence boundaries.

Tag Switching was the least frequent type with 3 instances (14.3%), involving the insertion of structurally peripheral short expressions from one language into an utterance otherwise produced in another. Examples include: "yes, Terus?" and "okee udah jelas nak? jelas semua? Understand?" to which students responded in Indonesian "jelasss".

2) Functions of Code-Switching in English Classroom Interaction

Analysis of the interview data using Gumperz's (1982) functional framework revealed the presence of all six functions. The distribution is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Code-Switching Functions Based on Interview Data

No	Summary of the Interview Data	Function
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1	teacher reproduces students' erroneous pronunciations (e.g., "hepi besdey") before modeling the correct form ("happy birthday")	Quotation
2	Switching to Indonesian when reprimanding specific students by name.	Addressee Specification
3	Teacher frequently uses "okay" to reinforce material and maintain student attention and engagement	Interjection
4	Teacher consistently restates key instructions and explanations in Indonesian after delivering them in English	Reiteration
5	Teacher adds new real-world information in Indonesian after explaining textbook content in English	Message Qualification
6	Teacher uses Indonesian for motivation, humor, and cultural connection, acknowledging it as more capable of "menyentuh perasaan siswa"	Personalization vs. Objectivization

(Source: Teacher interview transcript data, 2026)

The Quotation function was realized through the teacher's corrective feedback strategy of reproducing students' erroneous pronunciations such as "hepi besdey" before immediately contrasting them with the correct form ("happy birthday"), making the correction publicly accessible to the entire class.

The Addressee Specification function was employed when the teacher switched to Indonesian to directly address and reprimand specific students by name, citing that Indonesian-language reprimands "masuk ke hatinya" (reach the student's heart) more effectively than English.

The Interjection function was manifested through the teacher's consistent use of "okay" as a discourse marker to punctuate key moments and maintain student engagement throughout the lesson.

Reiteration was the most consistently applied function, with the teacher systematically repeating key instructional content in Indonesian after first delivering it in English, monitoring students' nonverbal responses as real-time indicators of when reiteration was needed.

The Message Qualification function was realized through the teacher's practice of supplementing English-medium content with additional real-world

Indonesian-language elaboration that genuinely extends beyond mere restatement for instance, enriching a textbook topic on global warming with locally observable environmental examples.

The Personalization versus Objectivization function was evident in the teacher's deliberate use of Indonesian to connect lesson content to students' cultural identities, maintaining an approximately 50-50 balance between both languages across motivational and affective communicative acts, such as linking a narrative text about Lake Toba to students' daily experience.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that code-switching is a pervasive, systematic, and functionally diverse phenomenon in English classroom interaction at SMA Swasta Al-Maksum Percut Sei Tuan. The dominance of intra-sentential switching (61.9%) demonstrates the teacher's sophisticated bilingual competence and her consistent strategy of embedding English vocabulary within Indonesian instructional sentences as a scaffolding tool, consistent with Maruf et al. (2023). Inter-sentential switching occurred predominantly at lesson boundaries, consistent with Aleksius (2024) and Munawaroh et al. (2022). Tag switching, while least frequent, was notable for having been internalized by students as formulaic classroom responses, consistent with Taufiq et al. (2022).

With regard to functions, reiteration emerged as the most dominant, reflecting the teacher's systematic commitment to ensuring equal access to lesson content for all students. The affective dimension of addressee specification the teacher's recognition that Indonesian reprimands are more effective because they "masuk ke hatinya" extends the existing literature by highlighting the emotional, not merely informational, dimension of this function. Overall, the findings confirm that code-switching in this EFL classroom is a systematic and pedagogically motivated communicative practice, supporting the theoretical positions of Poplack (1980) and Gumperz (1982).

D. Conclusion

This study analyzed the types and functions of code-switching in English classroom interaction at SMA Swasta Al-Maksum Percut Sei Tuan. With regard to

types, a total of 21 instances were identified from the classroom interaction transcript. Intra-sentential switching was the most frequent type (13 instances, 61.9%), reflecting the teacher's strategy of embedding English vocabulary within Indonesian instructional sentences. Inter-sentential switching occurred 5 times (23.8%), predominantly at lesson boundaries. Tag switching was the least frequent (3 instances, 14.3%) but was notable for having been internalized by students as formulaic classroom responses.

With regard to functions, all six functions identified by Gumperz (1982) were present in the interview data. Reiteration was the most dominant function, reflecting the teacher's systematic commitment to restating key content in both languages to ensure equal comprehension. Addressee specification, interjection, message qualification, quotation, and personalization versus objectivization were also identified, each reflecting a distinct pedagogical purpose. Taken together, these findings confirm that code-switching in the EFL classroom at SMA Swasta Al-Maksum Percut Sei Tuan is a systematic, purposive, and pedagogically motivated communicative practice that constitutes a valuable pedagogical resource rather than a deviation from effective language teaching.

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