

# Navigating EFL Classrooms: A Functional Analysis of Code-Mixing and Code-Switching as Instructional Strategies

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*Received : Feb' 2026 Revised : Mar' 2026 Accepted : Apr' 2026 Published : Apr' 2026*

## ABSTRACT

*This research investigates the phenomenon of code-mixing and code-switching used by a teacher and fourth-semester students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking class at a university in Bandung. The study is grounded in the fact that while learning a new language influences communication choices, excessive reliance on code-switching (CS) and code-mixing (CM) may hinder the mastery of English grammatical rules. This study aims to identify the specific types of CS and CM that occur during classroom interactions. Using a descriptive qualitative case study design, data were collected through online observations via Zoom meetings and audio recordings, which were then transcribed and analyzed using Poplack's (1980) and Muysken's (2004) frameworks. The results reveal that only specific types of linguistic shifts occurred: intra-sentential and inter-sentential switching were the primary forms of CS used by the teacher to ensure student understanding. Meanwhile, CM was manifested through insertion – such as adding Indonesian affixes to English base words – and alternation. The findings and discussion highlight that students frequently reverted to Indonesian or their mother tongue during group discussions due to vocabulary limitations and a lack of direct teacher monitoring. The study concludes that while these phenomena facilitate material comprehension, teachers should implement strategic rules to limit dependency on non-English codes to optimize students' speaking proficiency.*

**Keywords :** Code-Mixing; Code-Switching; EFL Classroom; Sociolinguistics; Speaking Class.

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menyelidiki fenomena campur kode dan alih kode yang digunakan oleh pengajar dan mahasiswa semester empat di kelas berbicara Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL) di sebuah Universitas di Bandung. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada kenyataan bahwa meskipun mempelajari bahasa baru mempengaruhi pilihan komunikasi, ketergantungan yang berlebihan pada alih kode (CS) dan campur kode (CM) dapat menghambat penguasaan aturan tata bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tipe-tipe spesifik CS dan CM yang terjadi selama interaksi di dalam kelas. Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi daring melalui pertemuan Zoom dan rekaman audio, yang kemudian ditranskripsikan dan dianalisis menggunakan kerangka kerja Poplack (1980) dan Muysken (2004). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hanya tipe pergeseran linguistik tertentu yang terjadi: alih kode intra-sentensial dan inter-sentensial merupakan bentuk utama CS yang digunakan oleh pengajar untuk memastikan pemahaman mahasiswa. Sementara itu, CM bermanifestasi melalui insertion – seperti penambahan imbuhan bahasa Indonesia pada kata dasar bahasa Inggris – dan alternation. Temuan dan pembahasan menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa sering kembali menggunakan bahasa Indonesia atau bahasa ibu selama diskusi kelompok karena keterbatasan kosakata dan kurangnya pengawasan langsung dari pengajar. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun fenomena ini memfasilitasi

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pemahaman materi, pengajar harus menerapkan aturan strategis untuk membatasi ketergantungan pada kode non-Inggris guna mengoptimalkan kemahiran berbicara mahasiswa.

**Kata Kunci** : Alih Kode; Campur Kode; Kelas Berbicara; Kelas EFL; Sociolinguistik.

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## BACKGROUND

English as an international language plays a vital role in global communication. In the current era of globalization, a vast amount of information and knowledge is documented in English, even in non-English speaking countries. Consequently, learning English has become a necessity for people worldwide to access broader insights. As a prominent lingua franca, English is learned by people in various countries, including those whose mother tongue differs significantly from English, often presenting it as a novel linguistic challenge.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language across all educational levels. For Indonesian learners, acquiring English often leads to a linguistic phenomenon where they utilize more than one language in a single conversation. This process involves "code-switching" (switching from one language to another) and "code-mixing" (mixing two or more languages within a single utterance), where the term "code" refers to a language, dialect, or variety. These phenomena occur in various settings, ranging from informal environments like homes and restaurants to formal contexts such as schools and offices.

In the English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, a formal setting, teachers and students frequently encounter difficulties in immediate comprehension. To bridge this gap, both parties often switch or mix English with Indonesian. This occurrence is heavily influenced by the bilingual or multilingual background of the participants. As noted by Lado, bilingualism is the ability to use two languages with near-equal proficiency. Given that many Indonesians are already bilingual in their tribal language and the national language, learning English adds another layer to their linguistic repertoire, making code choice a natural, albeit complex, outcome.

The use of Code-Switching (CS) and Code-Mixing (CM) in the classroom remains a subject of academic debate. Some scholars argue that CS and CM represent linguistic weakness or "laziness," suggesting a lack of competence in the target language. Conversely, other researchers highlight the positive benefits, noting that CS and CM can be effective pedagogical tools for giving advice, explaining difficult concepts, and facilitating the transfer of knowledge.

While previous studies on code-switching and code-mixing in EFL contexts have largely focused on either the general advantages and disadvantages or limited their scope to a single participant group (predominantly teachers), this study offers a more comprehensive and integrative perspective. The novelty of this research lies in its dual focus on both teachers and students as active agents in bilingual interaction, as well as its systematic identification and classification of the specific types of code-switching and code-mixing occurring in classroom

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discourse. Furthermore, this study does not merely describe the occurrences of CS and CM but also examines their impact on the structure and meaning of English as the target language. By situating these linguistic phenomena within authentic classroom interaction, this research provides a more nuanced understanding of how multilingual competence shapes language learning processes in EFL settings. Therefore, this study contributes a more detailed and context-sensitive framework that can serve as a practical reference for both researchers and educators in optimizing the pedagogical use of multiple languages in the classroom.

## **METHOD**

This study is designed as a qualitative case study aimed at dissecting linguistic phenomena within an academic framework. The research object focuses on the verbal interactions between an English lecturer and fourth-semester undergraduate students in a Speaking Class at a university in Bandung. This particular subject was selected due to the high intensity of communication within the class, providing ample opportunities for the emergence of code-switching and code-mixing phenomena.

The research procedure commenced with a preparatory phase involving the collection of relevant sociolinguistic literature to establish a solid theoretical foundation. The implementation phase was conducted through non-participant observations of online classes held via the Zoom Meetings platform. During the teaching and learning process, all interactions were audio-recorded to ensure data integrity, including student discussions within randomized breakout rooms.

In the data analysis phase, the researcher performed a comprehensive transcription of the collected audio recordings. The utterances were then selected and classified into categories of code-switching and code-mixing. For code-switching, the analysis utilized Poplack's (1980) taxonomy, categorizing instances into intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching. Meanwhile, code-mixing data were analyzed using Muysken's (2004) classification, which includes insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. Through this chronological sequence, the research aims to accurately map the patterns and motives of language choice used in an EFL environment.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section consists of types of code-switching and code-mixing occurred in the EFL classroom. Based on the data analysis from audio recording in the observation, it shows that teacher and students did use more than one language to communicate in the classroom. The following transcriptions are showing the code-switching and code-mixing used by teacher and students in one meeting of observation and has been classified according to its types.

## Types of Code-Switching

### 1. Intra-sentential switching

This type of code switching occurred at the beginning of learning activity while the teacher was reviewing the topic on the picture. Here is the teacher switched from English to Indonesian twice.

- Teacher : *Or maybe you are who give recommend to them?/ Atau kalian mungkin yang ngerekomendasiin? /What it is?*
- Student R : Yes, Sir. The quality of the foods, first.
- Teacher : Yes.

The provided excerpt illustrates a strategic use of intersentential code-switching, where the teacher employs the L1 (Indonesian) as a functional bridge to ensure conceptual clarity. This "optimal use" of the first language serves as a vital scaffolding tool in English Medium Instruction (EMI) settings, particularly when introducing or reviewing complex lexical items like "recommend"[1]. Instead of viewing the switch as a linguistic failure, modern perspectives such as the Translanguaging. The teacher is utilizing the students' full linguistic repertoire to maximize communication. By providing a direct translation "*Atau kalian mungkin yang ngerekomendasiin?*" the teacher effectively manages the students' cognitive load, ensuring that the difficulty of the vocabulary does not become a barrier to the "flow of discourse."

Furthermore, the teacher's behavior can be analyzed through the lens of Teacher Eco-efficiency in classroom interaction. Code switching often functions as a "repair" or "pre-emptive" strategy to avoid communication breakdown [2]. In this instance, the teacher anticipates a potential lack of participation due to the specific vocabulary used. The switch acts as a determining factor for the student's subsequent engagement. Student R's immediate response "Yes, Sir. The quality of the foods, first" demonstrates that the teacher's use of Indonesian successfully activated the student's background knowledge, allowing them to participate in English once the semantic hurdle was cleared. Strategic L1 use can actually increase the quantity and quality of L2 output by providing a secure psychological foundation for the learners [3].

Finally, the interaction highlights how vocabulary familiarity shapes the classroom's social participation. The teacher's choice to switch on the word "recommend" implies a pedagogical awareness that certain "low-frequency" or "academic" words are not yet part of the students' preferred active vocabulary. By providing the Indonesian equivalent, the teacher "primes" the students' brains for the topic, allowing the interaction to remain fluent. The teacher's linguistic choices directly inform the students' "willingness to communicate" (WTC)[4]. In this specific context, the code-switching served as a catalyst that transformed a potential moment of silence into a meaningful instance of student engagement.

### 2. Inter-sentential switching

Inter-sentential switching occurs when a word, phrase, or clause of one language is found in a sentence of another language which is different.

Teacher : Hello? Test? Check? Check?

Students : Agak putus-putus, Pak.

Teacher : Oh, pantesan. Belum juga jadian udah putus-putus. /Okay, go on.

The exchange between the teacher and students demonstrates Inter-sentential switching that occurs at a clause or sentence boundary. In this instance, the teacher responds to the students' technical complaint ("*Agak putus-putus, Pak*") by using an informal Indonesian joke ("*Oh, pantesan. Belum juga jadian udah putus-putus*") before immediately switching back to a formal English instruction ("Okay, go on") [5]. This transition between a complete Indonesian sentence and a complete English sentence signifies a clear boundary between different "modes" of the classroom experience.

From a functional perspective, the teacher is employing a recreational or interpersonal function. Teachers often switch to the students' L1 to build rapport or use humor, which serves to lower the students' Affective Filter. By making a pun on the word "*putus*" (which can mean "lagging/disconnected" in a technical sense or "breaking up" in a romantic sense), the teacher temporarily steps out of the formal "instructor" role and into a "relatable" role [6]. In the context of Translanguaging, this use of the students' L1 is a strategic social tool used to manage the classroom atmosphere and maintain student interest before pivoting back to the academic task ("Okay, go on").

Furthermore, the switch to English ("Okay, go on") serves as a discourse marker to signal the end of the "interruption" and the resumption of the formal lesson. In the study of classroom interaction, the English phrase acts as a "frame" that tells students the social talk is over and the academic participation must begin. This specific interaction shows that the teacher's vocabulary preference for the joke (Indonesian) was driven by cultural nuances that would be lost in translation, while the preference for the instruction (English) maintains the pedagogical goals of the speaking class.

## Types of Code-Mixing

### 1. Insertion

The following transcript is taken from the breakout room session of the second group. The students were talking about the instruction given by the teacher, but one of them was confused and asked her friends what to do.

Student 1 : Gak ngerti aku ini gimana maksudnya? Aku daritadi keluar masuk wae. Kumaha, ih? Jelasin.

Student 2 : Disuruh nge-describe-in.

The core of the analysis lies in Student 2's utterance: "*Disuruh nge-describe-in*." This is a classic example of Insertion, a term popularized by Muysken (2000) and reinforced in more recent sociolinguistic studies. Insertion occurs when lexical items or entire phrases from one language are embedded into the grammatical structure of another. Here, the English root word "describe" is inserted into the Indonesian morphological framework. The student applies the Indonesian circumfix *nge-...-in* (a colloquial form of *me-...-kan*) to the English verb. This

"morphological integration" shows that the student is treating the English term as a flexible tool within their primary language's grammar to ensure the message is conveyed efficiently.

From a pedagogical perspective, this insertion serves a clarification function. Learners often resort to code-mixing when they need to compensate for "lexical gaps" or to emphasize a specific instruction. Student 1 expresses significant frustration and confusion ("*Gak ngerti aku... Kumaha, ih?*"), using a mix of Indonesian and Sundanese. Student 2 responds by mixing English and Indonesian to pinpoint the exact academic task. By using the word "describe" which was likely the original term used by the teacher Student 2 provides a terminological anchor. This aligns with Sert's findings that students use mixed-language "key terms" to maintain the link between the teacher's formal instruction and their informal peer discussion .

Furthermore, this data highlights Vocabulary Preference as a factor driven by Academic Utility. The students might not "prefer" English for social interaction (as seen in their use of Sundanese and Indonesian for venting frustration), but they "prefer" the English term "describe" because it is the specific "label" for the task at hand. This supports the theory of Translanguaging in which posits that multilingual speakers do not switch between "two separate folders" in their brains, but rather select the best "tools" from a single linguistic repertoire to achieve understanding [7]. In this breakout room setting, the insertion of the English verb becomes the determining factor that resolves Student 1's confusion and allows the group to move forward with the task.

## 2. Alternation

Alternation refers to the use of one language between structures from other languages in terms of clause. In the transcript below they were talking about the second topic, diet. Students sounded excited about this topic but they were expressed it using Indonesian more than English.

- |           |   |  |
|-----------|---|--|
| Student 1 | : | Aku lagi diet. ("diet" here is spoken in Indonesian)   |
| Student 2 | : | Aku, Pak, lagi diet biar body goals.   |
| Student 3 | : | Aku diet, besoklah, gitu.  |
| Student 4 | : | Mie didalam hari hahahaha...   |
| Teacher   | : | Oh, mie didalam hari, ya betul, hahaha, yeah instant noodle in the evening before sleep.                 |
| Student 5 | : | Lagi diet pake, makan pake itu ya, Pak, makan banana, eat banana.  |
| Teacher   | : | Banana, yeah, fruits. Yes. Next, number two, how many portion of fruits and vegetables do you eat a day? |

The exchange displays Alternation, a process where a speaker switches between two distinct grammatical structures or clauses. Alternation is frequent when both languages are used with a similar level of grammatical complexity. In the case of Student 5 ("Lagi diet pake... makan banana, eat banana"), the student provides a thought in Indonesian and immediately alternates to an English clause.

This "doubling" or parallel usage suggests that the student is using the L1 to anchor the meaning before attempting the L2 (English) structure [3].

From a pedagogical perspective, this data highlights the Relationship between Affect and Lexical Choice. Students often revert to their L1 when they are "excited" or emotionally invested in a topic [8]. The topic of "dieting" and "instant noodles" triggers a high level of engagement, but because the students' Productive Vocabulary in English is still developing, they use Indonesian to maintain the momentum of the conversation. This is a strategic "communication bridge" the students prefer to participate in Indonesian rather than remain silent in English [9].

The teacher's response also demonstrates a crucial scaffolding technique known as Recasting. When Student 4 says "*Mie dimalam hari*," the teacher validates the content in Indonesian before providing the English equivalent: "yeah, instant noodle in the evening before sleep." This recasting acts as a "corrective feedback" that doesn't discourage the student. The teacher is effectively feeding the students the preferred vocabulary they lacked, turning their informal participation into a learning moment [10].

Furthermore, the use of the term "body goals" by Student 2 is an example of Lexical Borrowing from popular culture. Modern learners often have a preference for English "buzzwords" found on social media, even if they cannot yet construct a full sentence in English. This proves that Vocabulary Preference is often driven by Media Influence and social relevance. The students are not "unwilling" to speak English; rather, they use English fragments (body goals, eat banana) as "islands of reliability" within an Indonesian sea to stay engaged in the classroom discourse.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, the researcher found out that not all of the types of code-switching and code-mixing classified by Poplack and Muysken occurred in the EFL classroom of this speaking class. There are only two types occurred; no tag switching type and no congruent lexical code-mixing type. From this study, it could be seen that in EFL classroom, code-switching and code-mixing are still often occurred. Especially, when the teacher is not watch the students' discussions, in the transcript could be found that students preferred to use their tribe's language and Indonesian than use English.

Even code-switching and code-mixing help student to understand more about the materials being learned, it will be better if the teacher give a rules to not to speak in other language except English. The students can use their phone if they are confused or lack of vocabularies to say their ideas in the classroom. Further research is suggested to compare EFL classroom with using code choice and EFL classroom without using code choice to find out the differences of learning English with and without code choice.

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