



## **Code Switching as Language Teaching Strategy in EFL Online Classroom**

Nur Amalina Zatalini

MTs Diponegoro Kediri

[nazatalini@gmail.com](mailto:nazatalini@gmail.com)

### **ABSTRACT**

In response to the transition to online classrooms during the pandemic, this research examines code-switching as a method to enhance language instruction in EFL online settings. Code-switching, the practice of switching between languages, is examined here for its effectiveness in boosting comprehension and student involvement among undergraduate students. Since the study employ a qualitative methodology, it gathered data from classroom observations and surveys distributed to both teachers and students. The results indicate that teachers utilized situational and metaphorical code-switching to elucidate intricate concepts, sustain attention, and promote student engagement. Code-switching proved particularly beneficial in reactivating initially passive or distracted students by offering a familiar language framework that bolstered their confidence and facilitated more active participation. Moreover, teachers noted that code-switching cultivated a supportive learning atmosphere, enhancing the bond between students and teachers. These findings suggest that, when used strategically, code-switching serves as a valuable tool for enriching language proficiency and maintaining engagement in online EFL classrooms.

Keywords: code-switching, language teaching strategy, online classroom

### **Introduction**

The language used by teachers has a significant impact on the teaching and learning process. Teachers or teachers will be able to deliver appropriate directions to students and assist students in understanding content if they use clear and proper language (Mukti & Muljani, 2016). When English is employed as the medium of instruction in the teaching and learning process, teachers may find some challenges regarding the language use (Leonak & Amalo, 2018). Students may not understand the material if it is delivered in full English. Therefore, the occurrence of switching between target and source language when the teacher and students share the same L1 is unavoidable. In the Indonesian setting, the use of exclusively English as a medium of teaching in English teachers tends to change from English to Indonesian language in order to assist pupils understanding the material. In other words, teachers are likely to switch from target language (L2) to first language (L1) during their teaching practice in the classroom in order to give better understanding (Argellan, et al., 2019). This kind of phenomenon is better known as classroom code-switching which refers to the alternating use of more than one linguistic code in the classroom by any of the classroom participants (Lin, 2017).

Received:	22-07-2024	Revised:	05-11-2024	Accepted:	07-11-2024
-----------	------------	----------	------------	-----------	------------

Since all of education practice holds online in this pandemic era, teaching and learning process must be adapted from face-to-face classrooms are being replaced with online classrooms that use internet technologies. Online learning is defined as using the internet to access materials, engage with content, teachers, and other students, and obtain aid in the learning process in order to gain information, make meaning, and progress through the learning experience (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Nugroho, et al. (2020) found that one of the primary challenges of the EFL teachers in online teaching are the lack of students' motivation and engagement. The reason behind that was the students were unable to understand the teachers' directions, despite the fact that they were provided and written clearly. Students frequently fail to read and comprehend the teachers' directions. They occasionally skipped instructions that were written a little longer. Sometimes, the students still cannot understand the instruction or material that delivered using English (L2) even though they read it. In this case, the teacher needs to repeat the instruction using Indonesian (L1). The teacher was using code-switching to give instruction for the students understand better. Pradita (2015) stated that the use of code switching as a teaching approach in MTsN Babakan Ciwaringin is consistent with Hall and Cook's theory. Code-switching serves nine functions: explaining vocabulary, giving teaching, explaining grammar, developing rapport and a good classroom, correcting spoken errors, explaining when meanings in English are unclear, testing and assessing learners, and maintaining discipline. Malik (2014) on his study in Pakistan found that code switching is an efficient way of teaching English, particularly to Intermediate pupils. It facilitates students' comprehension and encourages them to learn English.

Code-switching has been a long popular research topic over years in many countries. There have been quite large numbers of previous studies addressing this issue one of which concerns on the practice of code switching in the classroom's context involving bilingual or multilingual speakers. Studies regarding the use of code switching were found to have various reasons; to facilitate teacher-learner interaction (Greggio & Gill , 2007; Syafri, et al., 2019; Puspawati, 2018); to achieve pedagogical goals and to facilitate the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, in relation to teacher-student relationship (Leonak & Amalo, 2018; Puspawati, 2018); to lessen students feeling nervous during learning process (Jingxia, 2010; Shalini, et al., 2019); to stimulate students participation in the classroom (Bostanci & Çavuşoğlu, 2013; Shartiely, 2015).

Despite its benefits, the uses of code switching in EFL classrooms seem to be still debatable in practice. From teacher's perception, code-switching is an asset to assist in the delivery of material in an EFL course. Code switching is usually used by teachers to keep their teaching and learning processes running smoothly. Additionally, pupils agree that code switching has improved their understanding of the subject. Both teachers and students are enthusiastic about the use of code-switching in practical instruction. Despite

this, students believe that L2 should be the primary language of instruction in the classroom. They do not have the opportunity to use L2 outside the classroom where L2 not widely used. So, they believed that they can improve their L2 skills by practicing in the classroom (Adrios & Razi, 2019).

Because code-switching can also be found in online classrooms, the current study attempts to investigate the use of code-switching and its roles as language teaching tools because research on this area is scarce, particularly in EFL online classrooms. The current study is titled "Code Switching as Language Teaching Strategies in EFL Online Classroom" based on the explanation above. The study's findings are expected to give significant information for teachers, students, and other parties interested in learning more about code-switching in language education, particularly about students' engagement.

## **Methods**

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to examine how code-switching functions as a teaching strategy in EFL online classrooms. The case study method was selected to allow an in-depth exploration of teachers' natural code-switching behaviors and their perceived effects on student engagement and comprehension. It is in accordance to Moleong (2004), who states that qualitative descriptive research aimed to comprehend and enlighten the existing phenomena experienced by the subject of the research such as attitude, perception, motivation, action, and so on, in a holistic manner and by describing it in words and language on the expected specific context and by using such types of accepted method. This design aligns with the study's objective of understanding the nuanced role of language switching in real-time classroom interactions.

Data was collected through a combination of classroom observations and structured questionnaires. Observations were conducted across multiple online sessions to capture authentic language use and contextual shifts in code-switching. During these sessions, the researchers recorded the lectures, which were later transcribed and coded to identify instances of situational and metaphorical code-switching. Coding was based on established linguistic categories (e.g., clarification, repetition, socialization), allowing for consistent classification of code-switching types and functions.

In addition to observations, structured questionnaires were distributed to both teachers and students to gather their perspectives on code-switching. The questionnaires included open-ended questions designed to explore participants' attitudes toward the practice, as well as Likert-scale items to assess perceived impacts on engagement, comprehension, and confidence in participating.

By combining observational data with self-reported feedback, this study offers a holistic view of code-switching as it naturally occurs in EFL online classrooms. This method enables an exploration of both the functional and interpersonal roles of code-switching, emphasizing its effectiveness as a teaching strategy in online learning environments.

## Result and Discussion

The results of the classroom observation and questionnaire are presented as follow. The data from classroom activities recording are analyzed and labeled based on the type of code-switching and its function.

### 1. Type of Code-Switching

There are two types of code switching used by the teacher, namely, situational and metaphorical code-switching. Each of them will explain below:

#### a. Situational Code-Switching

The situational code-switching occurred when the language used change according to the situation. The speaker used one language in one situation and another language in a different situation (Wardhaugh, 2006). The researcher found that the teacher employed situational code-switching when students seemed confused about certain things.

L: *Apakah itu insert the CD room? CD room itu bukannya...* Insert the CD room from its case. *Case itu kan tempatnya itu to. Yang biasanya bentuknya bulat.*

S: Remove, Mam.

L: *Ya. Remove kayanya ya. Dipindahkan dulu atau lepaskan.* Remove the CD Room from its case. *Setelah dilepaskan dari tempatnya and then ke ini PC yang biasanya keluar sendiri itu. Lalu, kita masukkan CD room ke dalam itu.*

The data above showed that the teacher shifted from L2 into L1 when the students seemed do not understand about the things discussed. The teacher explained about the CD room and its case to the students using Indonesian languages, their first language, in order to make students understand better and could answer the question. This, the teacher needs to switch to the language that understandable for her students when the situation occurred.

#### b. Metaphorical Code-Switching

Language switch in metaphorical code-switching is related to particular kinds of topics or subjects. Metaphorical code-switching happens when the change of topics in a conversation requires a change in the language used (Wardhaugh, 2006). The data proved that the metaphorical code-switching employed by the teacher, as below:

L: *Oh ini. Iya. Iya ini kayanya internet saya yang salah ini. Agak bermasalah ini.*

The teacher talked in L1 when the topics changed from discussing the material into talking about the bad signal. The use of L1 brought the sense of having special

communication effect since the teacher and the students share the same L1. The code switching made the students understand that the teacher had a problem with the internet connection in the middle of their discussion.

## 2. Function of Code-Switching

Teacher performed code-switching for both pedagogical and interpersonal reasons. Based on Ferguson's classification of the functions of classroom code-switching (2009), the functions of code-switching were divided into two main functional categories, (1) for constructing and transmitting knowledge, (2) for interpersonal relations. The first category covers three pedagogical functions: clarification, repetition, and recapitulation. The second category represents the function of socialization. The result of classroom observation shows that the functions of Clarification were the most common functions performed by the teacher.

### a. Clarification

The teacher tended to switch into L1 to add some information related to the questions discussed. The data showed that the teacher switched to L1 to clarify the possibility of the accident happen regarding to the students' answer.

L: Very Good. Yes. It is still possible. That is why somehow, someone where not really aware of it or who are not really care about it then disturb the plane navigation. *Makanya sampe ada kecelakaan itu gara-gara flight modenya tidak diinikan. Bahkan kalau naik pesawat sebaiknya bukan flight mode, dimatikan saja.* When you still have the flight mode *takutnya itu nanti bisa mencet tombol yang lain gitu lo.*

Here, the teacher first clarified the students' answer in L2, and then she added some information to give better understanding about flight mode to the students. The teacher added that it will be better if we are turning off the phone instead of just turning on flight mode.

This function, clarification, is also used by the teacher to clarify the students understanding about the instruction and material discussed earlier.

L: You have to decide whether the statement here belongs to text A, text B or neither of them. *Masih ingat kan* text A is about how to install your phone. Text B is about how...

The data showed that the teacher asked the students whether they remember the material for answering the next questions discussed.

Then, the teacher switched to L1 in order to deliver some opinion about some unclear topics, so the students can understand better.

L: *Apakah itu* insert the CD room? *CD room itu bukannya..* Insert the CD room from its case. *Case itu kan tempatnya itu to. Yang biasanya bentuknya bulat.*

L: I don't know whether is replace or remove. Remove the cover on on the its box, *ya*, where it was at its top. *Karena kalau gak dipindah nanti bisa kesetrum atau menimbulkan kebakaran.* I think you have remove.

Here, the students seem confused about their answer. The teacher tried to explain the point more in L1. The teacher explains about what is case of CD room.

The function of Clarification is the most performed by the teacher to expand explanation of some given case.

L: Next week, I'm going to give you a quiz, small quiz for you. Since you haven't got any score for your quiz. *Soalnya ya dari unit pertama sampai unit ini ya.* And then after the next two weeks, you have to be ready for google form for your uts. *Utsnya saya lihat tadi soalnya ya mudah-mudah aja sih tentang semuanya tentang itu, tentang topik-topik itu tapi teksnya nggak sama gitu aja.*

The data revealed that this function is used to explain ideas and give broad information longer in L1. In this case, the teacher talked about the questions for the quiz. She added that the questions are easy and cover up all of the topics.

### **b. Repetition**

The teacher performed repetition to some L2 word in L1 to draw students' attention. In answering the question, the teacher repeats the sentences or questions written in English using Bahasa.

L: Try your sim card in? oh another phone. *Ini berarti another phone no.4. Jawabannya apa?*

S: Off, mam.

L: Off? *Oh iya. Matikan jika perlu.* Change to off if necessary.

The data above showed that teacher repeat the questions using L1, so students pay attention and answer the question correctly.

S: Remove, Mam.

L: *Ya, remove kayanya ya. Dipindahin dulu atau lepasin. Lepaskan.*

L: What about lift it? Yes, *mengangkat.* Put it into higher position.

L: Place? Placement. Placement test, *ya.* Placement. *Penempatan.*

L: We're talking about the personal here. PC. *Ini ngomongkan PC ini.*

The data revealed that the teacher tend to repeat the sentences using L1 so they can answer the task correctly. The teacher translates the answer such as remove, lift and placement. Also, the teacher draws the student attention into the topic by saying "*ini ngomongkan PC ini*"

### c. Recapitulation

The teacher using L1 to summarize the explanation of the lesson delivered using L2. This code-switching performed in order to make sure the students got the intended message.

L: False then. It is possible to have it. *Apalagi kalau masih ini kan, mau take off atau mau landing ya. Tiba – tiba ini ada yang menghubungi gitu dan lupa kalau flight mode lupa diganti ke flight mode terus akhirnya masuk itu sinyalnya dan ganggu landingnya.*

The data above showed that the teacher summarize the ideas about turning on flight mode and the possibilities of the signal interrupt the take-off and landing. The teacher delivered the message they want to share using L1.

L: Filling the blank in the sentences with one of the formed of the word from language focus 3. *Jadi, ini nanti ditaruh disini.* Insert, remove, replace, *sama* connect.

Here, the teacher summarizes the instruction of the task. Students may be confused with the instruction, so the teacher added the explanation in L1.

### 3. Teacher Beliefs of Code-Switching in EFL Classroom

The data were collected through questionnaire answered by the teachers. The teacher agrees that code-switching will facilitate language learning process. The saw code-switching as beneficial in EFL online classroom to help the students learn language. One of them, strongly agree that code-switching is an efficient and time-saving technique. The teacher agree that code-switching can be used in teaching language effectively. They all also agree that code-switching should be included as an integral part of the EFL lesson. The data also shown that mother language and second language did not to be separated. The practice of the code-switching will not make the students' reliance and dependency on the teacher are increased. However, they still believe that more English used, the better the results for the learners.

The teacher used code switching mostly to add some information related to the topics or terms that being discussed in the class. They performed both situational and metaphorical code-switching. Situational code switching occurred with the change of the situation in the online classroom. The teacher chooses to switch from L2 into L1 when the students starting to seem confused with the material. The teacher needs to give more explanation using L1 so the students can understand better and answer the task correctly. In this case, the teacher performed code switching as clarification. The teacher clarified the students' understanding and added information needed to the students. The code switching of teacher also changed related to the topic of conversation. Before the discussion started, the teacher talked about the weather that caused bad signal using their L1. It is called metaphorical code switching. Eventually, the teacher will switch into their L1

when change the topic of conversation, from explaining the lesson into talking about the bad weather. This code switching served its function as socialization which showing their closeness since they share the same first language. The switch of L1 shown their belonging in same society and feel more comfortable in talk. Some of students may feel shy and not really confident to talk in L2 fully.

Another function of code switching performed by the teacher is repetition. Some words could make the students confused because they do not understand the meaning if not being repeating in L1. The teacher needs to repeat some terms or translate the word into L1 so the students can answer the task correctly. After explaining some material, the teacher also summarizes the lesson by switching into L1. It is needed because some students may not fully understand about the topic being discussed or they may miss some topics. This kind of situation possibly happen since the class conducted online while the signal is not really stable and the utterances of the teacher cannot be heard as clear as in offline classroom. This, the code switching served its function as recapitulation.

The teachers have positive opinion toward code switching as language teaching strategy. The teacher used code switching to facilitate the students in their classroom interaction. They use code switching as efficient and time saving technique in teaching and learning language. The teacher saw code switching could be beneficial since there is no strict separation of mother tongue and second language in the EFL classroom. The use of code switching in online classroom really help the students understand the material better because students not always pay attention to the teacher explanation due to the lack of signal and audio that very influenced the class activities.

To explain the material, the code-switching was performed during the teaching and learning process. The teachers need to switch from L2 into L1 in order to help the students understand the material discussed better. The study from Suganda, et al., (2018) about teacher's code switching also support the idea that code switching can help the students and teacher to run the learning process smoothly. In this case, the students may seem confused about certain topic or word, so the teachers need to repeat the word or added some information related to the topic using L1.

The code switching gives positive impact in EFL online classroom. By performing code switching, students' engagement can be increased. Since the chance of students not to pay attention in teachers' explanation is higher in online classroom, the teachers need to make sure that the students follow the learning process well. The teacher can attract students' attention by talking in L1 when the students started to seem confused about the topic talked. Greggio & Gil (2007) revealed that in teaching process, code-switching can be performed in order to clarify the lesson taught. This is suitable for the EFL online



classroom since the students will understand the lesson better when they find difficulties in understanding certain topic.

The use of code-switching as teaching strategies in online classroom seemed give many advantages for both teachers and students. As teacher can clarify the lesson using L1, the students can get the information more clearly. In some case, the teacher has to explain some terms in L1 in order to added some information that can be receive by students better if delivered in their first language. The use of code-switching also shows their belonging. The teachers and students can get along well when they switch into L1 since the first language make the students feel comfortable and do not feel shy to express their ideas.

The finding of the current study revealed that the teacher performed both situational and metaphorical code-switching. So, it could be concluded that the code-switching is used in their teaching process. The teachers use code-switching when they added some information related to the topic discussed. The teacher also repeated some terms in L1 when the students can differentiate the meaning or can find the right answer of the task. After explained the lesson using L2, the teacher added summarize using L1 so the students can get the point of the lesson well.

Code-switching as teaching strategies is widely talked in several previous studies. It revealed that code-switching has several functions in teaching and learning process. The code-switching also takes a part in classroom management. Code-switching is used to discipline the students, direct or call the students, and ask students some favor. Sometimes the teachers have to call and repeat the instruction in L1 so the students be able to participate in the learning process. However, Adrios & Razi (2019) in their study of three universities in Libya stated that L2 must be the main language of instruction while L1 can be used but in limited purpose even though the teacher saw positive attitude toward code switching. Still, they realized the significance of code-switching performed by the teacher for some pedagogical and social functions. Code-switching was widely used in EFL classroom to help the students. The teacher belief that code-switching have the opportunity to help the teacher in delivering the material. By performed code-switching, students can be helped in encounter the obstacle during learning and teaching process.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the classroom observation and questionnaire, it could be stated that code-switching can be a powerful teaching strategy in EFL online classrooms. There are two types of code-switching performed by teacher, such as situational code-switching and metaphorical code-switching. By conducting situational and metaphorical code-switching, teacher can clarify complex content, reinforce key concepts, and create an engaging and

supportive learning environment. The use of first language (L1) enhanced comprehension and boosted confidence, particularly in an online setting where technical challenges often hinder active participation. Therefore, students felt more comfortable and easily engaged into discussion in classroom.

Finally, the result of this research may be underlying further research about the impact of code-switching across different proficiency levels or subject area among EFL. Besides, further researcher may also compare the effect of code-switching as instructional strategy in online setting and direct classroom environment. By enlarging the scope, it is hoped that longitudinal studies on the sustained impact of code-switching could be included. As the result, the study provides additional insights into its long-term benefits on language mastery and classroom engagement.

## References

- Adriosh, M., & Razi, Ö. (2019). Teacher's code switching in EFL undergraduate classrooms in Libya: Functions and perceptions. *SAGE Open*, 9(2).
- Argellan, S., Mohammed, L. A., & Krishnansamy, N. (2019). Code switching phenomenon in English language. *International Journal of Management and Human Science (IJMHS)*, 3(1).
- Atmojo, A. E. P., & Nugroho, A. (2020). EFL classes must go online! Teaching activities and challenges during COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *REGISTER JOURNAL*, 13(1), 49-76. <https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v13i1.49-76>
- Fareed, M., Humayuny, S., & Akhtarz, H. (2016). English language teachers' code switching in class: ESL learners' perception. *Journal of Education & Social Sciences*, 4(1).
- Latief, A. (2015). *Research methods on language learning: An introduction*. Malang: IKIP Malang.
- Leonak, S. P. P., & Amalo, B. K. (2018). Teacher's beliefs and perceptions of code switching in English as foreign language. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 42(00034). <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20184200034>
- Lin, A. M. Y. (2017). Code-switching in the classroom: Research paradigms and approaches. In K. King, Y.-J. Lai, & S. May (Eds.), *Research methods in language and education* (Encyclopedia of Language and Education, pp. 1-15). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02249-9\\_34](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02249-9_34)
- Mukti, T. W. P., & Muljani, R. (2016). Code switching in the instructions of English language education study. *LLT Journal*, 19(1).

- Nugroho, A., Ilmiani, D., & Rekha, A. (2014). EFL teachers' challenges and insights of online teaching amidst global pandemic. *Methasis: Journal of English Language Literature and Teaching*, 4(3), 277-291. <https://doi.org/10.31002/metathesis.v4i3.3195>
- Nurhamidah, Fauziati, E., & Supriyadi, S. (2018). Code switching in EFL classroom: Is it good or bad?. *Journal of English Education*, 3(2).
- Shartiely, N. E. (2016). Code-switching in university classroom interaction: A case study of the University of Dar es Salaam. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*, 49.
- Suganda, L. A., Loeneto, B. A., & Zuraida. (2018). Teachers' use of code switching in an English as foreign language context in Indonesia. *Script Journal: Journal of Linguistic and English Teaching*, 3(2).