

## EXPLORING THE TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCE IN USING CODE-SWITCHING WITHIN EFL SETTING IN WEST BORNEO

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### ABSTRACT

Exploring teacher experience in teaching English as a foreign language is always unique and challenging especially when it is seen as the perception of the native English teachers. The purpose of this research is to explore the native English teachers' lived experience towards their perceptions on using code-switching in teaching English to Indonesian students in West Borneo. The respective participants belong to non-profit organization focussing on English education. Obtaining the data, this study used open-ended questions and guided interview. This study reflects the usages and functions of code-switching. The usages of Code Switching are to speed up the explanation of difficult concepts, build rapport between students and teachers, help explain new vocabulary, and increase teachers' understanding towards students' L1, and become a tool to enhance the students' comprehension towards the lesson. While the linguistic function helps the teachers in two ways: first is to enhance the students' understanding of the target language and the second is to build rapport between students and teachers. The affective function is considered beneficial to arise students' motivation and willingness to study English.

**Keywords:** *native English teachers, teachers' perceptions, code-switching, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), lived experience.*

### INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, English turns into world Lingua Franca for people who do not use English as the first language. A great number of people have used English as Lingua Franca (ELF) for communication, as a result the role of ELF is more popular than native English among non-native speakers. ELF refers to communication which happens among people who have different first language (Groom, 2012). Nowadays, the use of ELF is more famous because it can unite many people who come from various backgrounds which their first languages are also different. So, in this context ELF becomes a bridge for non-native speakers to communicate with their interlocutors. This bridge is considered

necessary in term of practicing communication.

English as a foreign language (EFL) is one of trending research issues among researchers and scholars associated with the discipline of English (Alefesha & Al-Jamal, 2019). Regarding to classroom communication, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has its own challenges especially when the setting is in West Borneo. Teaching English to EFL students is quite challenging to be done by native teachers. This situation creates unusual classroom teaching. Moreover, English is considered as an alien language because of its difficulty and origin (Setyawan, 2019). Facing the students with low proficiency of language, communication gap between students and

teacher, and limited social support system in learning are the situation that the native teachers have to live with (Agung, 2019). Those complications make the EFL teaching complicated. Setyawan (2019) agrees that teaching EFL in West Borneo is a real challenge. Classroom communication between native English teachers and EFL students is rigorous when a language is the only tool to convey their ideas and feeling. The language classroom is a crucial venue for learners to practice interactive communication in the target language in nations and locations where English is learnt as a foreign language (EFL) (Peng and Woodrow, 2010). The complexity of teaching English in West Borneo is a huge marking for researchers and linguists which seems to be endless collection in EFL. Classroom communication relates to the practice of picking or remodeling linguistic elements.

Teaching is a circular cycle which makes the teachers shape their understanding (Setyawan, 2013). Understanding, according to Gardner in Weggins (1998), is a sufficient comprehension of concepts, principles, or skills that one applies in specific situations. This understanding is some kind of reflective awareness a teacher may possess. Having reflective awareness and immediate possessing of senses lead to objective in thought as lived experience (Manen, 1990). In line with it, past experience, such as comprehension, accumulates through time, teaches the native teachers lessons, and molds their response to the world (Bradley, 2002). Lived experience, according to Urban (2006), entails reflexive awareness and instantaneous possessing in some senses that have become objective in cognition; it does not confront as something experienced or represented. The experience of an object, event, or relationship obtained through collecting information and

interpreting messages is known as perception (Agung, 2020). In specific, Michotte (2017) describes perception as a phase of the overall action process that allows us to adapt our activities to the reality in which we live. Perception contributes to the importance of personal value. It perceives characteristic and even standard of applied action and quality.

Classroom communication emphasizes on communication between teachers and their students. A big gap may appear greater when a group of native English speakers have to teach a folk of EFL students. The gap crater gives a real challenge on conversation. They may have number of unfamiliar words during the tasks and activities. Therefore, code-switching is one of the alternatives that can be used to solve the problem. Reviewing to Saqib et al., (2021) code switching was widely used by ESL teachers in language classroom to facilitate learning for students. Nowadays, code switching becomes part of EFL which allows people to communicate well with their interlocutors (Pietikäinen, 2014). In code-switching there is a switch from one language to another language which involves two linguistics code and it involves more than one language or variety in conversation (Ansar, 2017). Code Switching is described as the skill of bilingual speakers that refers to the use of more than one language or variations in conversation. Sometimes bilingual speakers get into trouble when they have conversation with other bilinguals, so that they change their language from one language to another language in sentence construction to make the interlocutor understand.

Ferguson (2009) believes that code switching will enhance students' involvement in EFL class because they already know all the instructions and teaching and learning activities in which

they will survive. Code-switching will allow all speakers to get more involved in one particular discourse (Bhatti, Shamsudin, & Said, 2018). It indicates students content knowledge and skills will improve because they create a gap in a conversation. It will help the students understand complicated aspects of the lesson as well as enabling them to participate in lessons. Leoanak & Amalo (2018) state in teaching English as a foreign language, EFL teachers usually use code switching to facilitate teaching and learning among the students. Code Switching helps students who have low ability obtaining a better understanding and comprehension particularly when they have to do certain procedures (see Leoanak & Amalo, 2018). Code Switching is not the same as Code Mixing. Many people assume that both of the codes can be applied in the same context. Code switching is the mixture of words, phrase and sentence from two different grammatical system while Code Mixing is the embedding of several linguistics components such as morphemes, phrase, clause, etc (Dahmen, 2022; Fanani, 2018).

Suhardianto & Afriana (2022); (Bonyadi, Kalvanagh & Bonyadi, (2021); Ismail & Mahmud, (2021); state Code Switching is divided into three types namely tag switching, inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching. Tag switching refers to the insertion of a tag from one language to another language. The example of tag-switching is “*Wanita itu cantik, isn’t it?*” There is a tag word in English which is inserted into Bahasa sentence. Inter-sentential switching is switching between sentences, the switching is used at the boundary of a sentence at the beginning or end of a sentence. This switch is most commonly seen in fluent bilingual speakers. The example of Inter-sentential

switching “*tugas sekolahku sudah selesai, I’m going to play*”. Intra-Sentential Switching is switch that is done in the middle of a sentence without any hesitations and interruptions indicating a language shift for example “*pacar saya pasti tahu I love cat*”. The shift from Bahasa to English happens in a sentence.

This study is supported by several relevant research. The first study is conducted by Adrios and Razi (2019) “*Teacher’s Code Switching in EFL Undergraduate Classrooms in Libya: Functions and Perceptions*”. This study explores how EFL teachers facilitate the students in learning and teaching process. The result of this study shows students and teachers have positive attitudes toward code switching because they can use it as a tool to develop their pedagogical and social function. Students and teachers use L1 for clarification, repetition, recapitulation, and socialization. The second research is conducted by Kim (2015) “*The Use and Perception of Codeswitching among Teachers and Students*”. There result of the study shows the instructors and the students perceive that Code Switching is effective.

Based on the explanation above, the researchers is interested to explore the native English teachers’ perceptions on the use of Code-Switching in teaching ELF. To guide this study, the following is the research questions that has been formulated by the researchers: 1) How do native English teachers perceive the usage and function of Code Switching in teaching as a foreign language?

## **METHOD**

This qualitative study narrates the native English teachers’ lived experience on their perceptions toward code switching in EFL setting. Deveci & Onder (2013) state the objective of qualitative study is to

understand certain phenomena or behaviours revealed by human beings. The aim of this study is to understand EFL teachers' perception on Code Switching in teaching English as a foreign language. The researchers want to see teachers' views on the use and the function of code-switching as a method of developing content knowledge and English skills in EFL classroom. The data collection in this study was carried out by using purposive sampling technique. According to Etikan, Musa & Alkassim (2016) the purposeful selection of a participant based on their personal characteristics is known as the purposive sampling technique, also known as judgment sampling. Those whose characteristics are specified for a reason related to the study constitute a purposive sample (Andrade, 2021). It means the data is obtained by nonrandom technique. Consequently, the researchers obtained two participants based on the sampling technique. They are native English teachers belong to non-profit organization focussing on English education especially in speaking skills. In obtaining the data the researchers used open-ended questions and online-guided interview. The researchers created a number of questions pertaining to self-efficacy characteristics in order to address the research question. The questions were developed and modified using theories from Carless (2007); Cook (2001); Gort (2012); and Sampson (2012) related to the function of Code Switching.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Code Switching plays a fundamental role in communication especially in education field. Code Switching is commonly used by a teacher who has mastered two languages namely the students first language and the target language. In this study, the two native teachers who teach students at one campus in West Kalimantan do not master the

student's first language, they only speak English (the target language). It causes various obstacles during the language learning process. Even though the two native teachers experience difficulties in implementing Code Switching but they still find it useful to master the target language.

The findings in this study reveals various usages and functions of Code Switching. The following is a description of the native teachers' perceptions of the use and function of code switching in the West Kalimantan EFL class.

### **The use of students' L1 to facilitate the teaching and learning process**

The use of L1 in EFL class is still a debatable topic. At certain point of view, it provides a real exposure which close to students. The opponent may say that many people assume that students are able to master a target language effectively without L1. The exposure to L1 will interfere with the language target improvement because students still focus on using L1 (Islam, 2018; Kuo, Hou, & Hsieh, 2021). On the other side, L1 helps teacher facilitate students in the learning process. The class that uses both L1 and the target language assist students to follow up the lesson so that they have a better understanding. (Efendy, 2019; Patmasari, 2022; Alang, 2018).

Based on the interview conducted by the researchers, Mr. D prefers the positive impacts rather than the negative impacts of code switching in EFL class. She conveys the use of L1 can facilitate and increase the absorption of learning English. They consider the use of L1 in EFL classes as a solution to meet the needs and level of individual learning.

*"I use student's L1 for several reasons. 1) It speeds up the process of explaining new or difficult concepts. 2) It helps me build*

*comradery with my students. 3) It makes it easier to explain new vocabulary to beginners. 4) When the students use their L1, I'm able to understand. (I allow students to use their L1 when they are explaining concepts, brainstorming ideas, translating new vocabulary. But I require them to use English for all of their speaking practice)."*

Mrs. D describes there are three advantages of Code Switching. First, Code Switching speeds up the explanation of difficult concept. This statement is in tune with research which is conducted by Prodromou (2002). He explored three hundred Greek students' perceptions regarding to students' L1 at three levels namely beginner, intermediate and advanced. He discovered that students' L1 is used for explaining difficult concepts, checking students' comprehension, enhancing students' self-confidence, explaining language learning activities and checking the error analysis or the vocabularies. Second, the use of Code Switching can build solidarity between teacher and students. This finding is closely interlinked with Ahmad (2009) and Hamid (2016) where code switching is used among people from various or similar ethnic individuals in order to signal shared ethnicity as well as group membership among addressees. Third, Code Switching improve students understanding. This statement is in line with the research conducted by Zainil & Arsyad (2021). The result shows Code Switching plays a significant role to enhance students' comprehension towards the lesson. It indicates that Code Switching affects the target language learning. The last, Code Switching improves native teachers' comprehension of L1. Code Switching is not only useful for students but also for native teachers. It helps native teachers

explain and convey their knowledge in the classroom. In this context Code Switching becomes a learning strategy in order to increase students' skill in English.

Moreover, Mrs. C revealed that students' L1 can be a tool to evaluate students' comprehension and facilitate students in conducting discussions particularly for beginner learners.

*"Yes, I do. My students use L1 as a feasible learning strategy to clarify their comprehension of the learning content and as a tool for participating in class discussions especially for early-level learners."*

This finding also has a close relationship with previous research conducted by Upton and Lee-Thompson (2001). The finding shows that L1 is used as a strategy to increase L2 reading comprehension and facilitate their own understanding of a certain text. It means the usage of L1 can improve students' abilities, especially in comprehending learning aspect. Yavuz (2012) argues although teachers use students' L1 in EFL classes, teachers should be able to balance between the use of L1 and the target language efficiently. The frequent use of L1 influences the students' inability to speak English. However, although both of the teachers assume that using L1 help them in the teaching and learning process, but they still find challenges when using L1. Mrs. D admitted the biggest challenges that she finds in EFL classes, teachers are lack of proficiency on students' L1, and students are lack of attention when applying Code Switching.

*"The greatest challenge for me personally is that I am not fluent in my students' L1."*

*Another challenge is that sometimes my students don't listen as carefully to the English words when they know they will be restated in their L1"*

This finding indicates that both sides between students and teachers experience some difficulties during the learning process. It happens because both of participants are not from the same country as the students. So, the challenges they face are heavier. Further, students often underestimate the use of the target language because they know the native teachers will translate the English sentences to L1. This situation will make students lose their eagerness to learn the target language. Therefore, teachers must be able to balance the use of students L1 and the target language. Furthermore, Mrs. C also confessed the same opinion:

*"I have difficulty conveying the appropriate meaning of the words".*

In the previous studies conducted by Ferguson, (2009), he found that the use of L1 can help students and teachers to create an effective learning process. However, after interviewing my participants, they stated that they were not fluent in using students' L1 and it prevented them from helping students understand certain ideas or concepts. It indicates that EFL teachers' lack of fluency in speaking students' L1 is also one of the factors that affect students' ability to learn English.

### **The functions of code-switching in EFL classroom**

The researchers interviewed the participants about the function of code-switching in EFL classroom. This study found two functions namely linguistics and affective aspect. Hait (2014) & Waris (2012) argue the linguistic function of code-switching refers to students' knowledge or

the learning content. While the affective function of code-switching is more inclined to students' emotions.

In line with the previous actual conception, here are the three linguistic functions found in this study. Mrs. D conveys her argument that code-switching helps students to understand certain concepts and instructions during the learning process.

*"Yes, especially lower-level students because they often don't have enough understanding of the English language to grasp an explanation or understand instructions. So, in order to move forward with the practice, it's much more efficient to use their L1 to explain the concept."*

The statement above closely related to Muin's (2016) opinion who stated code-switching is used to minimize student confusion about certain concepts and it plays a role as a complement of each other (2011). Sa'd & Qadermazithe (2015) also expand the use of L1 can be beneficial for the clarification of instructions, lexical items and grammatical. Regarding the function of code-switching, the researcher explored deeper the perception of both participants, whether code-switching can reduce students' errors in learning English or not. Mrs. C argued that it depends on the aim of the learning.

*"It depends on what goal you are trying to achieve. Example if your goal is to teach fluency, it is not ideal to use code switching but if you're teaching understanding about a certain concept then code switching can be useful."*

Mati (2013); Ataş & Sağın-Şimşek (2021); Hafid & Margana (2022); Norzaidi, Sabri, Singh, Ramanlingam & Maniam (2022) have a similar point of view with the

statement above. He states code-switching can be used as a means and strategy to avoid student's misunderstandings and transfer the intended meaning. The tendency of using codeswitching depends on students' needs and purpose or intension. Clara (2007) conducted research related to the use of code-switching in the classroom. The results show that Code switching does not lead students to a confusion because most students have limited skill of English. On the other hand, she also stressed that teachers should not apply code-switching too often because it will bring a negative impact on students. Therefore, the use of code switching is only 15% and the use of English as the main language is 85%. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the function of code switching in linguistic aspect is as a means to develop students' understanding regarding to various concepts.

After exploring their perceptions about the linguistic function of code-switching, then the researchers continued to discuss the affective function. The researchers investigated whether code-switching increase students' motivation or not. Mrs. D argued:

*"Absolutely. When my students realize that I'm a language learner too, it breaks down barriers. I make mistakes using their L1, and this puts the students at ease when they make mistakes in English. They are more willing to try when they know that they are not alone in the language-learning process."*

The statements above have two main components, namely language learner and willingness. The argument suggests that feeling like they are not alone would boost students' willingness to study English. It means a teacher must be able to create a

comfortable situation in order to encourage students to be more motivated. Set up an ample environment is considered beneficial. Shvidko (2017) states if a teacher forces her/his students to speak English and applies "punishment system", it will affect their scores and characters. On the other side, Mrs. C has a different opinion, he believes that code-switching does not arise students' interest in learning English.

*"Not really, the interactive activities that encourage them to use English"*

Mrs. C explains that code-switching only takes a small role in influencing students' motivation. This finding is inversely proportional to a study which is conducted by Bensen & Cavusoglu (2013). He states code-switching can increase students' motivation during the learning process because it encourages students when they try to understand certain concepts. Code-switching leads them to participate more and thus students can attain better results. Based on the description above, the researchers concludes that code-switching function in affective aspect is able to improve students' motivation and willingness in learning English in order to reach the learning goals.

## **CONCLUSION**

Code Switching is usually used by teacher who have mastered two languages namely the students first language and the target language. However, in this research, the English teachers are real native English. They do not mastery their students first language. Somehow, the students acquire various local languages. Sometimes they do not share the same language among the students because of the differentiation of the local languages. This variation is the

legacy of their inherited language used by each sub-tribes.

Findings from this study reveal the usages and functions of L1 in EFL classes. Based on the interview, there are several usages of Code Switching namely to speed up the explanation of difficult concepts, build rapport between students and teachers, assist new vocabulary, and increase teachers' understanding towards students' L1, and become a tool to enhance evaluate students' comprehension on towards the lesson.

Moreover, the functions of Code Switching reflect two functions namely the linguistic and affective functions. Linguistic function helps the teachers in three ways: first is to enhance the students' understanding of the target language, the second is to decrease students misunderstanding, and the third is to improve students' motivation. The next function is affective function. Affective function enhances students' motivation and willingness in achieving better results of studying.

In this study, the researchers find there are many advantages found by researchers based on the teachers' perceptions but on the other hand the two native teachers also face a challenge when implementing Code Switching during the learning process. The native teachers do not master students' L1 which makes them difficult to convey certain intentions. Sometimes students also don't pay attention carefully to the English words when they know they will be restated in their L1. However, even though the found some trouble in using code-switching but they still assumed that code switching is beneficial for language learners and instructors.

In addition, the native teachers convey there are two important things that teachers need to remember. The first code-switching cannot be applied in all aspects of English

such as fluency. Code switching is actually a tool used by teachers to improve students' understanding of certain concepts. The second Code-Switching should not be implemented too often because it will bring a bad impact for students. Code-Switching make conversation chaotic, and it makes the students cannot speak the language well.

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