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A Narrative Study of Pre-Service English Teachers' Perspective on Code-Switching Activities in Their Speaking Class

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ABSTRACT

The majority of Indonesians can speak two or more languages. Code-switching is the practice of language changing or switching to another, which is highly widespread in bilingual and multilingual communities like Indonesia. Code-switching is a phenomenon that also happens throughout the teaching process in ELT classrooms. English is chosen as the medium of instruction in several contexts in Indonesia. One of the contexts is when pre-service English teachers use English as their primary language of teaching. The study aims to explore pre-service English teachers' perspectives on code-switching in their Speaking classes. The study was performed at the English Education Department in one of the state universities in Jember, Indonesia. An interview was utilized to generate the data. Three pre-service English teachers were voluntarily taken as the participants. The data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. There were three key perceptions identified from the participants' responses, namely positive attitude, negative attitude, and suggestion on code-switching implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian people are mostly capable of speaking two even more languages, namely Indonesian and vernacular language which becomes the first language for some groups of people (Setiawan, 2016). In bilingual and multilingual communities such as Indonesia, it is common for the speakers to switch their language to another language. This phenomenon is known as code-switching. According to Grant and Nguyen (2017), code-switching is defined as the alternation between the speaker's first language (L1) and the speaker's target language (TL). Code-switching is also defined as the use of different languages within a speech exchange (Harjunpaa & Makilahde, 2016).

The phenomenon of code-switching also occurs in the instructional process at the ELT classroom. The students or the teachers sometimes have difficulties finding a term, phrase, or sentence with the same or closest meaning in the target language when speaking. Consequently, altering their code (language) in their native language is the solution. The pre-service English teachers are encouraged to communicate in English totally in

speaking class. This demand might be hard for those who are non-native English speakers. The speakers might have anxiety when speaking on the stage. According to Horwitz (2008), as cited in Gan (2013), anxiety is the most common challenge in speaking a second language. By having anxiety, the students who are non-native English speakers will experience a lack of confidence that affects their performance. As Pitura (2021) remarked, the speakers would feel overwhelmed by the audience's attention, consequently, speaking class would be a very stressful subject. As Lee (2016) said, compared to native English-speaking teachers, non-native ones are valued low on fluency and pronunciation in speaking. This might make them unconfident.

In the context of language subjects, the language itself becomes the medium of learning and also the object of learning (Then & Ting, 2011) as what usually occurs in Indonesian contexts. In Indonesia, English is selected as the medium of instruction in several contexts. English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is the use of English to teach academic subjects where the first language (L1) of

the majority of the population is not English (Khasbani, 2019). One of the contexts is when English is used as the medium of instruction in the English Education Department usually called pre-service English teacher education. Sagala & Rezeki (2018) found that code-switching occurred in the Indonesian instructional process when having a proposal seminar. The grammatical code-switching included was in the form of noun phrases, negative sentences, language similarity, etc.

The study conducted by Buoy and Nicoladis (2018) that compared two French-English bilingual groups found that the Québécois who uphold linguistic purism of French have negative attitudes towards code-switching, while the Albertans who mostly speak English in family and schooling contexts show more positive attitudes towards code-switching. In Sri Lanka where the people speak three languages (i.e., Sinhala, Tamil, and English).

In examining code-switching, Gauci and Grima (2013) reported that code-switching was also applied by the teachers in Malta. In teaching Italian to Maltese students, the teachers sometimes altered their code into their first language to provide efficient explanations. In Vietnam, Tien (2016) found that some factors affecting the use of code-switching include the time budget of English class, the student's English level, and culture. Code-switching was used to check the student's second language (L2) comprehension and to facilitate the communication between the teacher and the students more efficiently. Nukuto (2017) supported this finding by stating that Japanese EFL classes also changed their target language into their L1 to help the students' lack of English ability. One of the studies was conducted by Chen and Hird (2016) in China which focused on the code-switching that occurred in group work. The students tend to apply code-switching in their discussion. The existing studies about code-switching in Indonesia (Luciana, 2006; Setiawan, 2016) specified their research in a social context rather than an educational context.

Based on the previous studies, the research examining pre-service English teachers' perspectives on code-switching in speaking classes in an Indonesian context has not been reported yet. To fill the gap, the present study focused on investigating pre-service English teachers' perspectives on code-switching in their speaking classes.

METHODS

The study performed a narrative inquiry. The participants' story is the foremost idea in a narrative inquiry that then provides the meaning of how the participants construct their experience of certain cases (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007). Narrative inquiry focuses on the way of thinking about one's experiences as a story (Clandinin & Connelly as cited in Schaefer (2016).

The study was conducted at the English Education Department in one of the state universities in Jember, East Java, Indonesia. I performed both narrative and semi-structured interviews to generate the data. The research interview helps explore someone's experiences or views on certain matters (Gill et al., 2008; Grillia & Daskolia, 2023). The data collected from the interview are the words that are recorded, transcribed, and then analyzed (Andrews, 2021). The narrative interview was conducted first and then followed by a semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview was conducted to answer some important questions that were not answered or told in a narrative interview.

Before doing the interview, I took a video documentary in speaking class, I also took notes on some important points dealing with code-switching occurrences. I did so to make sure that the participants really experienced the phenomenon of code-switching in their speaking class. The participants involved in this study were three pre-service English teachers. There were two female students and one male student.

The data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which is described as a method of data analysis that consists of identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within data. This kind of data analysis method is often used to process qualitative research data. The stages of doing Thematic Analysis are familiarizing researchers with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Having performed the data generation and analysis, I found several data extracts from the participants' stories. The most representative data extracts from the participant's responses are presented in each theme. Concerning the

participants' anonymity, the pre-service English teachers' pseudonyms are written in brackets after every quotation in this report. They are respectively written in the following sections.

Positive Attitude towards Code-switching in Speaking Class

Two out of three participants perceived that the practice of code-switching in their speaking class really helped them. This certainly assisted them in understanding more of the material elaborated. This is indicated by their statement during the interview:

Excerpt 1: Then the lecturer re-explained it in the Indonesian language, so I sometimes understood it better and I learned from it. When we guessed the meaning of a vocabulary, then it was re-explained in Indonesian, and I could see what I thought was right (Dania, interview).

Excerpt 2: Yes, it helps. For example, when we looked confused while the difficult material or task was explained, the lecturer immediately re-explained it in Indonesian (Nayla, interview).

The first statement above denotes that code-switching in speaking class for certain circumstances is helpful to confirm her understanding of the lecturer's utterance (Temesgen & Hailu, 2022). Excerpt 2 also shows that a code-switch is used to ease someone's transfer of a bit of complicated expression or material (Narayan, 2023). In this term, code-switching is useful to clarify the meaning of some points being explained (Abeywickrama, 2008; Adriosh, 2019). She feels more confident and satisfied with the explanation in Indonesian because she can make sure that her understanding is correct. This kind of explanatory translation is considered a strategy (Raschka et al., 2009) in the early stages of learning a foreign language to compensate the students for a lack of competence in the L2 (Gutiérrez, 2018). The interview result also shows how code-switch functions to navigate diverse linguistic and cultural contexts (Zakiyah, 2023).

The two participants also stated their support of applying code-switching in speaking class. A particular circumstance such as making a joke was considered appropriate to be spoken in the L1 which is Indonesian to build a comfortable and supportive atmosphere in the classroom. This notion was supported by the interview as follows.

Excerpt 1: Usually, the class also needs humor. Sometimes if the jokes were spoken in English, some people would not get it, so the jokes were usually spoken in Indonesian. It is not comfortable if the class is too tense (Dania, interview).

Excerpt 2: To be honest, I prefer the class with a bit of code-switching in order not to look as serious as the previous semester did. There was no joke, directly to the point (Nayla, interview)

All of the participants prefer to have a class atmosphere with little jokes. The jokes might reduce the tension in the learning process, specifically in speaking class in which the students often feel anxious. The sense of the joke is certainly different if it is delivered in the student's L2. This is due to the different cultures and sense of humor in each language. The use of code-switching for humorous purposes was also applied in this research which is in line with Cahyani et al., (2016) study that code-switching for humorous purposes is one of the ways to construct interpersonal relations between the teacher and the students.

Negative Attitude towards Code-switching in Speaking Class

One of the participants had a slightly different perspective from the other two participants. He did not really agree with the practice of code-switching in speaking class since it should be the students' chance to practice and speak totally in English. He also explained that he never did code-switching during the speaking class because he had been experiencing English speaking when he was at his senior high school. He was confident with his speaking ability.

Excerpt 1: But based on my own experience, code-switching should not be applied in speaking class. Why? Because in speaking class, that is our chance to speak up in front of our friends, even our lecturer. I think that practicing English is not only about how we use grammatical correctly. So, in speaking class, whatever you speak, using past tense, future past, or future continuous, the thing is how we can catch the meaning (Sammy, interview).

Excerpt 2: In my own experience, I have never applied code-switching, but I did not do it because of a bad purpose. I indeed believe that I have to get something in this study program. Before I got admitted to the English department, I studied in a school or a boarding house for three years. So, I am

confident in speaking up fully in English (Sammy, interview).

The negative attitude towards code-switching in speaking class perceived by one participant is affected by his background which is from the Islamic boarding house applying English conversation in daily life. He was accustomed to speaking English only at that time. Thus, he did not feel it hard to speak English when he became a student of the English department. His background in an Islamic boarding school which influences his attitude is related to Bokhorst-heng & Caleon (2009) study examining the multi-ethnic society's attitude towards code-switching influenced by socio-economic status (SES). Those in the middle and high SES perceived code-switching negatively and tended to use English rather than mixing. In relation to the current study, the participant having a background from Islamic boarding school and applying English in daily life is considered from the middle or high SES. Thus, he perceived code-switching in speaking class negatively. It is supported by Yim and Clément (2021) that code-switching is not without social correlates.

The factor of having a negative attitude in this study is slightly distinct from what had been stated by Buoy and Nicoladis (2018) in their study. The negative attitude that their participants had was caused by the belief in the linguistic purism of their L1. The current study performed the reverse in which the negative attitude stated by the participant is caused by the motivation to have more consistency in speaking the target language or L2 especially. He believed that speaking English only is the responsibility of everyone involved in the English department who is also automatically a pre-service English teacher.

Suggestion on Code-switching Implementation

Although the participants had different perceptions or attitudes towards the practice of code-switching in speaking class, two of them gave several suggestions dealing with the implementation of code-switching in speaking class. The suggestions will be presented in this part which are quoted from the participants' responses as follows.

Excerpt 1: I think the use of code-switching should be about twenty percent, no more than that. Code-switching should be applied to beginners (Sammy, interview).

Excerpt 2: So code-switching should be implemented in the first three months of our lecture. (Sammy, interview).

Excerpt 3: So, it matters on the system of choosing lecturers about who should teach in that semester. So, code-switching can be utilized well (Sammy, interview).

Excerpt 4: But if later the last year students whose English ability is good or at a high level, the lecturers can reduce the frequency of code-switching (Dania, interview).

The first participant had a negative attitude towards code-switching. However, he realized that code-switching is actually an unavoidable phenomenon in the environment of multilingual groups such as in his speaking class. In addition, some of his friends in that class had diverse backgrounds in which they might need code-switching to help them. It is also quite impossible to use English only in an ELT classroom where the teacher and the students have the same L1 (Raschka et al., 2009). In that class, both the lecturer and the students have the same first language. Some of their first languages are vernacular languages, the others are Indonesian language. Thus, on several occasions, the lecturer sometimes switched their code to Javanese.

Regardless of the negative attitude the participant stated, he also gave suggestions as the alternatives to apply code-switching in speaking class. The suggestion is to deal with the frequency, the target students, and the system. As Grant and Nguyen (2017) said, code-switching can be an effective strategy in learning a foreign language if it is applied concerning its frequency. The participant mentioned twenty percent as the ideal percentage of frequency of code-switching practice in his speaking class.

Then the suggestion dealing with the target student or the object of code-switching stated by the participants is in line with Gutiérrez (2018) belief that code-switching is utilized in the early stage of ELT classes. The early stage in this case means the early semester which is approximately from the first to the third semester in which the students are considered to lack knowledge in L2 compared to the higher semester students. Thus the participants approved that the use of code-switching in the high semester class should be reduced because the

students' competencies are sufficient to speak and listen to English totally.

One suggestion dealing with the system or policy made by the head of a study program is also considerable. The head of a study program is considered aware of each lecturer's teaching style, particularly those who frequently apply code-switching in speaking class. The policy regarding lecturer distribution in speaking classes in different semesters was perceived by the participants as one of the strategies to implement code-switching properly.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the practice of code-switching in speaking class was perceived differently based on the participants' background and motivation in the related competency. The perceptions were positive attitude towards code-switching in speaking class, negative attitude towards code-switching in speaking class, and suggestions on code-switching implementation. Although the participant stated a negative attitude, he continued giving suggestions on the application of code-switching because however, he realized that code-switching is needed by the pre-service English teachers in speaking classes in the early semesters. Another participant perceiving code-switching positively also gave suggestions to apply code-switching more effectively. In essence, code-switching can be applied with sufficient proportion in several contexts of speaking class. Code-switching implementation in a speaking class is incorporated with the policy of the stakeholder.

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