

THE USE OF CODE-SWITCHING BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' IN ENGLISH SPEAKING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of code-switching in English speaking classrooms within a rural bilingual secondary school context in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. While previous research on code-switching has predominantly focused on teachers' practices or urban learning environments, limited attention has been given to students' perspectives and the underlying factors influencing their language choices in rural settings. To address this gap, the present study employed a descriptive qualitative design, using in-depth interviews to explore the factors affecting students' use of code-switching and their perceptions of its functions in speaking activities. The findings indicate that students' code-switching is shaped by situational demands, linguistic competence constraints, and social considerations. Furthermore, students perceive code-switching as serving essential communicative, cognitive, and social functions, enabling them to maintain interaction, compensate for vocabulary limitations, and reduce anxiety during oral communication. The results also reveal that code-switching contributes positively to students' motivation, engagement, and confidence in speaking English. Overall, this study argues that code-switching should not be viewed as a linguistic deficiency but as a strategic pedagogical resource that reflects learners' needs and supports effective English speaking instruction, particularly in rural bilingual classroom contexts.

Keywords: *Code-Switching, Bilingualism, Speaking, Student Perception.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a way for people to communicate. It connects individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and regions. English is recognized as a global lingua franca, widely used across education, business, and multicultural communication contexts (Alam, 2023). One of the hardest parts is learning to speak, mainly due to limited exposure to the language outside the classroom. Learners' first language (L1) frequently influences their speaking performance, particularly through reliance on code-switching and native-language structures when lexical or grammatical gaps occur (Fuente & Goldenberg, 2020). These challenges are more pronounced in rural secondary school contexts, where access to English input and interaction is considerably limited. This is especially true in rural secondary schools, where students are at a key stage in their language development but often feel anxious or hesitant when speaking English.

Consequently, code-switching emerges as a recurring linguistic practice in English classrooms, referring to the alternation between two or more languages during instructional interaction. According to Almagableh & Yunus (2022), code-switching is a method often used by teachers during instruction. It involves shifting from English to Indonesian or the other way around and sometimes includes local dialects, which can improve students' understanding. enhance students' comprehension by reducing cognitive overload and facilitating clearer meaning-making processes. In bilingual classrooms, this technique serves several purposes, such as making complex ideas clearer, keeping students engaged, and addressing knowledge gaps. Previous studies explain that teachers' strategic alternation between the target language and students' first language enables learners to anchor new information to existing linguistic schemas, thereby supporting deeper understanding and more effective knowledge transfer (Khosa, M & Zitha, 2024). For instance, a

teacher might use Indonesian to explain a difficult grammar rule and then switch to English to show how it is used.

Students might also rely on their native language to ask questions or express ideas that they find hard to communicate in English. While the benefits of code-switching are clear, its use in language teaching still sparks debate among educators and researchers. Supporters of the monolingual approach, as argued by Achieng (2023) claim that the most effective approach to teaching English is to conduct instruction entirely in English, limiting the use of students' first language in order to maximize learning outcomes. On the other hand, advocates of code-switching, as stated by Altun (2021), emphasize that teachers use code-switching in second language instruction to maintain conversation flow, encourage focus and involvement, and strengthen social bonds between teachers and students. Therefore, the discussion highlights the need for a customized approach that considers the specific needs of students and the learning environment.

The use of code-switching often occurs in bilingual classrooms. According to Kumari (2024) , code-switching can also be found in classroom settings, particularly in classes with bilingual or multilingual speakers, like those for second language (L2) learners. In bilingual classrooms, especially in rural areas, code-switching frequently happens as students and teachers move between their first language (L1) and the second language (L2). Many practices naturally emerge in environments where learners possess limited exposure to English and require linguistic support to comprehend instructional content (Richards, J & Pun, 2021). In this situation, educators face the challenge of providing full exposure to English while making sure students understand the lesson. A teacher might explain grammar in Indonesian to help students grasp the concept, then continue with the discussion or illustration in English.

In rural secondary schools, students' reliance on code-switching is influenced by both internal and external factors. According to Gil & Gaspar (2022), code-switching can happen in learning because of internal and external influences. Students' reliance on their first language stems from both internal and external factors. As a result, code-switching becomes a strategic tool to bridge comprehension gaps and sustain classroom interaction. Preliminary classroom observations also reveal frequent alternation between English and Indonesian, particularly when students experience difficulty understanding instructions or expressing ideas. This indicates that code-switching functions as a purposeful communicative strategy rather than random language mixing.

Although numerous studies have examined code-switching in bilingual classrooms, most research has focused primarily on teachers' instructional practices and has largely been conducted in urban or well-resourced settings. Limited attention has been given to students' own perspectives, especially in rural secondary schools where English exposure is minimal. Moreover, existing studies tend to debate the effectiveness of code-switching rather than explore the factors that influence students' use of code-switching and how learners themselves perceive its functions in supporting speaking performance. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the factors influencing students' use of code-switching and their perceptions of its role in enhancing English-speaking performance in bilingual classrooms. By foregrounding learners' voices in a rural context, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to code-switching research, pedagogically to more responsive English teaching practices, and practically to the development of context-appropriate language instruction.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the phenomenon of code-switching in English-speaking classes at a rural secondary school. The qualitative design was chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of how and why students used code-switching and how they perceived its functions in communication. According to Thorne & Elizabeth (2025), the qualitative approach is often more important when there isn't much information about a subject. This design enabled the researcher to capture students' personal perspectives and interpretations that quantitative methods could not fully represent.

The aim of this study, entitled "The Use of Code-Switching by Secondary School Students' in English Speaking Class" focused on identifying the use of code-switching among secondary school students in Sidoarjo. The research was grounded in the theory of code-switching within the qualitative paradigm. Specifically, the researcher examined both the affecting factors that led students to switch codes and the perceived functions of doing so. It was anticipated that by understanding these aspects, students would be better equipped to overcome limitations in vocabulary and build greater confidence in their English-speaking abilities.

The research was conducted at a private rural secondary school located on Jl. Kajar, Kedungcangkring, Jabon, Sidoarjo, East Java. Data collection took place between March and May 2025. After obtaining permission from the school on March 15, the researcher conducted interviews with students from April 10 to 24 and carried out validation sessions with teachers and students on April 25. The final data analysis was completed from April 26 to May 5, 2025.

The data consisted of students' instances of code-switching during English-speaking activities and their explanations regarding the reasons and functions behind it. It required an explanation of its deeper meanings and understandings through the personal views of the respondents (Mahat-shamir et al., 2021). According to Lim

(2024), this is often to comprehend the specific circumstances, issues, and situations in order to clarify why things take place in the context of the research being conducted.

This study involved 27 eighth-grade students from a private rural secondary school in Sidoarjo, East Java. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on those who frequently engaged in code-switching during English-speaking activities. This criterion was established through preliminary classroom observations that revealed frequent alternation between English and Indonesian among both teachers and students. Focusing on active code-switchers provided rich qualitative insights into the linguistic and social dynamics of the classroom.

As with any type of research, the appropriate design and methods depended on the research questions. For the research questions in this study, one-on-one interviews were used to understand participants' views. Additionally, other methods based on observation or analysis of writings or media may also be valuable, as discussed below (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). Data collection procedures in this study involved direct interviews with teachers and students at SMP Avisena Jabon.

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed before analysis. According to Thorne & Elizabeth (2025), collecting data through interviews is common in many qualitative studies. Interviews Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences freely while maintaining focus on the research objectives. The interview protocol included 18 open-ended questions addressing two key aspects: (1) factors influencing students' use of code-switching, and (2) their perceptions of its communicative, cognitive, and social functions. Example items included: *"In what situations do you usually use code-switching when speaking English?"* and *"Do you think switching languages helps you feel more confident when speaking?"* Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and comfort, recorded, and later transcribed

verbatim. Selected responses were translated into English for reporting, while original transcripts were retained to preserve authenticity.

At this stage, the researcher drew triangulation from the data that had been analyzed and verified for validity. This process involved interpreting the data and linking it to supporting theories, such as the theory proposed by Carol Myers-Scotton (1993) as cited in Zuhra et al. (2024) and Apple and Muysken (1987) as cited in Utami (2019). Triangulation techniques appeared in articles that met strict peer review standards in the author's fields (Natow, 2020). To ensure validity, the researcher applied triangulation by integrating the perspectives of the researcher, teacher, and students. Students provided primary data through interviews, while teachers validated classroom observations and student behaviors. Participant checking was conducted to confirm that interpretations accurately reflected students' views. The research instruments—including interview guides and observation sheets—were reviewed and refined before use. This multi-perspective triangulation minimized bias, enhanced reliability, and ensured the trustworthiness of findings.

In this section, triangulation framing was presented to support the validity of the research data.



Figure 3 1 Tringualtion

In this study, triangulation took place through the connected roles of the researcher, teacher, and students. The students served as the primary source of data, mainly through interviews that examined their perceptions and experiences. The researcher's role was to collect and analyze these responses while ensuring the data remained accurate and consistent. The teacher added value by offering contextual insights and checking whether the students' answers aligned with their behavior and performance in the classroom. This triangulation process improved the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings, as the data were verified from different angles.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This section presents the key findings of the study together with relevant analysis. The research explored the causes and functions of code-switching among eighth-grade students in English classes through semi-structured interviews. Eighteen guiding questions were designed to examine students' perspectives on the factors influencing their code-switching behavior and the perceived functions of this practice. The interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure clarity and comfort, and selected excerpts were translated into English for presentation. Data from 27 students formed the basis for the following thematic analysis.

1. Factors Influencing Code-Switching

Based on Myers-Scotton's (1993) framework, three main factors were identified: situational, linguistic competence, and social factors.

a. Situational Factors

Students often switched between English and Bahasa Indonesia in specific classroom contexts, especially during presentations and question-and-answer activities. Twenty-two students reported code-switching to maintain fluency during such interactions, while five admitted doing so when they forgot certain vocabulary

items. One participant shared, “I use Bahasa Indonesia when I forget English words during presentation” (Student 4), and another added, “Our teacher allows us to mix languages, so I feel more confident speaking” (Student 9). These examples illustrate that situational demands, rather than random choices, triggered code-switching in formal and informal academic exchanges.

b. Linguistic Competence Factors

Linguistic limitations also emerged as a significant cause of code-switching. Twenty-six students mentioned gaps in vocabulary or grammar that led them to mix languages. For example, one student remarked, “This simple past tense kan, sir?” (Student 7), while another said, “There is noda on your face” (Student 12). Such intra-sentential switching occurred naturally when students encountered lexical or structural gaps, helping them continue communication without interruption. Most participants considered this practice an intuitive way to sustain conversation and avoid hesitation.

c. Social Factors

Social comfort and peer interaction were also identified as strong motivators. Twenty-one students reported feeling more relaxed and confident when mixing languages with classmates or teachers. One participant stated, “I feel more relaxed using both languages with my friends” (Student 2), and another commented, “Code-switching makes me brave to speak English” (Student 11). These findings show that code-switching is not only a linguistic choice but also a social behavior that enhances inclusion and reduces anxiety.

2. Students’ Perceptions of the Functions of Code-Switching

Students’ perceptions of the functions of code-switching were categorized according to Appel and Muysken’s (1987) typology: communicative, cognitive, and social.

a. Communicative Function

Students reported that switching helped them understand instructions and express ideas clearly. “When my teacher uses both languages, I understand better and feel relaxed to answer,” explained one learner (Student 5).

b. Cognitive Function

Students used both languages to process and retain new information. One remarked, “It’s easier to remember when the meaning is also explained in my language” (Student 18).

c. Social Function

Code-switching created a friendlier learning atmosphere and built rapport between students and teachers. As one student put it, “Mixing languages makes the class friendlier and less scary” (Student 21).

Discussion

The findings show that code-switching is not merely a backup strategy; it is a deliberate linguistic tool. The three identified Affecting factors highlight students' genuine need for effective communication. In this section, the researcher explained all the data gathered in the classroom by Carol Myers-Scotton regarding the Affecting factors of code-switching and students' views on the functions of code-switching as discussed by Apple and Muysken.

1. Affecting factors of Code-Switching Found in English Speaking Class

The finding showed all the affecting factors of code-switching proposed by Carol Myers-Scotton simply occurred in the classroom.

a. Situational Factor

The presence of situational factors highlights that classroom context significantly shapes students' language behavior. Students switched languages when formality, topic, or participant roles demanded immediate comprehension or fluency. This finding corresponds with Suhardianto & Afriana (2022), who emphasize that

environmental and interpersonal dynamics influence bilingual speakers' code selection. The teacher's supportive stance also encouraged flexible communication, confirming that pedagogical tolerance fosters linguistic confidence and engagement.

b. Linguistics Competence

the study found that limited vocabulary and grammar triggered code-switching as a compensatory strategy. Students inserted Indonesian words into English sentences to maintain fluency—an example of intra-sentential switching described by Afifah et al. (2020). This linguistic flexibility allowed them to continue speaking without losing meaning, illustrating that code-switching functions as a communicative bridge. These behaviors support Panhwar & Buriro (2020), who interpret code-switching as a socially motivated and cognitively efficient adaptation rather than linguistic failure.

c. Social Factor

Social factors also played a major role. Students' comfort in using both languages among peers reflects the social motivation described by Villaabrille et al. (2024), where code-switching strengthens group identity and emotional security. The bilingual classroom thus becomes a social space where linguistic boundaries are softened, promoting inclusivity and cooperative learning.

2. Students' Perceptions of the Functions of Code-Switching

The result showed all students' perceptions of the functions of code-switching by Apple and Muysken.

a. Communicative Function

The cognitive function further shows how switching facilitates mental processing and retention. By using their first language to interpret

or confirm meaning, students activate deeper learning pathways. This confirms Appel & Muysken’s (1987) argument that code-switching assists conceptual linking between languages, reinforcing comprehension and memory.

b. Cognitive Function

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c. Social Function

The social function highlights the emotional and relational dimensions of language learning. This aligns with Panhwar & Buriro (2020), who explain that language mixing promotes social bonding and reduces affective barriers in bilingual education. Students felt valued and supported when teachers used code-switching, creating a classroom environment of empathy and collaboration.

3. Summary Table

Tabel 4 1 Summary Table

| Factor/Function | Frequency (Out of 27) | Finding Description |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Situational Factor | 22 | Used code-switching during questions-answers or presentation |
| Linguistics Competence | 25 | Lexical gaps in vocabulary or grammar. |
| Social Factor | 21 | Comfortable and Fluency when talking to each other. |

| | | |
|------------------------|----|--|
| Communicative Function | 24 | Students greater confidence when teacher code-switches |
| Cognitive Function | 27 | Students better understanding of difficult material or term. |
| Social Function | 25 | To increased relationships and relaxed classroom situation. |

The study revealed that students’ use of code-switching in English-speaking activities was influenced by situational, linguistic, and social factors. Most students switched languages during presentations or question-and-answer sessions due to limited vocabulary or grammar knowledge. Social comfort also encouraged bilingual interaction. Functionally, code-switching served communicative, cognitive, and social purposes helping students understand lessons, gain confidence, and foster positive classroom relationships. Overall, both internal and external factors shaped students’ language choices, suggesting that controlled code-switching supports effective learning in bilingual classrooms, particularly in rural settings.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study concludes that secondary school students use code-switching in English-speaking classes due to three main factors identified by Myers-Scotton (1993): situational, linguistic competence, and social factors. Situational factors involve spontaneous classroom interactions like presentations or Q&A sessions; linguistic competence relates to limited vocabulary or grammar knowledge, leading students to rely on their first language to maintain fluency; and social factors reflect students’ need for comfort and inclusion, creating a supportive learning environment.

In terms of function, as proposed by Appel and Muysken (1987), code-switching serves communicative, cognitive, and social functions. It enhances understanding and confidence, aids in processing and retaining information, and

strengthens classroom relationships. Code-switching is therefore viewed not as linguistic weakness but as a strategic and adaptive learning tool.

The study recommends that teachers use code-switching selectively to support comprehension, students speak confidently while using their first language strategically, and future researchers explore code-switching across different school contexts to expand understanding of its pedagogical value in bilingual classrooms.

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