

Beyond English and Bahasa: Exploring the Pedagogical Functions of Code-Switching in Multilingual EFL Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages, is a prevalent yet underexplored phenomenon in multilingual EFL classrooms in Indonesia. This study investigates the functional roles of code-switching employed by English teachers at SMAN 1 Rambah, emphasizing its pedagogical and managerial contributions. Addressing gaps in prior research, which primarily focus on English and Bahasa Indonesia, this study uniquely incorporates the role of local languages such as Mandailing and Malay. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, video recordings, and semi-structured interviews with two experienced English teachers. The analysis revealed five key functions of code-switching: explaining complex concepts, translating vocabulary, repeating for reinforcement, checking comprehension, and managing classroom interactions. These functions significantly enhance students' understanding, engagement, and overall learning experiences. However, excessive reliance on code-switching may impede immersive English language practice, presenting a pedagogical challenge. The findings underscore the importance of balancing code-switching with English immersion to optimize learning outcomes. This study extends the theoretical discourse on multilingual pedagogy by highlighting the strategic integration of local languages into EFL teaching. Implications include fostering a more inclusive and culturally responsive language education framework, which accommodates linguistic diversity while promoting English proficiency. These insights contribute to the global discourse on multilingual education, particularly in settings where linguistic and cultural diversity intersects with educational objectives.

1. Introduction

Language plays a pivotal role in education, serving as both a medium of instruction and a tool for fostering understanding. In multilingual countries like Indonesia, where a rich tapestry of local languages coexists with the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, the teaching of English as a foreign language presents unique challenges and opportunities. The Indonesian educational landscape is characterized by significant linguistic diversity, with over 700 local languages spoken across the archipelago, which influences the pedagogical approaches to English language instruction (Nugraheni, 2023). This multilingual context necessitates careful consideration of language policy and educational practices that can accommodate both local languages and English, fostering an inclusive learning environment that respects linguistic diversity (Mitchell, 2022).

The status of English in Indonesia, though globally significant, presents unique challenges due to the prominence of local languages that shape cultural identity and educational practices. As a compulsory subject in junior high schools, English language teaching (ELT) necessitates enhanced pedagogical competencies from educators to address the complexities of teaching in a linguistically diverse environment (Mubarok & Sofiana, 2022). The integration of Bahasa Indonesia (L1) in English classrooms has been widely debated, with some educators highlighting its role in aiding comprehension and improving students' language skills (Saputra & Asirah, 2022). Research supports this perspective, indicating that L1 serves as a valuable tool for facilitating deeper understanding of English (Madani, 2023).

However, balancing L1 usage with direct English engagement remains a challenge, particularly in contexts like pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), where English is often perceived as lacking practical relevance and culturally appropriate materials are limited, further complicating the learning process (Madkur, 2024). Recent studies advocate for adapting ELT methodologies to align with the principles of English as an International Language (EIL), emphasizing communicative and contextually relevant approaches over traditional grammar-focused instruction (Sitoresmi & Damayanti, 2022; Ilmudinulloh et al., 2022). Innovative teaching methods, such as genre-based and process approaches, have demonstrated effectiveness in improving students' writing skills, underscoring the importance of tailoring strategies to the needs of learners in Indonesia's unique cultural and linguistic landscape (Utami, 2023; Wicaksono et al., 2022).

The inclusion of English in Indonesia's national curriculum underscores its significance as a gateway to global opportunities, reflecting a broader recognition of its role in economic advancement and international engagement, particularly within the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018). Government regulations, such as Permendikbud No. 68 (2013) and Permendikbud No. 69 (2013), mandate English as a compulsory subject from junior high school. However, despite its formal curricular presence, English is often confined to academic settings, treated as a subject rather than a practical tool for real-world communication (Mubarok & Sofiana, 2022). This disconnect highlights a significant gap between the educational objectives of English language teaching (ELT) and students' actual linguistic realities, where Bahasa Indonesia and local languages continue to dominate daily interactions (Sibarani, 2019).

The challenges of teaching English in Indonesia are multifaceted, influenced by factors such as large class sizes, limited teacher proficiency in English, and constrained instructional time (Copland et al., 2013). Pedagogical approaches often fail to address students' communicative needs, resulting in learners excelling in reading and writing while struggling with speaking and listening in practical contexts (Sitoresmi & Damayanti, 2022). Traditional methods that prioritize grammar and vocabulary over communicative competence further exacerbate this issue, leaving students ill-equipped to use English in real-life scenarios, diminishing the relevance of their English education (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018).

The integration of local languages in the English classroom presents both opportunities and challenges. Research indicates that students perceive the use of their first language as a helpful tool for understanding complex English concepts and instructions (Sibarani, 2019). Code-switching, when used judiciously, can enhance comprehension and foster an inclusive learning environment. However, it also raises concerns

about the effectiveness of English immersion strategies that overlook students' linguistic backgrounds (Pardede, 2018). A more integrated approach that combines English instruction with an acknowledgment of local linguistic realities is critical for fostering genuine communicative competence (Madya, 2007).

A growing body of research explores strategies to bridge this gap, with code-switching emerging as a prominent pedagogical tool. Code-switching, the alternation between two or more languages within a conversation (Kristian Florenzio et al., 2020), has been widely observed in EFL classrooms. Studies by Grant and Nguyen (2017), Zainil and Arsyad (2021), and Murtiningsih et al. (2022) have demonstrated that this strategy helps students comprehend challenging materials, reduces anxiety, and fosters active participation. Teachers often switch between English and Bahasa Indonesia to clarify concepts, explain vocabulary, and ensure understanding. Additionally, researchers like Cahyani, de Courcy, and Barnett (2018) have highlighted its role in enhancing communication between teachers and students.

Despite these findings, gaps remain in the literature. Most studies focus narrowly on English and a single additional language, often neglecting the multilingual realities of classrooms in regions like Indonesia. For instance, while Selamat (2014) examined code-switching between English and mother tongues, their scope did not extend to incorporating multiple local languages. Similarly, Adriosh and Razi (2019) studied code-switching in Libya's EFL classrooms but limited their analysis to primary languages of instruction. This lack of attention to the interaction between English, Bahasa Indonesia, and local languages leaves a significant gap in understanding the full potential and challenges of code-switching in diverse linguistic contexts.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the use of code-switching not only between English and Bahasa Indonesia but also with local languages such as Mandailing and Malay. By focusing on a high school in Rokan Hulu, Riau, Indonesia, where students and teachers actively use local languages alongside Bahasa Indonesia, the research offers a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of multilingual classrooms. This approach highlights the importance of understanding students' linguistic backgrounds and their impact on learning. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform more inclusive and effective pedagogical practices. By examining how code-switching functions as a tool for enhancing comprehension, reducing anxiety, and facilitating engagement, the study aims to provide actionable insights for teachers navigating multilingual classrooms. It also seeks to address the tension between leveraging students' native languages and fostering proficiency in English, ensuring that code-switching serves as a bridge rather than a barrier to language acquisition.

In conclusion, this research not only sheds light on the pedagogical role of code-switching in Indonesian EFL classrooms but also challenges traditional assumptions about language use in education. By exploring the interplay between English, Bahasa Indonesia, and local languages, the study underscores the importance of linguistic diversity in shaping effective teaching strategies. Its implications extend beyond the classroom, advocating for a more nuanced and culturally responsive approach to language education in multilingual societies.

2. Method

This study utilized a qualitative research design to investigate the phenomenon of code-switching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. This approach was chosen due to its ability to delve deeply into human behavior and capture the contextual and nuanced experiences of participants (Kothari, 2004). Specifically, a case study method was employed to provide a focused exploration of how code-switching is practiced and perceived by English teachers in a real-world classroom setting. This design aligns with the study's objective to generate detailed insights into a phenomenon rather than generalize findings across a broader population.

2.1 Population and Sampling

The study targeted English teachers in senior high schools across Rokan Hulu Regency, comprising 29 public schools and 78 English teachers. These schools span various districts, reflecting the diverse linguistic and cultural contexts in the region. Given the study's focus on understanding code-switching practices, purposive sampling was adopted to ensure the selection of participants who could provide relevant and rich data (Leavy, 2017). Two English teachers from SMAN 1 Rambah were chosen based on their experience and active engagement in teaching English, making them ideal candidates for the study's objectives. This deliberate selection ensured that the insights generated were directly aligned with the research focus.

2.2 Data Collection

A triangulation method was used to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings. This approach was justified by the need to capture multiple perspectives and cross-verify data, thereby reducing bias and enhancing the comprehensiveness of the results (Sugiyono, 2019). Three primary tools were employed: classroom observations, video recordings, and semi-structured interviews. Each step was carefully designed to address the research questions and provide a multi-dimensional understanding of the use of code-switching.

Classroom Observations were conducted to capture authentic, real-time instances of code-switching within its natural context. Observing lessons from beginning to end ensured that no significant behaviors were

overlooked. The use of structured observation sheets further ensured consistency and focus on key aspects of code-switching, such as its purpose and frequency. Teachers and students were informed of the observation's purpose beforehand to maintain ethical transparency and create a supportive environment for data collection. Observations were carried out across three classrooms, with sessions lasting 90 minutes each, to provide a representative sample of teaching practices.

Video Recordings were employed to supplement observational data, offering a detailed and permanent record of classroom interactions. This method allowed the researcher to revisit and analyze specific moments of code-switching that might not have been captured fully during live observations. Positioning the camera at the back of the classroom minimized disruptions, ensuring that participants' behavior remained natural and uninfluenced. The recordings provided critical evidence of how and when code-switching occurred, enabling precise analysis of its functions in facilitating teaching and learning.

Semi-Structured Interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into the motivations, perceptions, and experiences of both teachers and students regarding code-switching. This method was justified as it combines structure with flexibility, allowing for the exploration of predetermined themes while accommodating unexpected but relevant responses (Kvale, 2007). The questions were adapted from Selamat (2014) to ensure relevance to an EFL context, while also addressing the specific focus of this study. Individual interviews with teachers ensured a focused exploration of their pedagogical decisions, while group discussions with students facilitated the collection of diverse perspectives within a shared learning context. Interviews lasted 15–30 minutes to balance depth with participants' availability.

2.3 Data Analysis

The analysis process began with the transcription and organization of data collected from observation sheets, video recordings, and interviews. This systematic approach ensured that all data were accounted for and prepared for in-depth analysis. The researcher then reviewed the data to identify inconsistencies, missing information, or potential outliers, ensuring the integrity of the findings. Instances of code-switching were classified into five main categories based on their observed functions: giving explanations, translating, repeating, checking for understanding, and managing the classroom. This classification was guided by both the data and existing literature to ensure consistency and academic rigor.

The categorized data were then interpreted to uncover patterns and draw conclusions about the pedagogical role of code-switching in EFL classrooms. Each step in the analysis was carefully documented to maintain transparency and reproducibility. By

integrating findings from multiple sources, the study provided a robust understanding of how code-switching facilitates teaching, addresses language barriers, and supports students' learning in a multilingual environment.

3. Results

The study investigated the functions of code-switching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at SMAN 1 Rambah, Rokan Hulu. Data collected from classroom observations, video recordings, and semi-structured interviews revealed that code-switching serves multiple pedagogical and managerial purposes, including giving explanations, translating, repeating, checking for understanding, and managing the classroom. Each function contributes significantly to enhancing the teaching and learning process in a multilingual context.

This study highlights the multifaceted role of code-switching in EFL classrooms. By facilitating explanations, translations, repetitions, comprehension checks, and classroom management, code-switching proved to be a valuable tool for navigating linguistic diversity. The findings demonstrate that code-switching not only supports comprehension but also fosters engagement, inclusivity, and effective classroom dynamics. However, balancing its use with immersive English instruction is essential to promote long-term language proficiency. Below, these key findings are analyzed in depth.

3.1 Giving Explanation

One of the most significant functions of code-switching was giving explanations, particularly for complex concepts, grammar rules, and new vocabulary. Teachers used code-switching extensively to simplify complex concepts and ensure students understood challenging material. This was particularly evident when explaining grammar rules, abstract ideas, and new vocabulary. Teachers alternated between English, Bahasa Indonesia, and local languages, tailoring their language use to the students' needs.

Interview with Teacher 1:

"Ketika saya menggunakan 100 persen bahasa Inggris, saya merasa seperti berbicara sendiri. Murid-murid tampak khawatir, mengantuk, dan bingung. Tapi ketika saya mencampur bahasa Inggris dengan Bahasa Indonesia atau bahasa lokal mereka, mereka lebih terlibat. Ini membantu saya mentransfer pengetahuan dengan lebih efektif."

(When I use 100 percent English, I feel like I am speaking to myself. Students look worried, sleepy, and confused. But when I mix English with Bahasa Indonesia or their local language, they engage more. It helps me transfer knowledge more effectively.)

(Int.1-T1-2.Exc-01)

Classroom Observations:

During a lesson on descriptive writing, the teacher introduced the concept of "caption" in English: "A caption is a short text describing an image."

When students appeared confused, the teacher switched to Bahasa Indonesia:

"Caption itu teks singkat yang mendukung gambar. Misalnya, judul pada foto di media sosial."

(Caption is a short text that supports an image. For example, the title of a photo on social media.)

(ObsNote.1-T1-01)

Video Recordings:

In another session, Teacher 1 used a blend of English and Bahasa Indonesia to explain giving opinions:

"Have you ever given your opinion to someone? Kamu pernah memberikan pendapat? Kalau pernah, itu adalah contoh giving opinions."

(Have you ever given your opinion? If yes, that is an example of giving opinions.)

(VidR.1-T1-1.1')

Switching to Bahasa Indonesia or local languages during explanations allowed teachers to break down complex material into more understandable parts. This strategy ensured that students, particularly those with limited English proficiency, could follow the lesson without feeling overwhelmed. By contextualizing abstract concepts in familiar languages, teachers fostered inclusivity and encouraged active participation. Moreover, this approach created a supportive environment where students felt confident engaging with the material.

The practice of code-switching for explanations aligns with sociocultural theories of learning, which emphasize the role of language in mediating understanding. By leveraging students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, teachers not only conveyed content effectively but also validated the students' identities. This dual focus on comprehension and cultural relevance highlights the importance of localized pedagogical strategies in EFL settings.

3.2 Translating

Translation was a critical function of code-switching that enabled students to connect unfamiliar English vocabulary with familiar terms in Bahasa Indonesia or their local languages. This function played a significant role in expanding students' vocabulary and ensuring comprehension.

Interview with Teacher 2:

"Jika murid tidak mengerti arti sebuah kata, saya sering menerjemahkannya ke dalam Bahasa Indonesia atau bahasa lokal mereka. Ini cara tercepat untuk membantu mereka mengerti."

(If students do not understand the meaning of a

word, I often translate it into Bahasa Indonesia or their local language. It is the fastest way to help them understand.)

(Int.1-T2-1.Exc-021)

Classroom Observations:

During a vocabulary lesson, the teacher introduced the word "inserted" and explained:

"Insert itu artinya dimasukkan. Contohnya, teks yang dimasukkan ke dalam gambar."

(Insert means inserted. For example, text that is inserted into an image.)

(ObsNote.1-T2-02)

Video Recordings:

Teacher 1 employed a Mandailing expression to explain the concept of giving opinions:

"Unjung doho manido pendapat ni sasahalak? Itu contoh giving opinions."

(Have you ever given your opinion to someone? That is an example of giving opinions.)

(VidR.1-T1-2.5')

Using translation as part of code-switching provided an immediate and effective solution for bridging linguistic gaps. Associating new English terms with familiar equivalents helped students comprehend and retain vocabulary more effectively. This practice also reduced cognitive load, allowing students to focus on understanding the material without the additional challenge of decoding unfamiliar words.

Translation through code-switching illustrates how multilingual classrooms can effectively integrate students' existing linguistic resources to facilitate learning. By respecting the students' native languages while introducing new vocabulary, teachers created a supportive environment for language acquisition. This approach demonstrates how localized strategies can complement global language education goals.

3.3 Repeating

Repetition was another key function of code-switching, helping teachers reinforce understanding and address potential misunderstandings. Teachers alternated between English and Bahasa Indonesia to emphasize critical points, ensuring that students retained the material.

Interview with Teacher 1:

"Dalam refleksi, saya sering mengulang materi dalam Bahasa Indonesia. Ini membantu murid meninjau dan memahami poin-poin utama dengan lebih baik."

(During reflection, I often repeat the material in Bahasa Indonesia. This helps students review and understand the key points better.)

(Int.1-T1-1.Exc-03)

Classroom Observations:

During a grammar lesson, the teacher stated in English:

"The subject is the doer of the action in a sentence."

The teacher then repeated in Bahasa Indonesia:

"Subjek adalah pelaku dalam sebuah kalimat."

(The subject is the doer in a sentence.)

(ObsNote.1-T1-03)

Video Recordings:

A teacher asked in English:

"Have you ever asked someone's opinion?"

When students hesitated, the teacher clarified:

"Kamu pernah meminta pendapat seseorang? Kalau pernah, itu artinya asking for an opinion."

(Have you ever asked someone's opinion? If yes, that means asking for an opinion.)

(VidR.1-T1-3.2')

Repetition through code-switching served as a reinforcement tool that ensured all students, regardless of their English proficiency, could grasp key concepts. Restating critical points in both languages allowed students to process the material at their own pace, promoting confidence and active engagement.

This approach reflects the iterative nature of learning, where reinforcement is key to mastery. By leveraging both English and Bahasa Indonesia, teachers provided scaffolding that supported gradual progression toward independent use of the target language.

3.4 Checking for Understanding

Teachers employed code-switching to verify students' comprehension and address gaps in understanding. This practice often involved shifting from English to Bahasa Indonesia or local languages to pose questions or elicit responses. By doing so, teachers ensured that students could grasp the material and actively participate in the learning process.

Interview with Teacher 2:

"Setelah menjelaskan dalam bahasa Inggris, saya bertanya dalam Bahasa Indonesia untuk memeriksa apakah murid mengerti. Ini memungkinkan saya menyesuaikan penjelasan saya jika diperlukan."

(After explaining in English, I ask questions in Bahasa Indonesia to check if students understand. This allows me to adjust my explanation if needed.)

(Int.1-T2-1.Exc-04)

Classroom Observations:

During a lesson on sentence structures, the teacher posed a question in English:

"What is the subject in this sentence?"

Observing confusion among the students, the teacher rephrased the question in Bahasa Indonesia:

"Subjek dalam kalimat ini apa, ya?"
(What is the subject in this sentence?)

(ObsNote.1-T2-03)

Video Recordings:

In a session on grammar, the teacher explained a concept in English before switching to Bahasa Indonesia for verification:

"Do you understand what a predicate is? Kalau bingung, predicate itu bagian yang menjelaskan tindakan atau kata kerja."

(Do you understand what a predicate is? If confused, the predicate is the part that explains the action or verb.)

(VidR.1-T1-4.7')

Code-switching for comprehension checks allowed teachers to adapt their explanations based on students' responses. By posing questions in Bahasa Indonesia, teachers created an inclusive and non-threatening environment where students felt comfortable seeking clarification. This practice also enabled teachers to gauge whether their initial explanations were effective or required adjustments. From classroom observations, it became evident that students were more responsive when questions were rephrased in their native language. The shift to Bahasa Indonesia or local languages bridged linguistic gaps, reducing anxiety and fostering participation. Similarly, video recordings captured moments where students' hesitant responses in English were clarified with follow-up questions in Bahasa Indonesia. This interactive approach supported a collaborative learning environment and encouraged active engagement.

The use of code-switching to check for understanding underscores its role as a tool for fostering student-centered learning. By aligning their language use with students' comprehension levels, teachers ensured that the learning process was engaging and accessible. This practice reflects the adaptability required in multilingual classrooms, where effective communication is central to successful teaching.

3.5 Managing Classroom

Code-switching served as an essential strategy for classroom management. Teachers alternated between English, Bahasa Indonesia, and local languages to give instructions, address behavioral issues, and maintain discipline. This approach allowed for clear communication and ensured that students understood expectations and procedures.

Interview with Teacher 1:

"Saya menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk menarik perhatian murid, seperti dengan mengatakan 'Hey, look at me!' Tapi jika mereka tetap tidak merespons, saya beralih ke Bahasa Indonesia agar instruksi saya dipahami dengan jelas."

(I use English to get the students' attention, like saying, 'Hey, look at me!' But if they still do not respond, I switch to Bahasa Indonesia to ensure my instructions are clearly understood.)

(Int.1-T1-2.Exc-05)

Interview with Teacher 2:

"Ketika murid tidak langsung mengikuti instruksi saya, saya harus menerjemahkannya ke Bahasa Indonesia. Jika tidak, aktivitas di kelas tidak bisa berjalan dengan baik dan akan memakan banyak waktu."

(When students do not immediately follow my instructions, I need to translate them into Bahasa Indonesia. Otherwise, classroom activities cannot proceed smoothly and will take too much time.)

(Int.1-T1-2.Exc-06)

Classroom Observations:

During group activities, the teacher initially instructed in English:

"Form groups of four."

When students appeared confused, the teacher clarified in Bahasa Indonesia:

"Buat kelompok berempat dan diskusikan topiknya."

(Form groups of four and discuss the topic.)

(ObsNote.1-T1-04)

Video Recordings:

Teachers reinforced classroom norms using a mix of languages. For example:

"Ready? Must be ready. Saya mau mengingatkan kembali kesepakatan kelas kita yang sudah disepakati kemarin."

(Ready? Must be ready. I want to remind you of our classroom agreements from yesterday.)

(VidR.1-T1-1.5')

Switching languages for classroom management tasks ensured that students clearly understood instructions and behavioral expectations. When teachers used Bahasa Indonesia or local languages, it often resulted in immediate compliance and improved attentiveness among students. Classroom observations showed that students responded more quickly and confidently when instructions were reiterated in their native language.

Video recordings further highlighted the importance of code-switching in managing transitions between activities. For instance, when group work instructions in English were unclear, the switch to Bahasa Indonesia resolved confusion, saving time and ensuring the activity proceeded as planned. Additionally, addressing behavioral issues in Bahasa Indonesia allowed teachers to communicate more persuasively, reinforcing rules and maintaining order.

The strategic use of code-switching for classroom management reflects its role in creating a well-regulated learning environment. By using students' native languages for procedural and disciplinary tasks, teachers minimized misunderstandings and fostered a sense of structure and predictability. This practice underscores the importance of effective communication in managing multilingual classrooms and highlights how bilingual approaches can enhance both teaching and classroom dynamics.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study illustrate the multifaceted role of code-switching in EFL classrooms, particularly in enhancing comprehension, managing the classroom, and reducing student anxiety. This section discusses the key findings, connects them to previous research, highlights the gaps and novelty of the study, and explores the broader implications of using code-switching as a teaching strategy.

This study highlights the central role of code-switching as a pedagogical tool for explaining complex material, particularly when switching from English to Bahasa Indonesia or local languages to address challenging topics that students find difficult in English. This aligns with [Nurhamidah \(2018\)](#), who emphasize that bilingual teaching strategies enhance comprehension by connecting new information to students' prior linguistic knowledge. Teachers frequently utilized code-switching to simplify grammar rules, explain unfamiliar vocabulary, and clarify instructions, as supported by [Mekheimr \(2023\)](#), who found students view code-switching as beneficial for clarifications and overcoming communication barriers in language learning contexts. Similarly, [Markhamah \(2023\)](#) highlights its functions in classroom management and improving student comprehension. [Tale and AlQahtani \(2022\)](#) further attribute its effectiveness to bridging linguistic gaps, enabling beginners to grasp new vocabulary and complex concepts more efficiently. [Agnas et al. \(2022\)](#) confirm its prevalence in educational settings for enhancing understanding and communication, while [Darong \(2023\)](#) demonstrates how teachers employ intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching to engage students and clarify content. Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of code-switching in creating a more accessible, interactive, and supportive learning environment.

Code-switching has emerged as a pivotal strategy in the realm of vocabulary acquisition, particularly in this research where teachers utilize this linguistic phenomenon to enhance students' understanding and retention of new vocabulary. By introducing English terms and translating them into students' native languages, educators create cognitive anchors that aid memory retention, as highlighted by [Purmas \(2023\)](#), who asserts that linking new vocabulary with familiar words enriches students' lexicons and bolsters overall

language skills. Similarly, [Fatsah and Purnama \(2022\)](#) emphasize that code-switching facilitates comprehension, enhances listening skills, and ultimately improves students' writing abilities in English. [Tenés et al. \(2023\)](#) further explore code-switching behavior in dual-language-learning children, identifying it as a compensatory mechanism for navigating bilingual environments, though their findings contradict theories suggesting significant negative effects of language proficiency on code-switching frequencies. Additionally, [Murtiningsih et al. \(2022\)](#) underscore the varied types of code-switching teachers employ to foster engaging and comprehensible learning experiences, while cautioning that its use should be judicious to maximize exposure to the target language.

Beyond vocabulary acquisition, code-switching fosters deeper cognitive engagement in language learning. [Wang \(2023\)](#) demonstrates that combining traditional teaching methods with tools like Quizlet enhances vocabulary retention, aligning with the cognitive theory of multimedia learning, which posits that varied instructional methods cater to different cognitive styles ([Immanuel, 2023](#)). Thus, the strategic integration of code-switching with innovative teaching tools significantly improves students' vocabulary acquisition and retention, making it a valuable pedagogical approach.

This study highlights that code-switching significantly alleviates anxiety in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms by creating a supportive environment where students feel less intimidated by unfamiliar language structures and more willing to engage with the material. This aligns with [Sholikhah \(2024\)](#), who argues that reducing cognitive load through native-language support allows students to focus on content comprehension rather than linguistic challenges ([Haryanto et al, 2016](#)). Beyond alleviating anxiety, code-switching enhances learning outcomes, as noted by [Rahmani et al. \(2022\)](#), who emphasize its role in clarifying information, strengthening communication between teachers and students, and fostering a more interactive learning experience. [Sholikhah \(2024\)](#) further identifies its effectiveness in reducing speaking anxiety and creating an engaging classroom atmosphere. Additionally, [Aparece and Bacasmot \(2023\)](#) assert that integrating students' native languages into the learning process diminishes language anxiety and promotes a deeper understanding of the target language. Collectively, these findings establish code-switching not merely as a linguistic tool but as a transformative educational strategy that fosters inclusivity and effectiveness in EFL classrooms.

The study underscores the pivotal role of code-switching in classroom management, where teachers used Bahasa Indonesia or local languages to give instructions, maintain discipline, and provide activity directions, ensuring clarity, minimizing misunderstandings, and facilitating smooth transitions.

This aligns with [Tamene and Desalegn \(2022\)](#), who highlight code-switching as a practical tool for managing classrooms and fostering positive teacher-student relationships. Similarly, [Putri \(2022\)](#) emphasizes its multifaceted role in educational settings, noting that teachers employ code-switching for academic, social, and management purposes, using it to enforce authority, build respect, and enhance instructional clarity, thereby strengthening classroom management.

Beyond management, code-switching enhances student engagement and comprehension. [Hu et al. \(2022\)](#) reveal that teachers' use of code-switching helps students grasp complex concepts, promoting active participation in discussions. Likewise, [Purma \(2023\)](#) highlights the strategic employment of various types of code-switching to facilitate understanding and maintain a conducive learning environment. [Anisah \(2023\)](#) further reports that students perceive code-switching positively, recognizing its role in improving their understanding of English and fostering effective communication. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that code-switching is not merely a linguistic tool but a strategic asset in classroom management and pedagogy.

While previous studies have extensively explored the functions of code-switching, this study contributes a novel perspective by emphasizing its role in integrating local languages alongside Bahasa Indonesia and English. Most existing research, such as that by [Selamat \(2014\)](#) and [Bhatti et al. \(2018\)](#), focuses primarily on English and the national language. However, the inclusion of local languages such as Mandailing and Malay in this study highlights the linguistic diversity of Indonesian classrooms and demonstrates how local languages can serve as additional resources for effective teaching. This study also underscores the dynamic interplay between code-switching and student engagement. By examining real-time classroom interactions through video recordings and observations, the research captures the immediate impact of code-switching on students' responses, a dimension often overlooked in earlier studies.

The findings of this study have significant implications for EFL teaching practices, particularly in multilingual settings. Code-switching emerges as a valuable pedagogical tool that enhances comprehension and communication in classrooms with students of varying English proficiency levels. By strategically alternating between languages, teachers can ensure that all students, regardless of linguistic background, can access the material. Incorporating local languages into teaching not only aids in understanding complex topics but also fosters inclusivity and cultural relevance, validating students' linguistic identities and creating a more engaging learning environment. However, the study underscores the importance of balance; over-reliance on native languages may hinder students' progress in mastering

English. Teachers are encouraged to use code-switching sparingly and selectively, focusing on moments when students face significant comprehension challenges while gradually encouraging greater use of English.

Despite its advantages, excessive use of code-switching can pose challenges. [Rahman \(2018\)](#) and [Altun \(2019\)](#) caution that frequent switching may reduce students' exposure to English, limiting their opportunities to practice and internalize the language. This concern was reflected in the present study, where some students overly depended on their native languages during discussions, potentially hindering their fluency development. Additionally, as [Brown \(2005\)](#) notes, code-switching may be perceived as a shortcut or sign of laziness if not framed as a deliberate and purposeful strategy. Teachers must strike a balance between providing linguistic support and fostering immersion in the target language, ensuring that students receive adequate exposure to English to build their confidence and proficiency.

Future research could explore the long-term impact of code-switching on students' language development, focusing on its effects on fluency, accuracy, and confidence in using English independently. Investigating its effectiveness across different age groups, proficiency levels, and cultural contexts would help assess its adaptability and limitations. Additionally, examining students' perspectives on code-switching could yield valuable insights into its perceived role in their learning process. The integration of digital tools and technologies to support bilingual instruction offers another avenue for enhancing the strategic use of code-switching in modern pedagogical practices. Ultimately, this study highlights the transformative potential of code-switching to bridge linguistic gaps, reduce anxiety, and foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment. A balanced approach, coupled with immersive opportunities, can empower students to become confident and proficient English users, preparing them for real-world communication and success.

5. Conclusions

This study significantly advances our understanding of code-switching in EFL classrooms by analyzing its functions across English, Bahasa Indonesia, and local languages such as Mandailing and Malay, providing a nuanced view of multilingual teaching practices. The key findings reveal five critical functions of code-switching: explaining complex concepts, translating unfamiliar terms, reinforcing material through repetition, checking comprehension, and managing classroom dynamics. These findings underscore the role of code-switching as a dynamic pedagogical tool that facilitates comprehension, fosters inclusivity, and enhances engagement in linguistically diverse classrooms.

The novelty of this research lies in its exploration of local languages as integral to classroom communication, filling a gap in studies predominantly focused on English and Bahasa Indonesia. By showcasing the interplay between code-switching and effective learning strategies, this study has important implications for teaching practices, encouraging a balanced use of code-switching to support understanding without impeding English immersion. Future research should delve into the long-term impact of code-switching on students' English proficiency, exploring its role in developing skills like speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Additionally, examining students' perceptions and the integration of digital tools in bilingual instruction could offer deeper insights into optimizing code-switching as an educational strategy in multilingual settings.

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