



Strategic Code-Switching in Indonesian EFL Classroom: Forms, Functions, and Students Perspective

Yunita Maharani Azzahra¹, Aridah Aridah², Maria Teodora Ping³, Syamdianita Syamdianita⁴, A.K. Amarullah⁵
Mulawarman University, Indonesia

ymazhr09@gmail.com¹, aridah@fkip.unmul.ac.id², mariateodoraping@fkip.unmul.ac.id³,
syamdianita@fkip.unmul.ac.id⁴, blatinazilavka@gmail.com⁵

Correspondence author Email: ymazhr@gmail.com

Paper received: January-2026; Accepted: February-2026; Publish: February-2026

Abstract

This study examined the forms and functions of lecturers' code-switching in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom interaction in Indonesian higher education. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through classroom observations and student interviews and analyzed thematically. The study focused on naturally occurring interactions across multiple lessons to capture authentic language use. The findings reveal three main forms of code-switching: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching, with inter- and intra-sentential appearing more salient during explanatory and instructional sessions. Functionally, code-switching was used to explain material, give instructions, check understanding, build rapport, and manage classroom behavior. Students reported that code-switching supported their understanding while still maintaining the use of English as the main instructional language. These results indicate that lecturers' code-switching is a patterned and interactionally grounded practice, demonstrating how bilingual resources can be effectively leveraged to enhance learning outcomes and student engagement in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Code-switching; EFL classroom discourse; linguistic forms; communicative functions; Indonesia

Copyright and License

Authors retain copyright and grant the journal right of first publication with the work simultaneously licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgment of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.



1. Introduction

In multilingual educational contexts, the use of more than one language in classroom interaction is a common and often unavoidable reality, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting where English is neither the first language of teachers nor students. Classroom discourse in such contexts frequently involves alternation between English and learners' first language as teachers attempt to convey meaning, manage interaction, and respond to students' linguistic and cognitive needs. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as code-switching, is defined by Gumperz (1982) as the use of two or more languages within



a single interaction, sentence, or utterance. Within EFL classrooms, code-switching does not merely occur as spontaneous linguistic behavior but often emerges as a strategic and purposeful practice embedded in teaching and learning processes. Understanding lecturers' strategic code-switching is therefore essential for explaining how multilingual classroom interaction is organized and how instructional meaning is negotiated in EFL higher education settings.

Early perspectives on classroom code-switching frequently associated the practice with linguistic inadequacy or limited proficiency in the target language, viewing the use of the first language as a failure to maintain English exposure. However, contemporary research increasingly challenges this deficit-oriented assumption. Recent studies conceptualize code-switching as a functional resource that facilitates communication, scaffolds comprehension, and supports classroom interaction (Bhatti et al., 2018; Lin, 2013; Aminah et al., 2019; Arbain et al., 2017). In EFL contexts where students' exposure to English is largely confined to classroom settings, teachers continuously make decisions about when and how to alternate languages, shaped by both pedagogical considerations and immediate interactional demands such as clarifying complex ideas, sustaining student participation, and ensuring shared understanding of instructional content. Despite this growing recognition, recent studies differ in how they conceptualize classroom code-switching, variously framing it as a pedagogical technique, an interactional strategy, or a linguistic practice embedded in discourse, resulting in fragmented analytical approaches and inconsistent findings.

From a linguistic perspective, classroom code-switching is closely connected to the dynamics of instructional interaction. Teaching involves negotiating meaning, monitoring comprehension, providing feedback, and managing classroom behavior in real time. Within this interactional environment, code-switching functions as a discursive resource that enables teachers to balance sustained target language use with clarity and accessibility. Macaro (2005) conceptualizes teachers' code-switching as a communicative and learning strategy serving multiple functions, including explaining material, giving instructions, checking understanding, building rapport, and managing classroom behavior. These functions highlight that code-



switching constitutes an integral component of classroom discourse rather than a random deviation from English-only instruction (Lin, 2013; Arbain & Nur, 2017; Arbain & Rohman, 2023). However, many studies examining these functions rely on broad categorizations and do not sufficiently account for how such functions are realized through specific linguistic forms during actual classroom interaction.

Beyond communicative functions, code-switching can also be examined through its linguistic forms, revealing how language alternation is structurally realized. (Poplack, 1980) typology categorizes code-switching into inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching. Examining these forms provides insight into the degree of bilingual competence involved in teachers' language choices and how code-switching supports classroom interaction without disrupting English instruction. Nevertheless, research that systematically links these structural forms with their interactional and pedagogical functions remains limited, particularly in higher education EFL contexts.

Much of the existing literature on code-switching in EFL classrooms prioritized pedagogical outcomes, instructional effectiveness, or students' attitudes toward first-language use (Almutairi & Alqarni, 2024; Puspawati, 2018; Syahrin, 2024; Erliana & Arbain, 2020; Gracella & Rahman Nur, 2020). While such studies provide valuable insights into the benefits and challenges of code-switching, they often treat the phenomenon in broad terms and pay limited attention to how it is linguistically structured and deployed within classroom discourse. As a result, code-switching is frequently conceptualized as an instructional technique rather than as a structured linguistic practice embedded in interactional sequences.

In the Indonesian higher education context, this limitation becomes more pronounced. Indonesian EFL classrooms are inherently multilingual, and lecturers commonly alternate between English and Indonesian to manage instruction and interaction. However, empirical research at the tertiary level remains relatively limited and tends to focus on language policy issues or general student perceptions rather than detailed analyses of classroom discourse (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Murtiningsih et al., 2022; Nur, 2020; Nur & Jamilah, 2022).



Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence illustrating how lecturers linguistically realize code-switching in real-time classroom interaction and how students interpret these practices during instruction.

Empirical evidence nevertheless demonstrates that teachers use code-switching strategically to facilitate comprehension and reduce learners' cognitive load. Cook (2001) argues that selective use of the first language can clarify abstract concepts and unfamiliar vocabulary, particularly in contexts where exposure to the target language is limited. Observations of EFL classrooms further indicate that code-switching enhances instructional clarity, promotes interaction, and increases student participation when applied judiciously (Albahoth et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2023; Taufiq et al., 2022). At the same time, excessive or unplanned switching may restrict opportunities for English engagement or foster reliance on the first language (Anisah & Nasrullah, 2023). These findings suggest that the effectiveness of code-switching lies not in its frequency but in how specific forms of switching are employed to serve particular interactional and instructional purposes.

This study is novel in that it simultaneously analyzes the linguistic forms, communicative functions, and students' interpretive perspectives on lecturers' code-switching in Indonesian higher education EFL classrooms, using classroom discourse as the primary unit of analysis. Accordingly, this study aims to examine lecturers' code-switching in Indonesian EFL higher education classrooms by analyzing its linguistic forms, communicative functions, and students' perspectives within actual classroom interaction.

This study addresses to answer the following research questions:

1. What forms of code-switching are employed by lecturers during classroom instruction?
2. What functions of lecturers' code-switching are identified in EFL classroom interaction?
3. How do students' perspectives help explain the use of these functions and forms in EFL classrooms?



2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore lecturers' code-switching in an Indonesian EFL higher education classroom. The research is exploratory, emphasizing analytical depth rather than generalization, and focuses on how code-switching functions as a communicative and instructional strategy within natural classroom interaction. By examining real-time language use, this study highlights the strategic, context-dependent deployment of the first language without measuring learning outcomes. This qualitative design was considered appropriate as the study aims to describe and interpret naturally occurring classroom discourse rather than to test hypotheses or measure instructional effectiveness.

The participants consisted of one lecturer and two sixth-semester students from the English Education Department at Mulawarman University, Indonesia. Classroom observations focused on a single lecturer whose identity is anonymized. The lecturer holds a doctoral degree in English education and has experience teaching undergraduate EFL courses. This background provides a relevant pedagogical context for examining code-switching practices in English-medium instruction at the tertiary level.

The students were selected through purposive sampling based on their extensive exposure to English instruction and their ability to reflect critically on lecturers' language use during classroom interaction. Students' perspectives were treated as interpretive resources rather than evaluative judgments of teaching effectiveness, complementing observational data by providing insight into how code-switching was perceived during classroom interaction. Although the number of participants was limited, this study does not aim to generalize findings but to provide an in-depth, discourse-oriented account of code-switching practices within a specific instructional context.

2.2. Research Instrument

Two data collection instruments were employed in this study: direct classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations were conducted over two



regular teaching sessions of a single undergraduate course, each lasting approximately 120 minutes. The observed course was selected because it involved sustained lecturer–student interaction and conceptual explanation, creating natural opportunities for code-switching. Observations documented instances of lecturers’ code-switching, including utterances in Indonesian and English, to capture naturally occurring interaction. The semi-structured interview protocol was used to elicit students’ reflections on observed instances of code-switching, focusing on how and why language alternation occurred during instruction.

2.3. Data Collection Technique

Data were collected through a combination of classroom observation and individual semi-structured interviews conducted in Indonesian. Classroom observation focused on utterances produced by the lecturer during explanations, instructions, and interactional exchanges. An instance of code-switching was defined as any observable alternation between English and Indonesian within a sentence, between sentences, or through discourse markers. All observed sessions were audio-recorded with participants’ consent and supplemented by field notes to capture interactional context. Recorded data were later transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy in identifying linguistic forms and interactional functions.

Subsequently, each student interview encouraged participants to describe and interpret instances of code-switching observed in class, explaining why the lecturer alternated between English and Indonesian. This triangulation allowed observable linguistic behavior to be examined alongside students’ interpretive perspectives.

Ethical considerations were addressed throughout the research process. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. The identities of the lecturer and students were anonymized to ensure confidentiality, and all data were used solely for research purposes. This study did not involve institutional intervention or assessment and followed standard ethical guidelines for classroom-based qualitative research.



2.4. Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis combined with linguistic categorization. Observed utterances were first transcribed and coded based on forms of code-switching as categorized by Poplack (1980):

2.4.1. Forms of code-switching

a) Inter-sentential switching

Inter-sentential switching, which occurred when teachers switched from English to Indonesian between sentences or clauses, particularly during explanation or clarification.

b) Intra-sentential switching

Intra-sentential switching, which involved the insertion of Indonesian words or phrases within English sentences, commonly used to explain vocabulary or concepts.

c) Tag switching

Tag switching, which consisted of short Indonesian expressions or discourse markers used to express emphasis or familiarity.

These forms were then examined in relation to their communicative functions, such as explaining material, giving instructions, checking understanding, building rapport, and managing classroom behavior, based on Macaro (2005) framework. Students' interpretations were subsequently used to contextualize and explain how these forms and functions operated within classroom discourse.

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. The analytical process consisted of several stages: audio-recorded interviews were first transcribed verbatim, followed by the identification and coding of meaningful segments related to lecturers' code-switching practices. The coded segments were then grouped into broader themes reflecting students' interpretations of the functions and effects of code-switching in classroom interaction. These themes were subsequently interpreted in relation to the research objectives and observational findings. Data triangulation was employed to enhance



trustworthiness by comparing interview-based themes with patterns identified in classroom observation data, allowing for cross-validation of interpretations.

To enhance analytical reliability, a subset of coded data was reviewed twice by the researcher to ensure consistency in categorization. Discrepancies were resolved through repeated reference to the data and analytical framework.

3. Findings and Discussions

This study presents and discusses the findings related to the forms and functions of lecturers' code-switching in EFL classroom interaction, based on classroom observation and students' interview data. To enhance analytical clarity, classroom observation data are presented first as descriptive findings, while students' interview data are subsequently incorporated as interpretive support to contextualize observed instructional practices.

The discussion is organized into two major subsections: (1) forms of lecturers' code-switching and (2) pedagogical functions of lecturers' code-switching. Students' perspectives are used not as attitudinal judgments but as interpretive evidence to complement observed classroom practices. By aligning observation and students' interpretations with established theoretical frameworks, this section highlights how code-switching functions as a contextually responsive instructional practice within the observed classroom interactions.

3.1. Forms of Lecturers' Code-Switching

Analysis of the classroom observation data indicates that the lecturer employed three main forms of code-switching as categorized by Poplack (1980): inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag switching. These forms were observed during the explanation of sociolinguistic concepts related to style, context, and register in an EFL setting. Inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching appeared more salient during instructional sequences that required conceptual clarification, while tag switching occurred mainly in interactional moments. This pattern indicates a recurring association between particular instructional moments and specific forms of code-switching in the observed classroom



discourse. From a discussion perspective, this recurring association may reflect pedagogical sensitivity to instructional demands; however, the present data do not support broad claims beyond the observed instructional contexts.

Across the observed sessions, multiple instances of inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching were recorded during explanations of abstract sociolinguistic concepts, feedback delivery, and example elaboration. These recurrent observation-based patterns suggest that these two forms were more frequently associated with meaning-focused instructional talk than with classroom management or interpersonal regulation. These findings are consistent with classroom-based studies in Indonesian EFL contexts that report inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching as pedagogically functional forms in instructional discourse (Fachriyah, 2017; Vitriya et al., 2023).

Table 1. Frequency Estimates of Lecturers' Code-Switching Forms in Classroom Interaction

No	Type of Code-Switching	Instructional Context	Pedagogical Function	Frequency Estimate
1	Inter-sentential switching	Explanation of sociolinguistic concepts, feedback elaboration	Clarifying abstract concepts, linking theory to everyday examples	High
2	Intra-sentential switching	Conceptual explanation, vocabulary, and term clarification	Immediate semantic scaffolding, emphasizing key concepts	High
3	Tag switching	Interactional moments, feedback, classroom engagement	Building rapport, softening directives, inviting agreement	Low

Table 1 summarizes the observed forms of lecturers' code-switching along with their instructional contexts and estimated frequencies. Given the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study, frequency is presented in relative terms (high, medium, low) rather than numerical counts. The use of these frequency labels reflects qualitative estimates based on the salience and recurrence of each code-switching type across the observed classroom sessions, capturing recurrent patterns within instructional sessions rather than absolute occurrence counts.



3.1.1. Inter-sentential Code-Switching

Inter-sentential code-switching was observed when the lecturer switched languages between complete clauses or sentences, particularly during the explanation of abstract sociolinguistic concepts. This form commonly occurred when English explanations were followed by Indonesian clarification to ensure students' understanding. The following excerpts from classroom observation illustrate this pattern:

“In academic writing, style tends to be more formal and structured. Kalau ngomong santai sama teman, tentu bahasanya beda.” (Excerpt 1)

“Register refers to the type of language used for a particular purpose. Kalau konteksnya akademik, bahasanya juga harus akademik, tidak seperti bahasa chat.” (Excerpt 2)

“Your data are actually very complete, especially because you included visual evidence from Instagram posts. Itu yang bikin analisis kalian kelihatan kuat” (Excerpt 3)

“Including screenshots or photos as data is a good decision. Itu bikin analisisnya lebih meyakinkan, bukan cuma deskriptif.” (Excerpt 4)

Linguistically, inter-sentential switching allows speakers to maintain grammatical integrity in both languages, making it one of the most accessible and structurally less complex forms of code-switching (Poplack, 1980). In the observed Sociolinguistics class, this form suggests a deliberate effort to maintain English as the primary instructional medium while strategically employing Indonesian to ensure conceptual clarity.

Consistent with previous studies in EFL contexts, inter-sentential switching functioned as a pedagogical strategy to bridge theoretical explanation and students' lived linguistic experience (Almutairi & Alqarni, 2024; Chen et al., 2023). At the same time, this form of switching also served as a discourse marker signaling transitions from abstract explanation to contextualized illustration. However, the present findings further suggest that this form of switching also serves as a discursive signal marking a shift from abstract explanation to



contextualized example. This supports Lin (2013) view that classroom code-switching is not merely compensatory but interactionally meaningful within instructional discourse.

Within the observed sessions, inter-sentential switching did not appear to replace English instruction but occurred as brief clarification following English explanations. By clarifying key ideas in Indonesian, the lecturer prevented potential misunderstanding while sustaining English use for conceptual framing. These findings challenge deficit-oriented views of code-switching in EFL pedagogy and aligns with studies emphasizing its strategic and facilitative role (Zatalini, 2024).

3.1.2. Intra-sentential Code-Switching

Intra-sentential code-switching was observed within a single sentence, particularly when the lecturer embedded Indonesian lexical items into English explanations. This form appeared during the discussion of register and communicative purpose, as shown in the following excerpts:

“Register depends on the situation and tujuan komunikasinya.” (Excerpt 5)

“Tenor is about the relationship between participants, misalnya dosen ke mahasiswa itu beda dengan teman.” (Excerpt 6)

“This presentation is already good in terms of data, apalagi kalian pakai foto sebagai data pendukung, so the analysis doesn't feel abstract.” (Excerpt 7)

“You already applied critical discourse analysis, walaupun masih sederhana, but the direction is correct.” (Excerpt 8)

Intra-sentential switching is considered linguistically more complex because it requires speakers to maintain syntactic and semantic coherence across languages within the same utterance (Poplack, 1980). Its occurrence in the observed classroom suggests not only bilingual competence but also deliberate pedagogical decision-making.

In this context, the lecturer used intra-sentential switching to provide immediate semantic support for key conceptual terms without abandoning the English sentence structure. García and Lin (2017) describe this practice as moment-by-moment scaffolding, where L1



elements are embedded to support comprehension while maintaining the target language as the main instructional code. Similar patterns have been reported in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where teachers clarify abstract or technical terms through brief L1 insertions (Fachriyah, 2017; Vitriya et al., 2023).

Rather than replacing English input, intra-sentential switching in this study operated at a micro level, allowing the lecturer to emphasize meaning efficiently. This selective use of Indonesian minimized cognitive overload while English remained the primary medium of instruction, indicating that intra-sentential switching can function as a precision tool for conceptual clarification in EFL classrooms.

3.1.3. Tag Code-Switching

Tag switching, although less frequent, was observed when the lecturer added short Indonesian discourse markers to English utterances, particularly to soften explanations or engage students. The following excerpts are presented below:

“This expression is more appropriate for formal register, ya.” (Excerpt 9)

“You can discuss this with your group later, ya.” (Excerpt 10)

“The topic is interesting and relevant, kan, especially for a tropical-studies university like UNMUL.” (Excerpt 11)

Tag switching typically involves brief phrases or discourse markers that do not affect the syntactic structure of the main utterance (Poplack, 1980). In the observed classroom, Indonesian tags such as *ya* and *kan* functioned pragmatically rather than instructional, signaling alignment and inviting student agreement.

Mehdi (2024) argues that tag switching enhances pragmatic richness and reduces social distance between speakers. The present findings support and extend this argument by showing that students perceive informal Indonesian tags as a means of emotional alignment rather than instructional explanation. This suggests that even minimal switching can play a significant affective role in EFL classrooms. Lecturers can use brief, informal L1 tags to build rapport and



reduce anxiety, particularly during interaction or feedback, without interrupting the instructional flow.

This finding supports Mehdi (2024) argument that tag switching enhances interpersonal connection and reduces social distance in instructional settings. In the Sociolinguistics class, tag switching contributed to a more relaxed and inclusive classroom atmosphere, particularly when discussing evaluative judgments about language use. Rather than serving as a tool for explanation, tag switching functioned affectively, reinforcing the lecturer’s approachability and maintaining student engagement.

The use of brief Indonesian tags illustrates how even minimal forms of code-switching can play a meaningful role in managing classroom interaction. This suggests that tag switching, though structurally simple, carries significant pragmatic value in EFL teaching contexts.

3.2. Functions of Lecturers’ Code-Switching

Beyond structural forms, the data reveal that lecturers’ code-switching served multiple pedagogical and interactional functions. Using Macaro (2005) framework, five main functions were identified: explaining material, giving instructions, checking understanding, building rapport, and managing classroom behavior. Among these, explaining material and giving instructions emerged as the most prominent.

Table 2. Saliency of Lecturers’ Code-Switching Functions in EFL Classroom Interaction

No	Code-Switching Function	Instructional Context	Saliency Across Observations
1	Explaining material	Explanation of abstract concepts, example elaboration, feedback on students’ work	Dominant
2	Giving instructions	Task procedures, assignment clarification, activity transitions	Dominant
3	Checking understanding	Comprehension monitoring following explanations	Secondary
4	Building rapport	Informal interaction feedback, classroom engagement	Occasional



5	Managing classroom behavior	Procedural clarity, preventing misunderstanding	Occasional
---	-----------------------------	---	------------

Table 2 summarizes the main pedagogical functions of lecturers' code-switching identified across classroom observations and student interviews. Rather than presenting numerical frequencies, the table reflects relative salience (dominant, secondary, occasional) based on how consistently each function emerged across instructional episodes. This categorization aligns with the qualitative and interpretive nature of the analysis.

3.2.1. Explaining Material

Explaining instructional material emerged as the most dominant function of lecturers' code-switching in EFL classroom interaction. Participants consistently reported that lecturers switched to Indonesian when explaining complex concepts, abstract ideas, or unfamiliar vocabulary. These interview accounts align with observation data showing that Indonesian was typically introduced after English explanations, particularly when comprehension difficulties became visible. Participant 1 states:

"When explaining a certain topic, she suddenly used Indonesian to give examples related to the material." (P1)

Similarly, Participant 2 agrees:

"The explanation is delivered in English, while the examples are given in Indonesian." (P2)

Participant 2 add:

"She usually starts with English and then switches to Indonesian when she sees that students do not understand." (P2)

These findings confirm that code-switching functions as a meaning-making strategy in EFL classrooms, particularly when lecturers respond to visible signs of student difficulty during instructional interaction. Consistent with Macaro (2005), switching to the first language allows teachers to reduce cognitive load and facilitate conceptual understanding, especially



when students lack sufficient linguistic resources in the target language. Cook (2001) similarly emphasizes that strategic use of the L1 can support learners' access to complex grammatical and lexical content.

However, rather than functioning as a default explanatory tool, the present findings extend previous research by showing that explanatory code-switching is interactionally contingent. Lecturers did not immediately rely on Indonesian; instead, they began explanations in English and switched only when comprehension breakdowns became evident. This challenges earlier assumptions that teachers' reliance on the L1 reflects limited pedagogical competence or insufficient commitment to target language use (Anisah & Nasrullah, 2023). Instead, code-switching in this study appears to be a responsive pedagogical decision, shaped by real-time classroom interaction.

From a discourse perspective, explanatory code-switching also operates as a scaffolding mechanism. By alternating languages at critical moments, teachers guide students from unfamiliar English input toward conceptual clarity without abandoning the target language entirely. This aligns with García and Lin (2017) view of multilingual classroom practices as dynamic resources for learning rather than obstacles. Similarly, Albahoth et al. (2024) argue that code-switching should be understood as a flexible instructional strategy that adapts to learners' needs and contextual constraints.

Within the observed instructional episodes, explanatory code-switching did not appear to replace English input but functioned as a temporary clarification following English explanations. Rather than replacing English input, code-switching functioned as a temporary discursive bridge that enabled students to re-engage with English content with greater confidence following clarification. This finding aligns with Chen et al. (2023), who reported increased student engagement and comprehension when explanations were strategically supported by the first language. The observed pattern suggests a staged instructional sequence in which concepts are initially introduced in English, selectively clarified in the first language when comprehension difficulties arise, and subsequently reinforced through continued English



use. Such a pattern allows instructional clarity to be maintained while preserving meaningful exposure to the target language.

3.2.2. Giving Instructions

Giving instructions emerged as another prominent function of lecturers' code-switching in EFL classroom interaction. Participants indicated that lecturers frequently switched to Indonesian when explaining task procedures, assignments, or classroom activities to ensure that all students clearly understood what was required. Participant 1 explained:

"When instructions are fully in English, sometimes I miss the meaning." (P1)

Participant 2 states:

"It is better when the instructions are explained again in Indonesian." (P2)

This finding highlights the role of code-switching as a procedural clarification strategy. In instructional discourse, unclear task instructions may lead to confusion, off-task behavior, or incomplete task execution. By switching to Indonesian at key instructional moments, lecturers minimize ambiguity and ensure that procedural goals are communicated effectively. This supports Macaro (2005) argument that code-switching serves practical classroom management functions, particularly in contexts where students' English proficiency is still developing.

While previous studies often frame instructional code-switching as a necessary accommodation for lower-proficiency learners (Bhatti et al., 2018; Munawaroh et al., 2022), the present findings extend this view by showing that code-switching during instruction is not merely compensatory but strategically selective. Lecturers in this study tended to begin instructions in English and then switched to Indonesian only when clarity was at risk. This pattern suggests that lecturers prioritize target language exposure while remaining sensitive to students' comprehension needs.

Moreover, this practice challenges the assumption that instructional code-switching reduces opportunities for language learning. Instead of replacing English input, Indonesian was used to reinforce procedural understanding, allowing students to focus their cognitive resources



on task performance rather than deciphering instructions. This supports Cook (2001) claim that judicious L1 use can facilitate learning by reducing unnecessary cognitive load.

From an interactional perspective, instructional code-switching also functioned as a discourse boundary marker. The shift in language signaled transitions from content explanation to task execution, helping students recognize when to move from listening to acting. This interactional role aligns with Lin (2013) view that code-switching is systematically embedded in classroom discourse to organize interaction. The observed data indicate a bilingual instructional pattern in which task instructions were initially delivered in English and selectively clarified in the first language when necessary. Following clarification, key procedural elements were frequently re-articulated in English, supporting both task accuracy and continued engagement with the target language.

3.2.3. Checking Understanding

Another prominent function of lecturers' code-switching identified in this study is checking students' understanding during classroom interaction. Participants reported that lecturers often switched to Indonesian when confirming whether students had grasped the lesson or specific explanations. Participant 1 explained:

"When the lecturer explains it again in Indonesian, I understand the material more clearly." (P1)

Participant 2 add:

"She usually switches to Indonesian when asking whether we really understand the material." (P2)

From a discourse-analytic perspective, this practice reflects the use of code-switching as a comprehension-monitoring strategy. By shifting to the students' first language, lecturers reduce the risk that students limited English proficiency masks their actual understanding of the content. This finding supports Macaro (2005) view that L1 use can function as a strategic tool to check comprehension rather than as a substitute for target language instruction.



However, the present findings extend and partially challenge earlier assumptions that comprehension checks should remain strictly in the target language to maximize exposure. While Bhatti et al. (2018) suggest that excessive reliance on L1 may limit students' English practice, students in this study perceived Indonesian-based comprehension checks as enabling more honest and accurate responses. In this sense, code-switching does not reduce interaction but recalibrates it, allowing lecturers to distinguish between linguistic difficulty and conceptual misunderstanding.

Furthermore, the data indicate that checking-understanding code-switching is interactionally responsive. Lecturers did not switch languages arbitrarily but did so after observing signs of confusion, silence, or hesitation. This finding aligns with Lin (2013) argument that classroom code-switching is shaped by moment-to-moment interactional needs. By switching languages at critical points, lecturers create a space where students can express uncertainty without the pressure of linguistic accuracy.

This finding also expands Cook (2001) claim regarding the cognitive role of the first language in the classroom. While Cook emphasizes L1 use for explaining content, the present study shows that L1 is equally important for diagnosing comprehension, allowing lecturers to adjust instruction based on students' actual understanding rather than assumed progress. Lecturers may strategically use the first language when checking understanding, particularly after complex explanations or abstract material. To maintain target language exposure, comprehension checks in L1 can be followed by brief English reformulations, ensuring that conceptual clarity and language learning objectives are both addressed.

3.2.4. Building Rapport

Another significant function of lecturers' code-switching identified in this study is building rapport between lecturers and students. Participants consistently reported feeling more comfortable and emotionally connected when lecturers occasionally used informal Indonesian expressions during classroom interaction. Participant 1 noted:

“Using Indonesian that does not sound too formal makes the class feel more



comfortable.” (P1)

Participant 2 states:

“Code-switching can be a way for lecturers to build closer connections with students.”

(P2)

From a discourse perspective, this finding supports Lin (2013) argument that classroom code-switching serves an important social function by reducing psychological distance and fostering positive interpersonal relationships. In EFL contexts, where students often experience anxiety or insecurity when using English, the strategic use of the first language can create a more supportive and inclusive learning atmosphere.

However, the present findings extend Lin (2013) argument by demonstrating that rapport-building code-switching is not merely affective but also interactionally strategic. Rather than replacing instructional discourse, informal Indonesian expressions were used selectively to soften interaction, signal empathy, or normalize difficulty. This suggests that rapport-oriented code-switching operates at the interpersonal layer of classroom discourse, complementing rather than competing with pedagogical goals.

This finding also challenges views that frame affective code-switching as pedagogically insignificant. Instead, students' perspectives indicate that feeling emotionally supported enhances their willingness to participate and engage in English interaction, aligning with Taufiq et al. (2022), who found that strategic code-switching increases students' classroom participation. The data suggest that brief and informal L1 expressions function as resources for establishing rapport and emotional alignment, particularly during feedback, humor, or moments of difficulty. When used sparingly, such forms of code-switching appear to reduce anxiety and encourage participation without diminishing the dominance of English as the instructional language.



3.2.5. Managing Classroom Behavior

In addition to interpersonal functions, code-switching was also used to manage classroom behavior and maintain instructional control. Participant 1 highlighted this function by stating:

“It prevents students from misunderstanding instructions.” (P1)

Participant 2 add:

“If everything is delivered entirely in English, it can be overwhelming for students” (P2)

Switching to Indonesian during moments of classroom management, such as clarifying rules, addressing confusion, or refocusing attention, ensured that expectations were clearly understood by all students. This finding aligns with Macaro (2005) observation that the first language can be effectively employed to maintain discipline and avoid miscommunication in second language classrooms.

Nevertheless, the present study adds nuance to this perspective by showing that behavior-related code-switching is closely linked to preventive clarity rather than corrective discipline. Rather than being used reactively after problems occurred, lecturers switched languages to pre-empt misunderstanding, particularly in procedural or organizational contexts. This suggests that code-switching functions as a discourse-management tool that supports instructional efficiency and classroom flow.

This finding also complements Anisah and Nasrullah (2023) caution regarding excessive or unplanned code-switching. In the present study, students did not perceive behavior-related switching as excessive, rather, they viewed it as necessary for maintaining clarity and minimizing confusion. This suggests that the effectiveness of classroom management code-switching lies not in its frequency, but in its situational appropriateness within instructional discourse. The data indicate that the use of the first language during classroom management functions as a preventive clarity mechanism, particularly in time-sensitive or organizational contexts. Distinctions between instructional English and managerial



use of the first language appear to support both classroom order and sustained engagement with the target language.

The discussion demonstrates that lecturers' code-switching in EFL classrooms is not random or compensatory, but systematically organized in relation to instructional goals and interactional demands. Specific forms of code-switching tend to co-occur with particular communicative functions, indicating a close relationship between linguistic structure and discourse function. This form–function alignment highlights code-switching as a strategic discourse resource that enables lecturers to manage meaning, interaction, and affect while maintaining English as the primary instructional language. While code-switching appeared to support comprehension and interaction in the observed classroom, excessive or unplanned reliance on the first language may risk reducing opportunities for sustained engagement with English, particularly if clarification becomes habitual rather than responsive to actual comprehension needs.

Despite these findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study is based on a limited number of classroom observations and only two student interviews, which restricts the scope of generalization. The findings therefore reflect localized instructional practices rather than universal patterns of EFL classroom interaction.

While students generally perceived code-switching as supportive, excessive or unplanned reliance on the first language may risk reducing opportunities for student autonomy or extended English interaction, particularly if clarification becomes habitual rather than responsive. This highlights the importance of selective and situational use of code-switching rather than routine dependence.

Based on the observed data, three practical guidelines may be suggested for EFL lecturers. First, explanations can be initiated in English and selectively clarified in the first language only when comprehension difficulties become visible. Second, brief L1 use may be employed strategically for procedural clarity or rapport-building without interrupting instructional flow. Third, lecturers may re-articulate key points in English following L1



clarification to maintain sustained exposure to the target language. These guidelines emphasize responsiveness rather than frequency as the key principle governing classroom code-switching.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that lecturers' code-switching in an Indonesian EFL classroom is a patterned and interactionally responsive practice rather than a random instructional habit. The findings indicate that three primary forms, inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching were used selectively to explain material, give instructions, check understanding, build rapport, and manage classroom behavior. Rather than functioning as a replacement for English instruction, the use of the first language operated as a temporary discursive bridge that supported comprehension and sustained student engagement at critical moments of classroom interaction.

By examining both linguistic forms and pedagogical functions within a unified analytical framework, this study highlights a clear form-function alignment, showing that language alternation is systematically embedded in instructional discourse rather than a random instructional technique. Students' perspectives further suggest that code-switching is a co-constructed and negotiated classroom practice, shaped by moment-to-moment interactional needs rather than by fixed teaching routines.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations, including the small number of interview participants and the focus on a single instructional setting. As such, the study does not aim to generalize across EFL contexts but to provide a situated, discourse-oriented account of classroom code-switching practices. Nevertheless, several practical implications emerge from the data. Lecturers may consider (1) prioritizing English for conceptual framing while using the first language selectively for clarification, (2) employing brief L1 switches to monitor comprehension and manage classroom interaction, and (3) limiting code-switching to moments where it clearly supports understanding or affective engagement.



Future research could extend this work by incorporating lecturers' perspectives, involving larger and more diverse participant samples, and employing more fine-grained interactional analyses to further explore how code-switching may both support and, in certain contexts, constrain learner autonomy and participation in EFL classrooms.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the sixth-semester students of the English Education Department at Mulawarman University who participated in this study. Their insights and reflections were invaluable to the completion of this research. The authors also acknowledge the support provided by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Mulawarman University.

5. References

- Albahoth, Z. M., Jabar, M. A. bin A., & Jalis, F. M. B. M. (2024). A Systematic Review of the Literature on Code-Switching and a Discussion on Future Directions. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v14-i2/20452>
- Almutairi, L., & Alqarni, R. (2024). Evaluating the Efficacy of Code-Switching as a Strategy for Enhancing ESL Instruction. *English Language Teaching*, 17(7), 64. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v17n7p64>
- Aminah, S., Nur, D. R., & Ariyanti, A. (2019). An Analysis of Teacher Talk used by English Teacher at SMKN 5 Samarinda. *Borneo Educational Journal (Borju)*, 1(1), 22–28. <https://doi.org/10.24903/bej.v1i1.256>
- Anisah, N., & Nasrullah, N. (2023). Code-Switching in English as a Second Language (ESL) Classroom Settings: A Strategy or a Problem? *Asatiza: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 4(3), 137–155. <https://doi.org/10.46963/asatiza.v4i3.859>
- Arbain, A., & Nur, D. R. (2017). Techniques for teaching speaking skill in Widya Gama Mahakam University. *Script Journal: Journal of Linguistics and English Teaching*, 2(1), 13–25. <https://doi.org/10.24903/sj.v2i1.80>



-
- Arbain, A., & Rohman, A. (2023). Dubbing as a Pedagogical Tool: An Experimental Study on Eleventh-Grade Students at SMAN 8 Samarinda. *EDUCASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Pengajaran, Dan Pembelajaran*, 8(2), 147–156. <https://doi.org/10.21462/educasia.v8i2.155>
- Arbain, A., Taufik, A., & Nur, D. R. (2017). *Daily English Phrases Book*. UWGM Press.
- Bhatti, A., Shamsudin, S., & Said, S. B. M. (2018). Code-Switching: A Useful Foreign Language Teaching Tool in EFL Classrooms. *English Language Teaching*, 11(6), 93. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n6p93>
- Chen, X., Xiao, J., & Liu, Y. (2023). The Application of Code-switching in Chinese College Students Second Language Acquisition. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 3(1), 1056–1063. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/3/2022748>
- Cook, V. (2001). Using the First Language in the Classroom. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57(3), 402–423. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.57.3.402>
- Erliana, U., & Arbain, A. (2020). The Effectiveness of Using Video Clip in Teaching English Vocabulary at SD Fastabiqul Khairat Samarinda. *IJOTL-TL: Indonesian Journal of Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 5(2), 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.30957/ijotl.v5i2.623>
- Fachriyah, E. (2017). The functions of code switching in an English language classroom. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 4(2), 148–156. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v4i2.6327>
- García, O., & Lin, A. M. Y. (2017). Translanguaging in Bilingual Education. In O. García, A. M. Y. Lin, & S. May (Eds.), *Bilingual and Multilingual Education* (pp. 117–130). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02258-1_9
- Gracella, J., & Rahman Nur, D. (2020). Students' Perception of English Learning through YouTube Application. *Borneo Educational Journal (Borju)*, 2(1), 20–35. <https://doi.org/10.24903/bej.v2i1.623>
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). Discourse Strategies. In *Studies in Interactional Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge University Press. [https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511611834](https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/CBO9780511611834)
- Lin, A. (2013). *Classroom code-switching: three decades of research*. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 4(1), 195–218. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/applirev-2013-0009>
- Macaro, E. (2005). Codeswitching in the L2 Classroom: A Communication and Learning Strategy. In E. Llurda (Ed.), *Non-Native Language Teachers: Perceptions, Challenges*



and Contributions to the Profession (pp. 63–84). Springer US. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-24565-0_5

- Mehdi, S. (2024). Code-Switching and Its Stylistic Effects in Multilingual Communities. *EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education*, 1(3), 171–180. <https://doi.org/10.69760/egjlle.202401030011>
- Munawaroh, H., Hartono, R., & Sakhiyya, Z. (2022). The Use of Code-Switching in EFL Classroom Instruction and Interaction. *English Education Journal*, 12(1), 38–46. <https://doi.org/10.15294/eej.v12i1.50517>
- Murtiningsih, S. R., Munawaroh, M., & Hidayatulloh, S. M. M. (2022). Code-switching in EFL classrooms: factors influencing teachers to use code-switching and its types used in the classrooms. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 12(2), 318–338. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v12i2.3941>
- Nur, D. R. (2020). Virtual Reality adoption in Indonesia higher Education from lecturer's voice. *English Teaching Journal: A Journal of English Literature, Language and Education*, 8(1), 31–35. <https://doi.org/10.25273/etj.v8i1.6672>
- Nur, D. R., & Jamilah, J. (2022). English Language Imperative Level in Indonesia. *Intensive Journal*, 5(1), 36–43. <http://dx.doi.org/10.31602/intensive.v5i1.5986>
- Poplack, S. (1980). *Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish Y TERMINO EN ESPAÑOL: toward a typology of code-switching I*. *Linguistics*, 18(7–8), 581–618. <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/ling.1980.18.7-8.581>
- Puspawati, I. (2018). Teachers' Use of Code Switching in EFL Classroom and its Functions. *Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning*, 3(1), 42–51. <https://doi.org/10.18196/ftl.3128>
- Syahrin, R. P. (2024). ENGLISH TEACHERS' USE OF CODE-SWITCHING IN LANGUAGE TEACHING. *ELP (Journal of English Language Pedagogy)*, 9(2), 215–230. <https://doi.org/10.36665/elp.v9i2.936>
- Taufiq, M. A., Eka Putri, R., & Asmawati, A. (2022). Code-Switching: A Strategy to Increase Students Participation In Efl Classroom Interaction. *Journal of Educational Management and Strategy*, 1(2), 170–175. <https://doi.org/10.57255/jemast.v1i2.218>
- Vitriya, N., Luthfiyati, D., & Widayaiswara, T. (2023). Teachers' code mixing and code switching: Insights on language barriers in EFL classroom. *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora*, 27(2). <https://doi.org/10.21831/hum.v27i2.52446>



Borneo Educational Journal (Borju)

<https://jurnal.fkip-uwgm.ac.id/index.php/Borju>

Volume 8, Issues 1, February, 2026

EISSN : 2655-9323

Section : Research Article

Page : 165-190

DOI : 10.24903/bej.v8i1.2318

Zatalini, N. A. (2024). CODE-SWITCHING AS LANGUAGE TEACHING STRATEGY IN THE EFL ONLINE CLASSROOM. *SALIMIYA: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Keagamaan Islam*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.58401/salimiya.v5i3.1557>