

# **INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES: A REASON TO USE CODE SWITCHING TO TEACH ENGLISH**

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## **Introduction**

Kachru (1992) classifies the spreads of English into three stratifications called *concentric circle* differentiated into *Inner Circle*, *Outer Circle*, and *Expanding Circle*. Dardjowidjojo (1996) notes Indonesia belongs to the expanding circle with the speakers amounting to 175.904.000 people. Despite the three stratifications of concentric circle, in reality English has developed and shifted to world language in almost all settings (Crystal, 1997); McKay, 2002). In other words, English is as international medium to compete among others in terms of fulfilling needs, science and technology.

The shift of English to world language or global language has given impact to the policy of English language teaching in non-native English countries, in terms of particularly curriculum and effective approaches or methods to teach English as a global language. The use of KTSP in Indonesia for example, is the latest change of curriculum recommending the use of communicative approach or method, aiming at preparing the students with ability to communicate in English as a global language. However, in fact the teaching of English has been still a common problem in non-native countries including Indonesia. The teachers seem to have not been well prepared to implement the communicative competence recommended by the curriculum. In other words, the teachers still use L1 (first language), even for most of the time during classroom instruction. Liu et al (2004) for example, reported code

switching by the South Korean High School English Teachers to explain difficult words and grammar.

In Indonesia in particular, the communicative approach recommended since the implementation of 1984 curriculum still fail to answer the global requirements. Djiwandono (2009) for instance mentions a number of reasons, among others, are teachers' ability, big classes, curriculum, and culture. In addition to these reasons, Semiun (2009) reported the use of code switch, English and Indonesian, of the senior high school EFL teachers in West Timor the province of East Nusa Tenggara. The unusual fact is that the use of code switching is also by the teachers of great oral ability. By means of two-way ANOVA, there is no significant difference between the S1 and Non-S graduate teachers.

Semiun (2009) also reported that the classroom teaching recordings show that even those of long teaching experience, found hard to use English. They use Indonesian for almost most of the time of classroom instruction. As they were interviewed, they acknowledged if they were still not confident to use English and therefore were happy if they have opportunity to go for further study. Many of them agreed if they did not use English when they came across with more complex discourses containing grammar focus such as English passives, conditional sentences, reported speech, and different types of genres. The way they taught was not to prepare the students to use English but to make their students well prepared for final examination (UN/ujian nasional). The teachers interviewed admitted also that they used Indonesian due to the poor English of their students, even those of language department. To sum, the factor of individual preference had caused teachers of great and low oral ability of senior high school EFL teachers in West Timor to use code switching and or code mixing as a medium of instruction.

## Using Code Switching to Teach English

Code switching (CS) and or code mixing (CM) are common speech patterns which are phenomenal in bilingual society. Since it is an oral form of language use, CS is a discourse to express pragmatic functions in forms of transactional or interpersonal interactions in various speech situations for various purposes. If these are considered determinant factors, CS is also seen as an essential part in sociolinguistics where various social elements trigger to interchangeably use two different languages. The sociolinguistic approach in terms of setting, topic, participants, and so on can be used to study CS as also presented in Susanto (2008).

As cited by Susanto (2008), Romaine (1995: 122-123) classifies code switching into three types: *tag-switching*, *intersentential*, and *intrasentential* code switching. The first deals with the use of tag-question of one language to a sentence of another language. The second deals with the interchangeable use of sentences of two different languages the so usually called code switching, which is an ability to switch from one language to another language. Meanwhile the interchangeable use of different words of different languages within a sentence, the so popularly termed code mixing, is seen as a transfer of a linguistic unit (words, phrases, clauses) from one language into another. It is interesting that the second and the third types seem to have no difference. Such being no difference is also said by Bokamba (1989) in Ayeomoni (2006). He says that CS and CM differ only in small language unit where code mixing includes affixes or function words that are rare in most languages. Take for example the code mixing in English-Spanish reported by Spradlin et al. (2003), such as *la house*. The *la* here is a Spanish determiner mixed with an English lexical *house*, usually spoken by young bilingual children.

Many researches in the area of CS and CM in the context of teaching have been done. Liu et al. (2004) for example, reported the use of CS in South Korean classroom English instructions. In brief, by applying multiple method i.e. questionnaire survey, recording, and interview questions, to Korean background EFL teachers and students, they found that CS was favorably used as medium in developing English acquisition process. To a certain extent, either English or Korean was beneficial in terms of helping the students understand the topic they learned.

To take an example in Indonesia, maybe the one conducted by Tulung reported in Cahyono and Widiati (2004). Concentrating on teacher talk, Tulung accomplished his case study designed with a task-based instruction involving two proficient and ten-years experienced English teachers. The teachers were negotiated to teach reading skills under a controlled topic “Influenza”, one to a class of ten, and the other to a class of nine students. The proficient and experienced teachers taught in the classes of very small number of students. Tulung reports that the teachers also used L1 (Indonesian) if they think students did not understand what they meant. The teachers adjusted the use of English to the students’ proficiency level of English; He reports that to a certain degree the use of L1 is beneficial for students’ understanding.

In addition to favoring L1 in learning L2 or FL, Nation (2003) had highlighted more effective use of L1 by a teacher by translating his explanations or saying the meanings of unfamiliar words to students. According to Nation, the effectiveness of L1 for such purpose had been so long argued by for examples Lado, Baldwin and Lobo (1967) or Mishima (1967). Similarly, McKeown (1993), also cited in Nation (2003), contends that using L1 for the purposes as such is because of L1 translations are usually clear, short, familiar, and holding qualities in effective

definitions. In terms of comprehension, Similarly, Brooks and Donato (1994) or Swain and Lapkin (2000) claim the L1 enables L2 students to negotiate meaning and communicate successfully in target language. Again, Ayeomoni (2006) found CS is a phenomenal case and prevalent not only in childhood speech community but also in English language teacher community in Yoruba.

To sum, the findings as well as opinions presented above may be sufficient to conclude that, the use of L1 and target language, so popularly termed code switching, to a certain degree, is still favored by EFL teachers in this global era because it still plays a particular role to help certain learners' or students' interlanguage develop and to help the teachers themselves to help explain in order to make their learners or students understand. This is an interesting phenomenon indicating that the use of L1 can never be avoided as long as the teaching of English as a target language is set in non-native countries. In addition, the same phenomenon seems to indicate that the use of L1 in all types of context is a kind of national spirit expression. The non-native countries desire to keep their language side by side with English as a global language. However, the favor of using L1 does not mean to minimize L2 during L2 classroom teaching. Turnbull (2001), Wells (1999) and Atkinson (1993) admit the use of L1 but strongly suggest to always maximize L2 in the L2 classroom, the only place for the students to use English.

The article specifically presents CS performed by senior high school EFL teachers in West Timor, making use the data collected by Semiun (2009) in order to help discuss the CS dealt with by this article. It is an attempt to look at the use of CS, the combination of English and Indonesian, seen as teachers' strategy to help them easily explain or express on one side, and to make what they say communicative or understood by their students on the other. As we can see from the

following recorded data and the discussion about them, the teachers combine English words or sentences with those of Indonesian, in four ways of CS, regarded as the types of CS used as medium by the teachers in classroom.

### **(1) Random mixing**

As shown by the examples below, what to mean by “random mixing” here is the combinations of different words within a sentence, the so called *intrasentential* by Romaine (1995). The teachers mix up English words with Indonesian words in a sentence randomly. As we can figure it out, there is no certain pattern to rule how words of two different languages are mixed. Thus, the English words can take initial position or vice versa. Consider the following data as samples.

- (1) **We will discuss about discussion text because**, *ujian praktek nanti kalian akan membuat **discussion text**, di mana kadang-kadang kita temukan **conflict or problem**.*
- (2) *Nah, sekarang kita sudah punya **difficult words** yang ada dalam teks.*
- (3) *Ini hari, **who is absent?***
- (4) **It is like container**, *seperti lemari-lemari, untuk simpan arsip.*
- (5) *Kalau ada persoalan, **we must tell what the problem is about.***
- (6) *Dia pikir itu anjing yg lain **with another piece of meat***

The data show that the order of the words or phrases is syntactically remained. Each of the examples seems to show a complete sentence. Take sentence (2) for example, “difficult words” is the object of the mixed words sentence. Then in sentence (3) *Ini hari* is an adverb of time of the sentence: *Ini hari, who is absent?* *Kalau ada persoalan* in (5) is an if-clause of the main-clause: *we must tell what the problem is about*. These seem similar with those in Spanish-English code mixing as reported by Dussias (no date) where English words follow Spanish ones in a sentence but grammatically correct, meaning the grammatical rules of English are kept maintained.

The examples presented above can be interpreted that the use of Indonesian words is not because of difficulty neither for the teachers nor for the students. The only approximately convincing estimation is that the teachers are not very sure with how to say Indonesian words in English, or vice versa, during such fast speaking. Consider for example, sentences (1), (2), (3) and (4). In other words, the teachers are trying to avoid long pause between thinking process and speech uttering when they are speaking. The teachers use CS as an interaction strategy to avoid long pauses within an utterance or a sentence. In that way the teachers may be dominated by their individual preference to avoid long pauses rather than for the purpose of easily understanding on the part of the students. Then, the students are assumed to be able to understand their teachers. As we can see, there is no part of the sentence as a repetition in a translation form in order to help the students understand their teachers.

The examples can also show that the use of CS can be due to a kind of a language variation found in a society of bilingual or multilingual speakers, that in Indonesian for instance, the combination like that is now trend due to most Indonesians are bilingual. People in society tend to mix their sentences with whatever high-status languages they know. Sentence (5) in particular, is seen as a way to tell or explain the meaning of the word *container*. Meanwhile mixing up Indonesian and English words in sentences (6) and (7) is seen as for variation, meaning they can say either in Indonesian or in English and the students have no problem with it. Such mixing type could be an example to show *equivalence constraint* regarded as a strategy in social interaction (Skiba, 1997). The speakers tend to switch code in a sentence as long as the sentence does not violate the grammar of either code

## (2) English-Indonesian translation or vice versa

This type is a combination where an English sentence precedes its translation into Indonesian, or vice versa. Consider the following examples.

- (1) **I will read twice for you.** *Ibu akan baca dua kali utk kamu.*
- (2) *Yang tahu, angkat tangan!* **Raise your hand!**
- (3) **So what is accountant?** *Apa itu akuntan?*
- (4) **You usually come late.** *Selalu datang terlambat.*
- (5) **Have you taken notes about hortatory exposition?** *Sudah pernah catat?*
- (6) **It is expensive, because it is very thick.** *Karena nampaknya tebal sekali.*
- (7) **Who can make conclusion of this material.** *Coba simpulkan?*
- (8) **When the dog cuts the shadow, the dog opened its mouth.** *Jadi dia, begitu mau menangkap, mulutnya terbuka.*

As shown by the examples, the use of CS or CM is not to explain but to emphasize instead by using free translation for two reasons. First, the teachers assume that (some of) their students do not understand their teachers' English. The other is that the use of Indonesian is to vary the speech because as we can observe, no English word is thought difficult for the students that the teachers need to translate them into Indonesian. Sentence (2) in particular, shows that the use of English *raise your hand* after Indonesian "yang tahu, angkat tangan" (not the other way round order) is so clear that it is to vary the speech. Here the instruction to raise hands, that is, "yang tahu angkat tangan" is very clear for the students because it is Indonesian. So, the use of English *raise your hand* is not to translate but to vary the speech. The examples are in line with what Tarone in Savignon and Berns (1984) says that such kind of translation is a kind of *borrowing*, where teachers mix target language with native language term "without bothering to translate". Such kind of translation is regarded as a strategy and is made upon the teachers' decision in terms of individual preference.



Linguistically the sentences perform different types of sentences to indicate a certain intention in terms of language functions. Sentence (1) is an affirmative to convey information about an instruction of how to do a practice on pronunciation and listening comprehension. Sentence (2) is an order to request an action in terms of checking comprehension. Sentence (3) is a kind of question to request information in terms of comprehension check. Sentence (4) is an affirmative to express feeling in terms of advising not to come late. Sentence (5) is a question of confirmation check to request information. Sentence (6) is an affirmative to convey information about something. Sentence (7) is a question to request information in terms of checking comprehension. The last, sentence (8) is an affirmative to convey information about an interesting behave of a dog.

### **(3) English precedes Indonesian or vice versa**

This type belongs to the so called intersentential type according to Romaine (1995). As shown by the examples below, an English sentence precedes an Indonesian sentence but for different ideas or intentions. It is clear that the idea or meaning of English words said first is different from that of Indonesian said next, or vice versa. Thus, the next sentence is not the translation of the first.

- (1) **The next meeting will be about explanation that also comes up during the examination practice.** *Jangan lupa pelajari kembali apa yg kita diskusikan hari ini.*
- (2) *Mengapa kita harus belajar teks yg menjelaskan ini?* **Because, in our life, we must tell, we must say, and explain something if we have problem.**
- (3) **I hope Markus, please you come in front of class, take a chalk to write down the sentence using a conditional sentence.** *Di dalam simple dialog itu saya kira ada beberapa kalimat conditional, Saya minta Anda untuk menulis satu kalimat conditional yang sudah Anda identifikasi tadi.*

The examples indicate that the teachers believe that their students understand what they mean, so that they need not change or translate the code into Indonesian. Instead, they continue by saying a sentence of another code, Indonesian, that bears a different meaning from the former one. In example (1), English sentence initiates the type of switch to give information. It is followed by Indonesian sentence functioning to remind the students (*Do not forget to learn again what we have discussed today*). In example (2), Indonesian sentence initiates the switch in the form of rhetorical question (*Why should we learn the explanatory text?*) functioning to request information. It is followed by English sentence, the answer of the question functioning to give information. In sentence (3), English sentence initiates the switch functioning to request action. It is followed by Indonesian sentence functioning to convey information (*In a simple dialogue, I think there are some conditional sentences. I ask you to write a conditional sentence that you have identified just now*).

It is clear then that the examples show the teachers' preference. The students show nothing about their comprehension problem towards their teachers' speech. Thus, changing English into Indonesian or vice versa is not the problem on the part of the students. There is no part in each sentence which is a translation to signal a repetition for easily comprehending on the part of the students.

#### **(4) English sentences precede Indonesian sentences or vice versa**

The last type indicates the extension of the third type presented above but the next part (its switch) can be the extension of either the second or the third types. As we can observe from the examples, more than one English sentence precede more than one Indonesian sentence, or vice versa. As we can see from the following

examples, the teachers tend to use more than one English sentence before they use Indonesian sentences.

- (1) *Sementara hortatory penulis memberikan rekomendasi berupa saran atau usul kepada pembaca, bahwa seharusnya masalah ini begini jalan keluarnya. Jadi fungsinya membujuk, meyakinkan pembaca agar dia setuju dengan pendapat penulis. Itu fungsi social. The purpose is to persuade the readers or listeners. Uuh, in the LKS there is no about this kind of text. Because there are only three types, narrative, analytical and description, that we have discussed last time.*
- (2) **Based on the story or based on the text, I can explain to you like this. I will draw here a forest. The text said that rainforest consists of four layers. What is first? emergent tree. OK ya. May be somebody has comment? Emergent trees itu puncak-puncak dari pohon. Pohon-pohon yang paling tinggi itu di atasnya menjulur keluar, ya?. Kita kalau naik pesawat kita lihat ujung-ujun pohon, dan itu yg disebut emergent tree. Dia ini menerima banyak sinar mata hari. Menerima banyak sinar matahari, itu juga yang membuat bisa bertumbuh lebih tinggi dari yang lain.**
- (3) **One billion rupiah, not one billion rupiahs. You must say one billion rupiah. And don't say two billion rupiah, but two billion rupiahs. Ya, it is different between one billion rupiah and two billion rupiahs. Mengapa kita mengatakan bahwa, menyebut satu rupiah dengan dua rupiah dalam bahasa Inggris beda? Karena yang satunya tidak tambah huruf -s dibelakang rupiah dan yang dua miliar rupiah ditambah -s di belakang. Satu menunjukkan tunggal. Satu rupia itu tunggal, tapi dua rupiah itu sudah jamak. Maka rupiahnya ditambah -s di belakang.**
- (4) **If I asked, what type of story, you can answer narrative. But my question is what kind of story is the text about? Fable. Fable is a kind of uuh, narrative text that talks about animal. Jadi fable itu menceritakan tentang kehidupang binatang. Tapi sebenarnya dia itu adalah dongeng perumpamaan. Binatang, kalau kita bandingkan dengan manusia itu, bagaimana eh? Maksud dari cerita itu.**

Like those of type three, these examples indicate that the students find no difficulty to understand their teachers English. So the teachers tend to finish first what they want to say in English or in Indonesian before they change the code, or they do not have to repeat or explain about what they mean by using English sentences. The teachers know that the students can understand what they say in both codes. This is just showing a phenomenon of a bilingual society.

As we can go through each example above, example (1) starts with Indonesian sentences and they are followed by English sentences. The first Indonesian sentences are to explain and so are the second. Example (2) starts with English sentences to explain. However, the next Indonesian sentences are to explain the meaning of an English phrase *emergent tree* in the first sentences. Thus, it is not the translation but the explanation of the phrase. Like example (2), the examples (3) and (4) are to explain again what is being learned, but it is not in terms of translation. Then, except example (1), the examples (2), (3), and (4) are in affirmative and question constructions, but all are to explain to convey information.

To conclude, the types of CS discussed above show that the use of CS performed by the teachers of English in classroom setting is for the purpose of avoiding long pause, telling the meanings of words, linguistically varying the sentence types as interaction strategy, and for easy understanding on the part of the students. Switching the code as such is nothing to deal with role system of code in terms of social status, different setting, etc. as argued by sociolinguists like Montgomery (1986). Instead, it is a strategy to achieve teaching objectives the so termed “kompetensi dasar” outlined based on standard competency so termed “standar kompetensi” in “KTSP” (Mulyasa, 2007).

### **Individual Preferences: a reason to use code switching**

The word ‘preference’ deals with one’s favorite to be his or her first choice because of feeling it the most desired. Once someone determines his or her choice, he or she has made decision for his or her choice. The decision is made upon his or her desire towards a number choice (Kramer et al. (2006). In social networks, people always consider first before they participate in any public activities. The consideration they make results with different participation from others because of

the individual preferences; even some people may decide not to participate. This is in line with studies of Klandermans (1997) and Marwell and Oliver (1993) founded on the theory that individual preferences and perceptions are strong predictors of engagement. They report if individual preferences affect differential participation, that is, the intensity to which one is involved in movement activities. They claim that individual preferences have a direct positive effect on the level of participation compared to collective preferences.

Individual preferences also enter into the world of teaching and learning context. In terms of teaching and learning, Cano et al (1992) for example, say that “each teacher is unique in many ways” due to difference in learning style, teaching style and personality style. Learning style deals with the way learners use to get and process information. From the way the learners learn, many researches conclude that not all students learn the same. Therefore it is expected that the teachers teach in such a way that all learning styles of the students be incorporated. In other words, to teach the students the teachers should be able to identify first their students’ learning style.

Semiun (2009) reported how individual preference affects the teachers to use CS or CM. He claims that higher degree of education does not always affect higher intensity of using English during classroom instruction. *Outside* and *inside* factors can limit the intensity of using English of the teachers of higher education degree. The factors result with preference of the teachers. Conversely, higher intensity of using English of the teachers of lower education degree could be possible.

Viewed form the *inside* factors, teachers can be differentiated into adequate and inadequate oral English proficiency. The teachers of the inadequate or adequate English proficiency can be of higher degree of education (S1) or of lower education

degree (Non-S1). It is usual that a teacher of higher education can be better in proficiency and higher in intensity of using English than of a lower education, but it is also possible the other way round. In short, higher education cannot always guarantee better proficiency and higher intensity as long as it is concerned with non-native English speakers. People of non-English specialization for example, such as priests or Ex-seminary teachers, can be better in speaking skill than those of English specialization due to a number of various factors. As reported by Semiun (2009) few teachers of the senior high schools in West Timor do not specialize in English, S1 or D3 degree. They are priests or Ex High Seminaries who have learned English since they were at Junior Seminary (equal to junior and senior high schools). They are assigned to teach English to a number of state senior high school students of any departments, science, social and language.

Viewed from the outside factors, Semiun found that the teachers limit the intensity of using English due to factors of class size, students basic English, curriculum requirement, level of difficulty of teaching topics, class levels, institution mission, English debate competition, types of schools (state and private schools) and school facilities.

In terms of types of school in particular, state schools particularly in West Timor, can be geographically grouped into those in towns and those in villages. The private schools can be those categorized as favorite and common private schools. To explain more in detail, the students enroll to the schools (state or private schools, or favorite or common schools) also vary. It is usual that those who are fast learning and high economic students gather at favorite state or private schools, while those of slow learning and low economic students gather at common state and private schools. It is certain that they also vary in terms of learning style as said by Cano et

al (1992). The higher intensity of using English by the teachers is also affected by such types of schools.

The teachers who randomly scatter over the schools described above perform differently in the following way. The teachers of adequate English proficiency of S1 graduates can always use English to students of state or private favorite schools where fast learning students gather, but other teachers of the same background limit their use of English to students of common state or private schools where slow learning students gather. Meanwhile, the teachers of inadequate English competence and of lower education degree can be the other way round. They seem to force themselves to always use English because they teach at favorite states or private school where fast learning students gather, but other teachers of the same background cannot or are not able to use English due to their own factor or factor of slow learning students. This unique phenomenon seriously happens in schools in villages where outside factors for the teachers to use or not to use English are vital. In that condition individual preference highly dominates.

### **Conclusion and implication**

It is usual that non-native senior high school EFL teachers in West Timor use CS and or CM as a medium of instruction. The use of CS or CM is for the purpose of effectiveness and efficiency on the part of teachers, and for understanding and learning on the part of the students. In terms of effectiveness the teachers use language one (L1) as a strategy for easy presentation while in terms of efficiency the teachers use L1 to cover all of the materials in curriculum to prepare the students for semester or national examination. This is beyond the purpose of communicative ability required by globalization.

The use of CS and or CM nowadays has entered into the world of English language teaching. The senior high school EFL teachers in West Timor in particular,

perform four types of code switching for different purposes. The use of L1 (Indonesian) can be in forms of words, phrases, and sentences, and the order can be of two version, i.e. Indonesian precedes English or vice versa. In short, the types of the CS or CM are (1) Random mixing, (2) English-Indonesian translation or vice versa, (3) English precedes Indonesian or vice versa, (4) English sentences precede Indonesian sentences.

The use of CS and or CM implies at least two “homework” as follow. First, in terms of global pressure requirement, the government needs to empower practicing EFL teachers particularly in both junior and senior high schools in West Timor in terms of their English oral ability to prepare the students with communicative competence recommended by “KTSP” curriculum. Then, in terms of quality of English education of tomorrow, the English studies programs in teacher faculties, particularly in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur, need to look for more accurate and precise alternative way to recruit new students of English department.

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