

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CODE SWITCHING FOR MIXED-ABILITY ESP CLASSES

Maulida Yuniswati

Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang

Maulida.yuniswati@gmail.com

Abstract

Code switching is the alternation between two or more languages in a speaker's speech (Yamat et.al, 2011:19). It is believed that code switching occurs naturally as an indicator of bilingualism. Classroom code switching starts to gain importance in language learning classes (Chowdhury, 2013:42) and becomes a controversial issue in the EFL classes. The language teachers who support classroom code switching in the EFL classes consider that it facilitates the continuity of the speech. It also serves as an aid to transfer meaning and communicative purpose. On the other hand, the ones who against the application of code switching in classrooms view a mother tongue as interference which hampers the learning environment. It makes the students become less interested in listening to the target language and gain low English proficiency. However, from several notable papers under classroom code switching, it can be concluded that code switching as one of scaffolding activities does assist the students in learning English. Code switching plays an important role both as the facilitative and the affective function.

Keywords : *Code switching, ESP*

INTRODUCTION

Code switching is the alternation between two or more languages in a speaker's speech (Yamat et.al, 2011:19). It is believed that code switching occurs naturally as an indicator of bilingualism. Code switching, in addition, is a common phenomenon in a multilingual society where English is taught and grammatical rules are explained with the assistance of the native language (Chowdhury, 2013:41). In other words, code switching cannot be avoided in EFL classes.

During the 1990s, classroom code switching starts to gain importance in language learning classes (Chowdhury, 2013:42) and becomes a controversial issue in the EFL classes.

The language teachers who support classroom code switching in the EFL classes consider that it facilitates the continuity of the speech. It also serves as an aid to transfer meaning and communicative purpose. On the other hand, the ones who against the application of code switching in classrooms view a mother tongue as interference which hampers the learning environment. It makes the students become less interested in listening to the target language and gain low English proficiency.

However, Richards and Rodgers, as noted by Chowdhury (2013:41), in Communicative Language Teaching both native and target language can be used with the condition that “judicious use of native language

is accepted where feasible". Cook (1996), further, mentions the New Concurrent Approach developed by Rodolpho Jacobson where the teachers can utilize a balanced usage of two languages in certain situations such as to discuss important points, to attract students' attention when they are distracted or to praise or to tell-off the students. It can be concluded that code switching is used as a medium of instruction and is used for other purposes in classroom discourse.

Furthermore, Peter Martin, as noted by Jeremy Harmer (2009: 131), quoted an English language teacher from Brunei whom he had interviewed:

"I try not to (use Malay) but sometimes you have. If we don't use Malay, they won't understand, especially some of the textbooks. The words are difficult. I don't like to use Malay if inspectors are here but I sometimes do. Otherwise the (the pupils) won't understand and they (the inspectors) might consider us as bad teachers."

Referring to the theories suggested by Cook (1996) and the real circumstance in classrooms reveals that code switching facilitates language teaching in EFL setting.

The condition, which is experienced by language teacher from Brunei, is pretty similar to the problems that are faced by EFL teachers or even ESP teachers in Indonesia. In ESP classes, the teachers are obliged to use the target language within the classroom for any kind of communication. However, the students with low English proficiency might find it difficult to

understand the words or even the text. If the ESP teachers ignore the existence of low English Proficiency students, they might lose their motivation to learn English. It is acknowledged for most fields of learning that motivation is essential to success (Harmer, 2009: 98). Hence, code-switching as teaching strategy might be implemented to tackle this problem.

A study on classroom code switching of English language teachers has been conducted by Nargis Chowdhury (2013). The aims are to focus on the reasons for teachers' code switching and the attitude of the teachers and students towards classroom code switching. A survey was conducted for data collection where two different sets of questionnaires were used for teachers and students. 20 English language teachers and 37 undergrad students from different universities participated in the survey. The findings of the survey result in identifying the reasons for teachers' code switching like ease of communication, explanation, maintaining discipline in the classroom, translation of the unknown terms etc. On the other hand, although many teachers consider that they should not switch codes in the class room, students possess a positive attitude towards it.

The aims of the paper, similarly, are to describe the functions of ESP teachers do code switching in the classroom. The information obtained from this article is expected to be useful for the ESP teachers, in order to assist them identify the areas where they need to code switching. For the future writers the article is expected to serve as a reference that is beneficial for them in writing similar topic.

DISCUSSION

The teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in a mixed-ability class

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is an approach to language teaching which aims to unify the need of particular learners. It can be defined a sphere of teaching English language including Business English, Technical English, Scientific English, English for medical professionals, English for Mechanic, English for waiters, English for tourism, English for Art Purposes, English for secretary, English for lawyer, etc.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is not a matter of teaching 'specialized varieties' of English. The fact that the language is used for a specific purpose does not imply that it is a special form of the language, different in kind from other forms. Certainly, there are some features which can be identified as a typical of a particular context of use and which, therefore, the learners are more likely to meet in the target situation. But these differences should not be allowed to obscure the far larger area of common ground that underlies all English use, and indeed, all language use. In addition, ESP is not also just a matter of science words or grammar for scientist, hotel words, and grammar for hotel staff and so on. That is because ESP has to consider the students' need and students' reason in learning. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is not different in kind from any other form of language teaching. It should be based on the effective and efficient learning. Though the content of learning may vary, there is no reason to suppose that the process of learning should be any

difference for the ESP students than for the English General students. In other words, there is no such thing as ESP methodology, merely methodologies that have been applied in ESP classrooms, but it could just as well have been used in the learning of any kind of English. It can be concluded that the characteristics of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) include:

- a. ESP is design to meet specified needs of the learners;
- b. ESP is related in content that is in its themes and topics, to particular disciplines, occupations, and activities;
- c. ESP learns material not only theoretically but also practically;
- d. ESP is in contrast with general English;
- e. ESP may be restricted as to the learning skills to be learnt; and
- f. ESP may not be taught according to any preordained methodology.

Scaffolding Strategy

Scaffolding theory (Yamat et.al: 2011) describes the social and instructional support for students learning new concepts. Scaffolding instructions as a teaching strategy originates from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and his concept of ZPD that is the "distance between what children can do by themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to achieve with competent assistance. the role of teachers, in this case, support the learners' development and provide support structures to get to the next level. The scaffolding strategies facilitate the learners' ability to build on prior knowledge and internalise new information. The activities

provided in scaffolding instruction are just beyond the level of what the learner can do alone. The more capable, other in this case the teachers provide the scaffolds so that the learner can accomplish (with assistance) the tasks that they could otherwise not complete, thus helping the learner through the ZPD.

An important aspect of scaffolding is that the scaffolds are temporary. As the learners' ability increases, the scaffolding is progressively withdrawn. The learners, finally, are able to complete the tasks independently. Therefore the goal of the teachers when using the scaffolding strategy is for the student to become an independent and self-regulating learner and problem solver. In other words, as the students' knowledge and learning competency increases, the teacher gradually reduces the assistance, in this case is code-switching.

The followings are three examples of scaffolding strategies that are commonly implanted in English teaching:

Code switching

Code switching could be defined as the alternation between two languages in a speaker's speech. It is believed that code switching occurs naturally as an indicator of bilinguality in a multilingual communities such as Indonesia. Regardless of how code switching is defined, it is a widespread phenomenon that extends from daily life to academic affairs.

Sert (2005) proposes that code switching can be used for self expression and is a way of modifying language for the sake of personal intentions. Another function of code switching is that it might be employed to build intimate

interpersonal relationships among members of a bilingual community. In this respect, it might be claimed as a tool to create linguistic solidarity especially between individuals who share the same cultural identity.

According to Teik and Lian (2013) code switching has two major functions, that is, facilitative function and affective functions. The followings are the facilitative functions of code switching. First, it facilitates and enhances students' learning. Second, code switching compensates for students' limited vocabulary/ low proficiency. Third, it saves time and effort explaining new and difficult concepts in L2. Fourth, it emphasise certain points. Fifth, it clarifies misunderstanding. Seventh, it compensates for the lack of exact equivalents in L2. Eighth, it serves as a resource/ strategy/ tool instead of an impediment to students' learning. Ninth, it reflects teachers' resourcefulness and not lack of proficiency. Tenth, code switching provides comprehensible input for students with poor grasp of English. Next, it frees a considerable cognitive load for low English proficiency students to process the meaning. Last, it cues students to different sections of explanation with signposting in L1, hence mitigating students' cognitive load.

In addition, the followings are the affective functions of code switching (Teik and Lian, 2013). First, it is to provide affective support. Second, code switching is to lower students' affective filter and to ease students into the lessons. Third, it is to enhance solidarity between teacher and students. Fourth, it is to provide a conducive and non-threatening

learning environment. Next, code switching is to facilitate communication and student participation. Still the next is to identify with the audience. Seventh, code switching is to close the status gap and asymmetrical power relations. And then, it is to establish goodwill and support. Next, code switching is to enhance learning success. And the last one is to provide students with a positive affective state to engage with the learning process.

It will be appropriate to give detail of the teaching procedure that relate to the application of code switching in ESP classes. The affective function of code switching might be implemented in the pre teaching and post teaching. The facilitative function, on the other hand, generally occurs in whilst teaching.

In topic switch cases, the teacher alters his/her language according to the topic that is under discussion. This is mostly observed in grammar instruction, that the teacher shifts his language to the mother tongue of his students in dealing with particular grammar points, which are taught at that moment. In this case, the students' attention is directed to the new knowledge by making use of code switching and therefore making use of native tongue. At this point, it might be suggested that a bridge the native language to target language is constructed in order to transfer the new content and meaning. It is in line with Cole (1998): "a teacher can exploit students' previous L1 learning experience to increase their understanding of L2", as noted by Sert (2005). Another explanation for the functionality of code switching in classroom settings is its repetitive

function. In this case, the teacher uses code switching in order to transfer the necessary knowledge for the students for clarity. Following the instruction in target language, the teacher code switches to native language in order to clarify meaning, and in this way stresses importance on the foreign language content for efficient comprehension.

In addition to the function of code switching named as topic switch, the phenomenon also carries affective functions that serve for expression of emotions. In this respect, code switching is used by the teacher in order to build solidarity and intimate relations with the students. In this sense, one may speak the contribution of code switching for creating a supportive language environment in the classroom. As mentioned before, this is not always a conscious process on the part of the teacher.

Questioning

Teacher questions are a powerful tool for guiding the linguistic and cognitive development of English as a second language (ESL) students (Gerstein, 1996; Gibbons, 2003). The types of questions to scaffold their students' learning across a school year, and teacher questions positively affected student participation in classroom activities and language learning.

Story Telling

Storytelling can be a very important tool for learning in the classroom. Storytelling is not only important in the classroom; it is also important to society. Storytelling has been instrumental in the preservation of history for

centuries. It is a means of sustaining cultural activities and beliefs. According to Seth Weaver Kahan, "Storytelling is one of the oldest and most powerful devices for building community" (Kahan, 2001, 26).

The followings are three researches that are conducted studies under the topic of code switching. The first one is Teik (2013). He conducted a preliminary case study of a contemporary Islamic discourse in the form of a Madrasah weekend holiday camp in Singapore. The findings of the study point to the strategic use of code-switching from English to Malay as a tool to enhance sacred literacy processes and instructions by capitalizing on the common mother tongue shared by the students and the teacher as it serves both facilitative and affective functions.

Next, Hamidah Yamat (2009) made a research with a title "Teacher's Code-Switching as Scaffolding in Teaching Content Area Subjects". The findings illustrate the problems students and teachers face in the teaching and learning process of these subjects; and that teachers had to code-switch as the interchange of language by the teachers was necessary to scaffold students' learning of these subjects. Similarly, Badrul Hisham Ahmad (2009) investigate Teachers' Code-Switching in Classroom Instructions for Low English Proficient Learners. The study found that learners perceived. Code-switching as a positive strategy due to the various functions it has. There are significant relationships between (1) teachers' code-switching and learners' affective support and (2) teachers' code-switching and

learners' learning success. Learners also showed favourable support for future code-switching in the English classrooms. It is strongly believed that teachers' code-switching is an effective teaching strategy when dealing with low English proficient learners.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that code switching as one of scaffolding activities does assist the students in learning English. Code switching plays an important role both as the facilitative and the affective function. The facilitative functions of Code Switching in mixed-ability ESP classes are: (1) to facilitate and enhance students' learning; (2) to compensate for students' limited vocabulary / low proficiency; (3) to save time and effort explaining new and difficult concepts in L2 i.e. English; (4) to emphasise certain points; (5) to better clarify misunderstanding; (6) to compensate for the lack of exact equivalents in L2 i.e. English.

The affective functions of Code Switching, in addition, are: (1) to provide affective support; (2) to provide a conducive and non-threatening learning environment; (3) to facilitate communication and student participation; (4) to identify with the audience; (5) to establish goodwill and support.

REFERENCES

- Chowdhury, Nargis. 2005. Classroom Code Switching of English Language Teachers at Tertiary Level: A Bangladeshi Perspective. Retrieved December 5, 2014, from <http://ac.els->

- cdn.com/S1877042811028758/1-s2.0-S1877042811028758-main.pdf?_tid=52522146-8501-11e4-a67a-00000aab0f6b&acdnat=1418720325_6750e1c92f458aba9d46a01a84f79ef0
- Amirabbas Ghorbani. 2011. First Language Use in Foreign Language Classroom Discourse. Retrieved December 5, 2014, from http://www.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/e02610/csl_introduction.pdf
- Selamat, Joanna Tiffany. 2014. Code Switching in the Malaysian ESL Classroom. Retrieved December 5, 2014, from <http://otago.ourarchive.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10523/4909/SelamatJoannaT2014MA.pdf?sequence=1>
- Fakharzadeh, Mehrnoosh. 2009. Why's of Pro-First Language Use Arguments in ESP Context. Retrieved December 5, 2014, from http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTI05/pdf_doc/04.pdf
- Sert, Olcay. 2005. The Functions of Code Switching in ELT Classrooms. Retrieved December 23, 2014, from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Sert-CodeSwitching.html>
- Ahmad, Badrul Hisham. 2009. Teachers' Code-Switching in Classroom Instructions for Low English Proficient Learners. Retrieved December 23, 2014, from www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/download/.../2228
- Youkhana, Sana. 2010. Code-switching in the Foreign Language Classroom. Retrieved December 23, 2014, from <http://www.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:404799/FULLTEXT02>
- Pollard, Susan. 2002. The Benefit of Code Switching within a Bilingual Education Program. Retrieved December 23, 2014, from http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=hispsu_honproj
- A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF TEACHER CODE SWITCHING IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONS
<http://www.melta.org.my/ET/2013/ong%20che w.pdf>
- Teacher's Code-Switching as Scaffolding in Teaching Content Area Subjects
<http://www.idosi.org/wasj/wasj15%28IPLL%2911/4.pdf>