

BETWEEN ENGLISH, INDONESIAN, AND ARABIC LANGUAGE: INVESTIGATING CODE-SWITCHING IN ENGLISH ONLINE WRITING

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Abstract

This study investigates code-switching practices among undergraduate students in online English writing at Sharia Tourism department in Cirebon, Indonesia. The research explores how these students navigate code-switching between English, Arabic, and their local languages. Furthermore, this research analyzes the factors which contribute code-switching in English writing online communication among young people. The data for this research are from questionnaires and analyzed quantitatively. The result show that the use of Arabic dominates the language choice for code – switching among undergraduate students in Cirebon, Indonesia. The most factor is caused by the effort to show their identity and maintain social relationship. This research contributes for educators and policymakers in developing effective teaching methods and fostering inclusive online learning environments.

Keywords: Code-switching, EFL online learning, language choice.

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INTRODUCTION

In our daily life, we convey knowledge, experiences, and instructions through language among communities. Language is a system of symbols and rules that allows humans to express thoughts, ideas, and emotions. According to Firth and Wagner (1997), language is a tool for communication and shared meaning, not just for individual thought. Language is not only controlled by rules but also cultural customs because communication involves a dynamic give-and-take of messages and interpretations. Many people use language for building image and strengthening relationship with other people. In sociolinguistics, language is part of social identity tool because it is not only for communication but also social

interaction. According to Fishman (1972), sociolinguistics examines how different forms of language (varieties), their uses (functions), and the people who use them (speakers) all influence each other and evolve over time within a particular community. Humans come from different backgrounds and experiences, which shapes how they use language.

The popularity of English as an international language and the advancements in technology make people of different background communicate easily regardless time and space. In Indonesia, English is perceived as the prestigious language among Indonesian people because it shows social status and well – educated. Astuti (2020) found that Indonesian teenagers from upper-middle class see English as a social status. As the consequence, it leads Indonesian people to use English, even if they make mistake. Furthermore, speaking two or more languages is a frequent occurrence in societies with diverse background such as Indonesian people. However, the ability of using more than one language foster the emergence of code-switching in both online and face to face communication.

Code-switching refers to mixing words or phrases from two languages from two or more languages within the same conversation (Syafaat & Setiawan, 2019; Wijayatiningsih et al., 2023), oral or written text (Al-Qaysi, 2019). It is commonly seen on multilingual speakers who use two languages in one sentence. For example: “You mau kemana?”. The word “You” refers to English while “mau kemana” refers to Indonesian language. For Indonesian grammatical correctness, it must be “Kamu mau kemana?” means “Where are you going?”. Many Indonesian teenagers are commonly switch the code of English in their native language’s sentence. It aims to show the symbol of modernisation. Fitriani & Ramadhani (2022) found that Indonesian teenagers of South Jakarta have developed a unique social identity that extends beyond where they live. According to Holmes (2013), there are three key influences on language choice in conversation namely the participants involved (their relationship and backgrounds), the social setting (formal or informal), and the topic of the

interaction (sharing information, joking, etc.). Furthermore, he categorised code-switching based on how much of the speech involves a switch in languages. There are four categories as follows:

1. Situational code-switching

This happens when people change in language use depending on the situation or topic being discussed. For example: when you order coffee at café where they are used to say Medium or Large for cup size and “order” word, then you will say to Barista: “saya mau order Coffee Latte yang large ya!”

2. Metaphorical code-switching

This is a less common type where the switch in language serves a symbolic purpose, like adding emphasis or humor. For example: Nadia (frustrated): "Astaga, this assignment is super duper difficult! My brain is burnt already!"

3. Intra-sentential code-switching: This occurs when languages are mixed within a single sentence. For example: “I think ga bagus deh”, “You pergi dulu aja”

4. Inter-sentential code-switching

It occurs when people switch languages between complete sentences.

For example: Zavera: “Baju ini bagus ngga?”

Khawla “It is very amazing”

Meanwhile, Wardhaugh (2006) stated that a change in topic doesn't necessarily trigger a code switch. The switch hinges more on the situation itself. Furthermore, he identifies two main kinds of code-switching as follow:

1. Situational Code-Switching

This happens based on the context of the conversation. People switch languages depending on the situation they're in, even if the topic stays the

same. For example, friends might use one language at home and another when talking to a teacher.

2. Metaphorical Code-Switching

This is less common and involves a language switch to achieve a specific effect, like humor or emphasis, even if the topic remains the same.

Some studies about code-switching among Indonesian on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have been investigated by some scholars (Syafrizal & Sari, 2017; Windyawati & Aurima, 2018; Sutrisno & Ariesta, 2019). They found that there is trend of code – switching among Indonesian people in social media. Moreover, some studies found that code – switching were found at government’s social media accounts and brand communication (Faqih, 2022; Muhartoyo & Sharone, 2023). This suggests that code mixing is a widespread practice and has been explored in various contexts. In 2015, Fauzi investigated code-switching in WhatsApp groups among male users in West Java, Indonesia namely Cirebon, Majalengka, Kuningan, and Indramayu. The most reasons were related to the topic being discussed (68%) and creating solidarity or expressing emotions (28%). The study also found that switching English – Indonesian languages was the most common type (86%). Despite research on code-switching had been explored in various social media platform, the context of code switching among young people during online classroom interaction is very limited especially in Indonesian context. Therefore, this research attempt to investigate how undergraduate students frequently choose Arabic language, Indonesian, and local language for code – switching during English writing interaction through Whatsapp group. In addition, this study attempts to analyse what factors that might affect the implementation of code – switching in English classroom interaction.

This research aims to improve our grasp of code-switching, and its effects on how people communicate in educational settings. By considering the English written language in virtual classa, the study will offer valuable knowledge for educators,

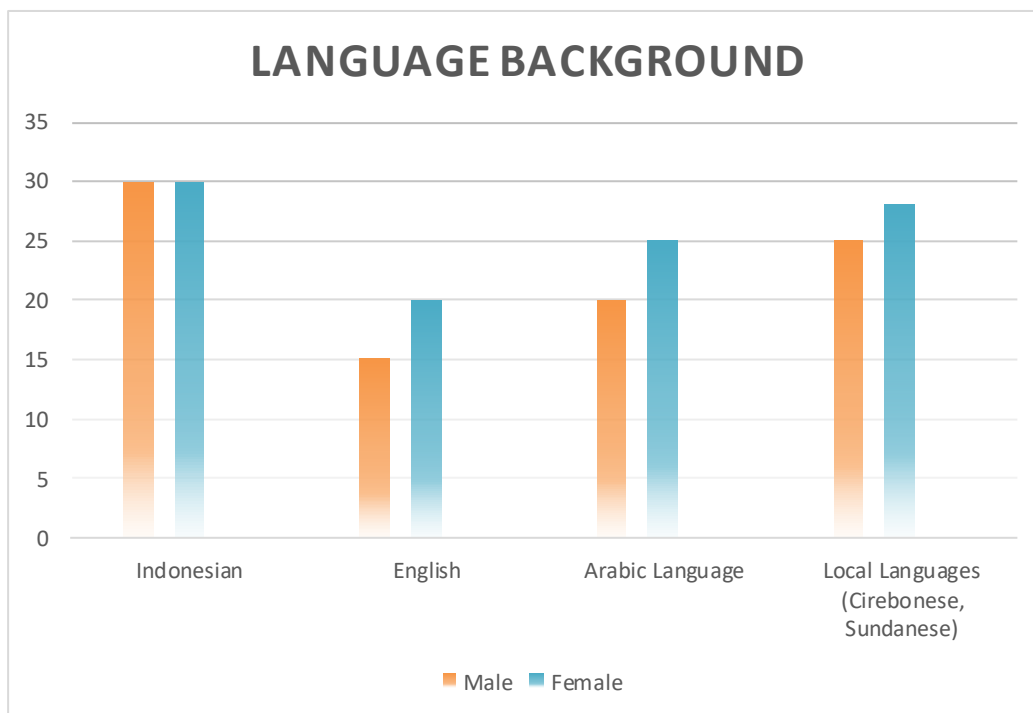
policymakers, and researchers. This knowledge can help them develop better language teaching methods and foster inclusive English online learning environments.

METHOD

This study used questionnaire to collect the data. The questionnaire items were adapted and modified from various relevant research in the English Foreign Language context, including studies by Yao (2011) and Momenian & Samar (2011). The questionnaire of this study consists of three sections. The first section is used for gathering participants' demographic information. The second section was for gathering the data regarding the frequencies of language choice for code – switching in English writing communication. The last section was designed relating the factors which might influence code - switching among English undergraduate students. Then, a quantitative analysis employed by calculate the frequencies and percentage in order to investigate students' language choice for code – switching and to analysis what factors for doing code switching. Neuman (2014) stated that quantitative analysis applies numerical data to extract the meanings. After conducting quantitative analysis, the results were calculated and analyzed by using SPSS before presented in a table.

This study involved 30 undergraduate students of English for Sharia Tourism. They were in the fifth semester who were from various levels of English writing competence. They consist of 12 males and 18 females with ages ranged from 18 – 20 years old. The participants were multilingual people who from diverse linguistic backgrounds, namely Cirebonese language, Sundanese language, Arabic language, Indonesian language, and English.

Graph 1. Distribution of Language Background



The graph shows all participants are able to speak and write in Indonesian both males and females at 30. Next, the second highest was local languages competencies which comprise Cirebonese and Sundanese. The number of females is higher than males, 28 and 25 respectively. In term of foreign language competence, Arabic was the highest number at average 22,5 while English was only at average 17,5.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Language Choice for Code – Switching in English Writing

EFL classrooms and multilingual countries such as Indonesia often see a natural mixing of languages, where people switch back and forth between their native tongue and another language. As Indonesian – English learners, it is commonly found that each students have capability in using two or three languages although

not all languages at high level of competence especially in English writing. Yanuar (2023) stated that writing is challenging because it requires language rule and cognitive skill. In this case, there are various Indonesian local languages and its rule which completely different. One of code-switching usage in English immersion settings is to bridge the gap in learners' understanding by providing clarification for unfamiliar words or phrases through their native language (Mujiono et al., 2013). However, there are other factors which affect language choice in a conversation (Halim & Maros, 2014).

Table 1. The Frequency of Language Choice for Code Switching

Language	Frequency	Percentage
Arabic Language	21	70%
Indonesian Language	9	30%
Local Language	0	0
Total	30	100%

Table above shows Arabic language is the most frequently used language among two another language, Indonesian and local language. It is at 21, making up 70% of the total usage. Next, Indonesian language is used lesser than Arabic language, accounting for 30% of the total. Meanwhile, no one used a local language for code – code switching in English writing communication.

An interesting phenomenon emerges in this study is Indonesian language usage is lesser than Arabic language which ranked first although Arabic competence among participants is limited. This can be attributed because Arabic holds a significant place within Islam and Muslims strive to incorporate it into their lives. Since Indonesia has a large Muslim population, Arabic is intensively taught in Islamic institutions. Secondly, a majority of the study participants were former students of Islamic boarding schools (Santri). This shared educational background

likely influenced their language choice. As Weninger (2007) suggests, people may switch languages due to "metapragmatic awareness". Metapragmatic awareness refers to an understanding how language adapts to social contexts. Holmes (2000:35) stated that people sometimes switch languages to show they belong to the same social group or share the same ethnicity as the person they're talking to. For example: the students write "Assalamualaikum" instead of "Hello", "Hi" in every greeting before doing presentation or open conversation with their classmates. This study revealed Masrahi's finding (2016) that a possible link between frequent code-switching and a lack of fluency in target language among foreign language learners

Notably, the participants of this research did not write local languages for code-switching in English writing. They understood that their classmates were from diverse linguistics background which might cause more misunderstanding in their English writing. This finding aligns with Holmes' (2013) proposed categories of code-switching factors, including participants' backgrounds and the social setting. Momenian and Samar (2011) found that there is negative transfer perspective about native language used for code – switching from foreign language teacher. It can be perceived that the students avoid the use of their mother tongue for code – swtiching.

2. Factors Affecting Code – Switching in English Online Writing

The development of information and technology allows us to communicate with other people regardless time and place. Furthermore, the ability of writing in more than one language contributes the occurrence of code switching. There are many factors influence people's decision to do code-switching when interacting with others which were investigated in this study as follow:

Table 2. Factors affecting code – switching

No.	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Lack of English competence	2	6,6%
2.	Showing Identity	13	43,3%
3.	Easier to speak in their own language	5	16,7%
4.	Avoiding misunderstanding	6	20%
5.	Lack of similar word	4	13,4%
TOTAL		30	100%

Table above shows the reason for showing identity is the highest number at 13 (43,3%). Other reasons for code-switching are easier to speak in their own language at 16,7%, and lack of similar word at 13,4%. Furthermore, there are only 20% who do code – switching because of avoiding misunderstanding. Interestingly, lack of English competence is the lowest percentage at only 6,6%.

Based on the finding, the highest score of showing identity at 13 is perceived as the way how undergraduate students might choose Arabic to signal their religious identity within the classroom setting. This result in line with Hamers and Blanc’s study (2000) that code-switching functions both as a practical tool for effective communication and a way to express belonging to a particular ethnic group (p. 266). A code – switching may functions as identity marker for people within online written communication. Identity is referred as “who you are” (Fishman, 1999), and “self and others” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2003). It can be argued that language plays significant role in constructing the identity. This finding is in line with Hong’s research (2007) who investigate the relationship between code-switching and identity. He found that Malaysians do code-switching from English to Bahasa Melayu or Chinese for identity marker.

Furthermore, other reasons for code-switching such as easier to speak in their own language (16,7%), lack of similar word (13,4%), and avoiding misunderstanding (20%) tend to see as students’ effort for effective communication. Meanwhile, the

last factor can be analysed as the result of English proficiency level. Due to they they communicated virtually through Whatsapp, it enables them to translate before witing in English.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated code-switching practices among undergraduate students in online English writing at Sharia Tourism Department in Cirebon, Indonesia. The research focused on how these students navigate code-switching between English, Arabic, and their local languages. This research finds that Arabic was the dominant language used for code-switching, followed by Indonesian. Meanwhile, local languages were not used by university students. In term of factors affecting code-switching, the primary reason for code-switching was to show identity. Other factors included expression, lack of a similar word in English, and avoiding misunderstandings. Interestingly, lack of English proficiency was the least common reason because they communicated virtually which enables them to translate before witing in English.

This research provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers in developing effective teaching methods that consider students' multilingual backgrounds and the role of code-switching in online learning environments. For future research, it is better to consider students' English TOEFL score and using interview in collecting the data.

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