

Types of Code Switching Used by Teacher and Students in EFL Classroom Interaction at a Vocational High School

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ABSTRACT

Code-switching is common in multilingual EFL classrooms, yet its structural types and pedagogical functions in Indonesian vocational high schools remain underexplored. This study aimed to identify the types of code-switching used by teachers and students in vocational EFL classroom interactions and examine their communicative and pedagogical purposes. Employing a qualitative descriptive design with a discourse-oriented approach, the study was conducted at a vocational high school in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, field notes, and semi-structured interviews with two EFL teachers and ten students. The data were analyzed using Poplack's (1980) typology and triangulated with interview and field-note data to enhance credibility. The findings identified 29 instances of code-switching: inter-sentential switching (69%), intra-sentential switching (17%), and tag switching (14%). Inter-sentential switching predominated and primarily supported idea negotiation, argument development, and instructional scaffolding. Tag switching reflected sociocultural values of politeness and respect toward teachers. These findings indicate that code-switching functions as a purposeful multilingual pedagogical resource rather than a linguistic deficit. Principled and context-sensitive language alternation can support comprehension, interaction, and English learning objectives in vocational EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *Code-Switching, EFL Classroom Interaction, Vocational High School, Language Pedagogy*

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental tool for communication and the expression of ideas. People rely on language to interact with others and participate in social life. As social beings, humans need to establish relationships and exchange information, and language serves as a primary means of conveying messages across educational, cultural, and social contexts. Because language is closely connected to human interaction, different languages have developed and are used across countries and regions, including Indonesia, which is characterized by considerable linguistic diversity.

Indonesia is a culturally and linguistically diverse country, with more than 700 languages spoken across its archipelago, including Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Bugis, Tolaki, and many others. This diversity influences various aspects of social life, including education. In general, students use Bahasa Indonesia as the national and primary language of education, while regional languages form an important part of their everyday linguistic repertoire. At the same time, English functions as a foreign language with considerable instrumental value, particularly in relation to educational achievement and global participation. In Southeast Sulawesi, for example, Sain & Hermansyah (2025) found that language attitudes among the Tolaki community in Kendari are closely associated with language choice, language contact, and the maintenance of local linguistic identity. This finding highlights the importance of understanding classroom interaction within a multilingual environment in which Bahasa Indonesia, local languages, and English coexist as linguistic resources.

The interaction between language and society is examined through sociolinguistics, a field concerned with the relationship between language use and social contexts. In multilingual communities, speakers frequently employ more than one language to communicate, depending on their interlocutors, purposes, and situations. This phenomenon is particularly relevant in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where teachers and students may draw on multiple languages to facilitate interaction and understanding (García & Wei, 2014; Macaro, 2014). The practice of alternating between two or more languages within a conversation or classroom discourse is commonly referred to as code-switching. (Poplack, 1980) identified three structural types of code-switching: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching. This typology provides an important foundation for examining how speakers alternate between languages at different grammatical levels.

Beyond its structural characteristics, code-switching has increasingly been examined from functional and pedagogical perspectives. García & Wei, (2014) conceptualized multilingual language practices as purposeful resources that can support comprehension, sustain interaction, and address challenges in foreign language learning. Similarly, (Canagarajah, 2011; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017) argued that code-switching should not be viewed merely as a compensatory strategy resulting from insufficient proficiency, but rather as a sophisticated communicative resource that reflects speakers' multilingual repertoires. In Indonesian EFL contexts, (Cahyani et al., 2018) demonstrated that teachers use code-switching strategically for vocabulary clarification, affective support, and procedural instruction. (Simbolon, 2021) likewise found that both teachers and students in Indonesian secondary schools employ code-switching to negotiate meaning and maintain participation in foreign language classroom discourse.

Code-switching may occur as a result of speakers' linguistic choices or as an adaptation to communicative needs when multiple languages are available within a shared interaction. Its use can vary according to the situation, institutional setting, participants, and learning objectives. In EFL classrooms, for example, code-switching may be influenced by the type of school and the nature of the instructional materials. These factors are particularly relevant in Vocational High Schools (SMK) in Indonesia, where English instruction is expected to develop students' general communicative competence while also addressing field-specific and technical language needs (Ardi, 2022). Consequently, teachers and students may need to balance English exposure with students' comprehension, making code-switching an important practice in vocational EFL classroom interaction.

The vocational nature of SMK education may create distinctive conditions for language use compared with general secondary schools and universities. Students are expected to acquire knowledge and skills related to particular occupational fields, which often involve specialized terminology and technical concepts. (Suherdi et al., 2022) observed that the technical and occupation-specific nature of learning content in Indonesian vocational settings can necessitate greater reliance on Bahasa Indonesia as a mediating language. This suggests that code-switching in vocational EFL classrooms may perform specific instructional functions, particularly in explaining technical concepts, clarifying unfamiliar terminology, facilitating comprehension, and maintaining classroom interaction. Therefore, the vocational context provides an important setting for examining how and why teachers and students alternate between English and other available languages.

Despite the growing body of research on code-switching in bilingual and foreign language education, its structural patterns and functions in Indonesian vocational high school contexts remain relatively underexplored. Previous studies have largely focused on general secondary schools and university EFL classrooms, leaving limited evidence regarding how code-switching operates in vocational settings where English learning serves both academic and occupational purposes. This gap is significant because the distinctive instructional demands of vocational education may shape the frequency, types, and purposes of language alternation. Moreover, the increasing recognition of code-switching as a legitimate multilingual resource rather than a manifestation of linguistic deficiency further

emphasizes the need to investigate its actual use in specific educational contexts (Canagarajah, 2011; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Macaro, 2014).

Based on this research gap, the present study investigates code-switching practices used by teachers and students during EFL classroom interaction in a vocational high school. Specifically, the study aims to identify the types of code-switching employed by teachers and students and to explore the communicative and pedagogical purposes underlying these language alternations. By examining code-switching through both structural and functional perspectives, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how multilingual resources are used in vocational EFL classrooms. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of a context-sensitive perspective on code-switching and demonstrate how language alternation can function as a meaningful linguistic and instructional resource for supporting English learning, content comprehension, and effective classroom interaction.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a discourse-oriented approach to examine the types of code-switching used by teachers and students in vocational EFL classroom interaction and to explore their communicative and pedagogical purposes. The study was conducted at a vocational high school in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) English is taught as a compulsory subject across all study programs, (2) the school represents a typical vocational institution in terms of student demographics and English proficiency, and (3) it does not implement a strict English-only policy, allowing naturally occurring code-switching practices to emerge. Participants consisted of two EFL teachers (T1 and T2), each with a minimum of five years of teaching experience, and students from two eleventh-grade (Grade XI) classes Class A from a Computer network and telecommunications engineering program and Class B from a Fisheries agribusiness, each comprising approximately 30 students. Ten students were purposively selected for interviews (IS1-IS10) based on their active participation in code-switching during observation. All students producing code-switching utterances during observation were included in the analysis and labeled sequentially by speaking turn. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and parental consent was secured for all student participants as minors. Pseudonyms and identification codes were used throughout to ensure confidentiality.

Data were collected through unstructured non-participant classroom observations, field notes, and semi-structured interviews. Two classroom sessions were observed one in Class A and one in Class B each lasting approximately 135 minutes. The researcher positioned herself at the back of the classroom to minimize observer effect and recorded all interactions using an audio recorder, supplemented by written field notes documenting activity sequences, participant roles, and language alternation patterns. Observations focused on teacher-student and student-student interactions during explanations, instructions, discussions, group work, and classroom management. All recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with the two teachers and ten students following classroom observations, in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express themselves freely. Interviews comprised two question types: descriptive questions exploring participants' general attitudes toward code-switching (e.g., "How do you feel about using Bahasa Indonesia during English lessons?") and interpretive questions clarifying specific observed episodes (e.g., "Why did you switch languages at this point in the lesson?"). Teacher interviews lasted 30-45 minutes and student interviews 15-20 minutes, with all sessions audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

The data were analyzed in four systematic stages Kim et al., (2017); Sandelowski, (2000). First, transcripts were reviewed line by line to identify code-switching episodes, defined as any utterance in which a speaker shifted between English and Bahasa Indonesia,

with isolated loanwords excluded unless embedded in a clearly code-switched utterance. Second, each episode was classified using (Poplack, 1980) typology inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching guided by a codebook developed prior to classification and cross-checked against interview data and field notes for contextual validation. Third, selected excerpts were interpreted contextually to explore communicative and pedagogical purposes, drawing on (Vygotsky, 1978) concept of scaffolding and (Hymes, 1972) notion of communicative competence. Fourth, interview data were analyzed thematically as a triangulation source, with convergence and divergence between observed and reported patterns documented and discussed. Member checking with the two teacher participants was additionally employed to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Code-Switching Frequency and Distribution

To provide a comprehensive overview of the code-switching patterns identified during classroom interaction, the occurrences of code-switching were first quantified and categorized according to Poplack (1980) typology, which distinguishes three structural types: inter-sentential switching (alternation at clause or sentence boundaries), intra-sentential switching (alternation within a single clause or sentence), and tag switching (insertion of a formulaic expression or address term from one language into an utterance of another). This typology was selected because it offers a systematic structural framework that has been widely applied and validated in bilingual and EFL classroom research (Cahyani et al., 2018; Muysken, 2000; Simbolon, 2021), allowing the present findings to be situated within an established theoretical tradition. The analysis focused on examining the frequency and proportional distribution of each type across the two observed EFL classes. Tables 1–3 summarize the frequency and percentage of each code-switching type in Class A, Class B, and the combined dataset.

As shown in Table 3 below, inter-sentential switching was by far the most dominant type, accounting for nearly seven out of every ten coded instances (69%), followed by intra-sentential switching (17%) and tag switching (14%). This distributional pattern is consistent with (Poplack, 1980) original observation that inter-sentential switching is the most commonly occurring type among bilingual speakers, as it requires a lower degree of bilingual competence compared to intra-sentential switching, which demands the ability to simultaneously satisfy the grammatical constraints of two language systems.

The dominance of inter-sentential switching in this vocational EFL context can be understood through three interrelated factors. First, from a linguistic standpoint, inter-sentential switching is structurally the most accessible form of code-switching because each language segment remains grammatically self-contained within its own clause or sentence boundary, requiring speakers to command only one language system at a time rather than integrating two simultaneously (Poplack, 1980). This structural simplicity makes it the natural default for speakers whose bilingual proficiency is developing rather than fully balanced – a characteristic that accurately describes the majority of vocational high school students in this study, whose English proficiency is sufficient for task-based participation but not yet advanced enough to sustain deep syntactic integration across two languages. Second, from a pedagogical standpoint, the classroom activities observed in this study – debate in Class A and text analysis in Class B – both required students and teachers to move frequently between informal peer negotiation and formal task-oriented discourse. Inter-sentential switching is particularly well suited to this kind of functional bifurcation, as it allows speakers to assign each language to a distinct communicative role: Bahasa Indonesia for informal clarification, hedging, and peer coordination, and English for the formal argumentative or analytical content demanded by the task (Auer, 1998; Canagarajah, 2011). Third, from a sociocultural standpoint, the multilingual ecology of Southeast Sulawesi, where Bahasa Indonesia, local languages such as Tolaki, and English coexist as part of learners' everyday linguistic repertoire (Sain & Hermansyah, 2025), means that alternating

between languages at sentence boundaries reflects a naturalized interactional pattern that participants bring into the classroom from their broader communicative experience. Inter-sentential switching thus represents not only the structurally simplest option but also the most sociolinguistically familiar and contextually appropriate form of language alternation available to these speakers.

A notable difference also emerged between the two classes: in Class A, the debate-based activity, inter-sentential switching accounted for the overwhelming majority of instances (85.7%), with only a single instance each of intra-sentential switching and tag switching. In Class B, the text-analysis activity, the distribution was more balanced across all three types, and all of the tag-switching instances identified in this study occurred exclusively in this class. This variation across activity types further suggests that the structural form of code-switching is not fixed but is shaped by the interactional demands and pedagogical context of a given classroom task, a point that will be elaborated in the discussion of each type below.

Table 1. Recapitulation of Code-Switching Types in Class A

Type of Code-Switching	Frequency	Percentage
Inter-sentential	12	85.7%
Intra-sentential	1	7.1%
Tag Switching	1	7.1%
Total	14	100%

Table 2. Recapitulation of Code-Switching Types in Class B

Type of Code-Switching	Frequency	Percentage
Inter-sentential	8	53.3%
Intra-sentential	4	26.7%
Tag Switching	3	20.0%
Total	15	100%

Table 3. Combined Recapitulation of Code-Switching Types in Both Classes

Type of Code-Switching	Frequency	Percentage
Inter-sentential	20	69%
Intra-sentential	5	17%
Tag Switching	4	14%
Total	29	100%

As shown in Table 3, inter-sentential switching was by far the most dominant type, accounting for nearly seven out of every ten coded instances (69%), followed by intra-sentential switching (17%) and tag switching (14%). This distributional pattern is consistent with (Poplack, 1980) original observation that inter-sentential switching is the most commonly occurring type among bilingual speakers, as it requires a lower degree of bilingual competence compared to intra-sentential switching, which demands the ability to simultaneously satisfy the grammatical constraints of two language systems. A notable difference also emerged between the two classes: in Class A, the debate-based activity, inter-sentential switching accounted for the overwhelming majority of instances (85.7%), with only a single instance each of intra-sentential switching and tag switching. In Class B, the text-analysis activity, the distribution was more balanced across all three types, and all of the tag-switching instances identified in this study occurred exclusively in this class. This variation across activity types suggests that the structural form of code-switching is not fixed but is shaped by the interactional demands and pedagogical context of a given classroom task, a point that will be elaborated in the discussion of each type below.

Inter-sentential Code-Switching

Inter-sentential switching, in which a switch occurs at a clause or sentence boundary with each unit produced according to the grammar of a single language, was the most frequent pattern observed in both classes. As Poplack (1980) notes, this type of switching is

structurally the least demanding because each language segment is grammatically self-contained, making it the most accessible form of code-switching for speakers operating across two languages. In Class A, this pattern was especially visible during the group discussion and Q&A stages of the debate activity. For example, when proposing a strategy to groupmates, one student alternated between an Indonesian assessment and an English argument:

"Guys, topik smartphone dilarang menurutku paling gampang. Let's argue that it's better for our concentration." (S1, Class A)

A similar alternation pattern appeared when a groupmate responded, moving from an English statement of agreement to an Indonesian question and back to an English suggestion:

"I agree. Tapi, kalau guru minta cari materi di internet bagaimana? We should mention that there should be an exception for educational purposes." (S2, Class A)

This pattern in which a discourse marker such as "Tapi" (but) signals a switch back into Indonesian for informal commentary or negotiation, before returning to English for the more formal content of an argument recurred throughout the question-and-answer sessions of the debate. Consistent with (Auer, 1998) notion of language alternation as a contextualization cue, the switch here signals a shift in footing: Indonesian marks the informal peer-negotiation register, while English marks the task-required argumentative register. During the smartphone policy debate, a questioning student combined an Indonesian framing remark with an English challenge, and the responding student replied in kind:

"Group 1, tapi kan sekarang zamannya digital. If we don't bring phones, how can we access information quickly? Isn't it a bit outdated?" (S4, Class A)

"We understand your point. Tapi, di sekolah kan sudah ada lab komputer. So, we can access the internet there without the distractions that come with personal smartphones." (S3, Class A)

The same alternating structure was repeated in the uniform-policy and job-versus-university debates, where students such as S6 and S7, and S9 and S10, moved between Indonesian framing or hedging expressions ("Tapi kalau seragamnya bebas," "Sebenarnya") and English argumentative statements. This functional duality Indonesian for hedging and peer negotiation, English for task-oriented argumentation reflects what Canagarajah (2011) describes as strategic deployment of multilingual resources to accomplish communicative goals, and aligns with Cahyani et al. (2018) finding that Indonesian EFL students use inter-sentential switching to manage the competing demands of informal peer interaction and formal task performance. Even the teacher's closing remarks in Class A exhibited this pattern, mixing English announcements and farewells with Indonesian classroom management directives and closing religious expressions.

In Class B, inter-sentential switching was primarily produced by the teacher and typically followed a pattern of presenting content in English before reiterating or extending it in Indonesian. For instance, when introducing the concept of genre, the teacher first offered a definition in Indonesian before continuing with an English example:

"Genre itu klasifikasi cerita berdasarkan karakteristiknya. For example, we classify Beauty and the Beast as a 'Fairy Tale' because it contains magical elements, like the transformation curse or the talking objects." (Teacher, Class B)

Likewise, when transitioning between tasks, the teacher combined an English task announcement with an Indonesian directive specifying exactly what students needed to do:

"Moving to Task 2, you are analyzing intrinsic elements. Tolong perhatikan perbedaan setting tempat dan waktu antara kedua cerita ini." (Teacher, Class B)

A particularly elaborate example occurred when the teacher connected the story's theme to a contemporary issue, alternating between an English explanation of the Beast being judged by his appearance and an Indonesian analogy linking this to the use of filters on social media:

"Excellent point. Begini penjelasannya: The Beast is judged by his appearance. Di dunia nyata, fenomena ini mirip dengan penggunaan filter di media sosial. We often judge someone's 'online profile' without knowing their 'true character'. Ini adalah bentuk diskriminasi modern yang perlu kalian analisis kritis di Task 4." (Teacher, Class B)

This "explain-then-reiterate" pattern is consistent with what [Levine, \(2011\)](#) and [Cahyani et al., \(2018\)](#) identify as the scaffolding function of teacher code-switching, whereby the L1 serves as a mediating tool to make L2 content accessible to learners with varying levels of receptive competence. From a [\(Vygotsky, 1978\)](#) perspective, this pattern positions the teacher's use of Bahasa Indonesia as a form of linguistic scaffolding that temporarily supports comprehension within the zone of proximal development, enabling students to engage with English-medium content that would otherwise be inaccessible. Across both classes, then, inter-sentential switching served two related but distinguishable functions: among students, it marked a shift between an informal Indonesian negotiation register and a more formal English argument register required by the task; among teachers, it most often followed an explain-then-reiterate structure aimed at accommodating students' varying levels of English proficiency.

Intra-sentential Code-Switching

Intra-sentential switching, involving the integration of elements from one language into the grammatical frame of another within a single clause or sentence, occurred less frequently than inter-sentential switching but was nonetheless present in both classes. [\(Poplack, 1980\)](#) regards this type as the most grammatically complex form of code-switching, as it requires speakers to simultaneously satisfy the syntactic constraints of both languages a demand that distinguishes it from the boundary-respecting structure of inter-sentential switching. In Class A, the clearest example occurred when a student embedded the English title of a debate topic, presented as a fixed quoted phrase, within an otherwise Indonesian question:

"Ma'am, maaf mau tanya, maksud dari 'Wearing school uniforms should be optional' itu bagaimana ya?" (S1, Class A)

Here, the English noun phrase functions as an embedded constituent within the Indonesian sentence structure, illustrating how a fixed English expression in this case, the title of the debate topic itself can be syntactically integrated into an Indonesian question without being translated. This instance aligns with [\(Poplack, 1980\)](#) equivalence constraint, which predicts that switches are most likely to occur at points where the surface structures of both languages overlap, allowing the embedded element to fit naturally into the grammatical frame of the matrix language.

In Class B, several intra-sentential instances involved short responses combining English confirmation tokens with Indonesian phrases within a single brief utterance, such as:

"Yes, siap maam." (Student, Class B)

A more elaborate example occurred when a student requested permission to use her phone's mobile data, mixing an English apology formula and technology-related terms with an Indonesian request:

"Ma'am, I'm so sorry, boleh izin tethering ma'am. Loading pakai wifi sekolah." (S1, Class B)

The teacher's response to this request similarly combined an English acknowledgment with technology-related terms embedded in an Indonesian instruction:

"Of course. Scan barcode di hapenya buguru." (Teacher, Class B)

A notable pattern across these intra-sentential examples is that the embedded English elements "tethering," "loading," "wifi," "scan," and "barcode" are technology-related terms that function as established loanwords in everyday Indonesian usage, rather than spontaneous instances of deep syntactic bilingual integration. This observation is consistent with (Muysken, 2000) distinction between insertional code-switching, in which single lexical items from one language are inserted into the grammatical frame of another, and alternational switching, which involves more extensive structural integration across two language systems. The intra-sentential instances found in this study are predominantly insertional in character, suggesting that within this vocational EFL context, intra-sentential switching is largely driven by lexical borrowing of globally familiar digital vocabulary rather than by advanced bilingual grammatical competence.

Tag Switching

Tag switching, involving the insertion of a tag, interjection, or short formulaic expression from one language into an utterance otherwise produced in another language, was the least frequent type overall (14% of all instances) and, notably, occurred exclusively in Class B and exclusively in student utterances. Poplack (1980) notes that tag switching is structurally the simplest form of code-switching because tags are relatively free from syntactic constraints and can be inserted at many points in an utterance without violating the grammatical rules of either language a property that makes this type accessible even to speakers with limited bilingual proficiency. Two recurring patterns were observed. The first involved students opening an otherwise Indonesian question with the English address term "Ma'am":

"Ma'am, bagaimana itu genre secara mendalam?" (S1, Class B)

"Ma'am, bagaimana cara menghubungkan cerita dengan standar kecantikan sekarang?" (S3, Class B)

The second involved a student closing an otherwise English sentence with the Indonesian address term "Bu":

"I understand, Bu." (Student, Class B)

In both directions, the inserted tag functions as a term of address directed toward the teacher, expressing the sociocultural value of respect (hormat) that students in Indonesian schools are expected to show toward their teachers. Consistent with Wardhaugh and Fuller's (2015) view that code-switching often indexes social identity and interpersonal relationships, the choice of address term here operates as a sociolinguistic marker of the student-teacher power dynamic rather than as a device driven by communicative necessity. What is particularly notable is that this address term remained constant either as "Ma'am" or as "Bu" regardless of whether the surrounding utterance was produced primarily in Indonesian or in English, indicating that the choice of address term operates independently of the matrix language of the rest of the utterance. This supports Poplack's (1980) characterization of tag switching as a structurally peripheral but socially meaningful phenomenon, and aligns with Simbolon's (2021) finding that tag switching in Indonesian EFL classrooms frequently serves a politeness function rather than a purely communicative or instructional one.

Discussion

The findings revealed that inter-sentential code-switching was the most dominant type, accounting for 69% of all instances observed across both classes. This finding directly confirms (Poplack, 1980) theoretical prediction that inter-sentential switching should be the most prevalent form among bilingual speakers, given that it places the lowest syntactic demands on speakers by confining each language to its own grammatically complete clause or sentence. The predominance of this type further aligns with empirical studies in EFL and bilingual classroom contexts, which have consistently reported inter-sentential switching as the most frequent structural pattern in teacher and student discourse (Cahyani et al., 2018; Simbolon, 2021). The present findings thus replicate and extend this pattern to the vocational high school context in Indonesia, where both teachers and students demonstrate a strong tendency toward boundary-respecting language alternation as a default interactional strategy.

A notable difference was observed between the two classes. In Class A, which involved debate activities, inter-sentential switching accounted for 85.7% of all occurrences. Students commonly used Indonesian to negotiate ideas, seek clarification, and coordinate with peers, while English was used to present arguments required by the task. This functional bifurcation Indonesian for informal peer negotiation, English for task-oriented argumentation supports (Canagarajah, 2011) view that bilingual learners strategically deploy their full linguistic repertoire to accomplish communicative goals, and is consistent with (Auer, 1998) argument that language alternation serves as a contextualization cue that signals shifts in footing, activity type, or participant role. Rather than indicating limited English proficiency, code-switching functioned as a sophisticated interactional resource that enabled students to manage the competing demands of peer collaboration and formal academic task performance simultaneously.

In Class B, inter-sentential switching was also the most frequent type, but it mainly occurred in teacher explanations following an "explain-then-reiterate" pattern, in which English content was immediately reinforced or extended through Indonesian elaboration. This pattern reflects the pedagogical scaffolding function of code-switching identified by (Cahyani et al., 2018; Levine, 2011), and is consistent with (Vygotsky, 1978) concept of the zone of proximal development, whereby the teacher's strategic use of Bahasa Indonesia provides temporary linguistic support that enables students to access and engage with English-medium content that would otherwise exceed their current level of independent comprehension. This finding suggests that in the vocational EFL context, teacher code-switching is not a sign of pedagogical failure but a deliberate instructional strategy aimed at maximizing both English exposure and content comprehension.

Intra-sentential switching occurred less frequently (17%) and primarily involved technology-related terms such as wifi, loading, tethering, and barcode. Measured against (Poplack, 1980) framework, these instances are best characterized as insertional rather than alternational in nature (Muysken, 2000), as they involve the embedding of single lexical items into the grammatical frame of the matrix language rather than the kind of deep syntactic integration that would require simultaneous command of the grammatical systems of both languages. This finding suggests that within this vocational EFL context, intra-sentential switching is largely driven by lexical borrowing of globally familiar digital vocabulary a pattern consistent with the observation by (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017) that technology-related terms tend to resist translation and circulate across languages as stable lexical insertions in multilingual educational settings.

Tag switching was the least frequent type (14%), appearing only in Class B and exclusively in student utterances. Consistent with Poplack, (1980) characterization of tags as structurally peripheral elements that can be freely inserted without violating either language's grammatical rules, the address terms "Ma'am" and "Bu" functioned independently of the matrix language of the surrounding utterance. This finding aligns with (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015) view that tag switching frequently indexes social identity and relational positioning rather than serving a primarily communicative or referential function,

and supports Simbolon (2021) finding that tag switching in Indonesian EFL classrooms is predominantly a politeness device reflecting the sociocultural norm of respect toward teachers.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that code-switching in these vocational EFL classrooms is a structured, purposeful, and multifunctional phenomenon. Each of the three types identified by (Poplack, 1980) was shown to serve distinct communicative, pedagogical, and sociocultural functions, and the variation between the two classes further demonstrates that the frequency and structural form of code-switching are shaped by classroom activity type, participant roles, and instructional objectives. Taken together, these findings contribute to a growing body of evidence that code-switching should be understood not as a deficit or deviation from target language norms, but as a legitimate and valuable linguistic resource within multilingual EFL learning environments (Canagarajah, 2011; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; García & Wei, 2014; Macaro, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that code-switching is a structured and purposeful phenomenon in vocational EFL classroom interaction, with inter-sentential switching emerging as the dominant type, consistent with Poplack, (1980) typology and previous findings in Indonesian EFL contexts (Cahyani et al., 2018; Simbolon, 2021). Beyond structural patterns, code-switching served important communicative and pedagogical functions, including idea negotiation, clarification, argument construction, and instructional scaffolding, supporting the view of code-switching as a multilingual resource rather than a linguistic deficit (Canagarajah, 2011). Tag switching also reflected sociocultural values of politeness and respect in teacher-student interactions (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). These findings suggest that vocational EFL teachers should adopt a principled, context-sensitive approach to code-switching, particularly when balancing general English proficiency with occupation-specific language needs. Teacher education and curriculum development should likewise recognize Bahasa Indonesia as a legitimate resource for supporting comprehension and learning. Overall, the study reinforces the view that code-switching is a sophisticated communicative and instructional resource in multilingual EFL classrooms (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; García & Wei, 2014; Macaro, 2014).

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