A STUDY OF STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF CODE MIXING IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Abstract

This present study aimed to explore students’ attitudes towards code mixing in English classroom through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. There were 30 students involved and 5 of the students were chosen to be the interviewees. The results from the two instruments showed that the teacher frequently used English with Indonesian in English classroom, but they had a positive attitude. In contrast, the majority of the students were not happy when their teacher used full English in the classroom. They believed that code mixing was a practical solution and strategy applied by the teacher to make them learn English more easily.

Keywords: code mixing, English classroom, students’ attitudes

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A. INTRODUCTION

The notion of code mixing can be simply defined as the transfer of linguistic elements from one language to another language which are blended together. It is different from code switching which refers to the use of two or more languages within a speech event. In the teaching learning process, the phenomenon of code mixing is commonly used by English teachers especially in the EFL countries as a language strategy. It is believed that a classroom with a single language is difficult to find (Ariffin & Husin, 2011). Yet, Celik
(2003) argues that careful and judicious use of code mixing can create successful teaching and learning especially in the speaking class. In this regard, the classroom language which involves code mixing in Indonesian context is the use of Indonesian language and the target language. Not to mention, the phenomenon of code-mixing contests some problems and shows both pros and cons in English language learning. Therefore, code mixing becomes the debate in certain countries.

The Hong Kong government has claimed that the use of code mixing in the classroom inhibits both students’ English language development and their academic development in other subjects. For this reason, teachers are not allowed to mix the language in the classroom (Li, 2008). Similar views on the practice of code switching or code mixing in Malaysia has also been reported by Martin (1995) that the use of native language and the target language in a classroom is a well-known phenomenon, but it is considered as a bad practice which indicates the teachers’ lack of English proficiency.

The issue also emerges in the curriculum applied in Indonesia. Following the current trends of English language teaching, the curriculum designers have decided to use communicative approach across the educational levels since 1994. The Indonesian government has seriously paid attention to establish an ideal form of English language education that can foster students to face the global development of economy, science, and technology. In result, the practice of code mixing in class might inhibit students’ ability to use English accurately (Kamisah & Misyana, 2011). Despite its counterargument to code mixing, the use code mixing has received acceptance in some communities. Therefore, studies have shown that there are varying attitudes towards this communicative behaviour even though there is a dilemma among teachers between “access to meaning and access to English” (Setati et al., 2002, p.140).

Many researchers have extensively investigated the effects of code mixing in the classroom. El-Fiki (1999) studied the phenomenon of code mixing in a university context in Libya and found that regardless the country’s language policy which promotes the proficiency of Arabic, code mixing was still a dominant feature. While Canagarajah (1995) reported on the micro- and macro- functions of code mixing in Sri Lankan ESL classrooms. Other scholars have also found the occurrences of code mixing in the classroom.
The issues which occur around code mixing is really interesting to be studied especially in Indonesia whose English language proficiency is still considered low. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the students’ attitudes towards code mixing in the classroom context at SMAN 1 Indramayu, the school where code mixing was usually found in the English classroom.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aimed at investigating students’ attitudes towards the use of code mixing in English classroom. The research question that the researcher attempted to address is what are the students’ attitudes towards the use of code mixing in English classroom?

1. Research Method

The researcher adopted mixed methods through questionnaires and interviews. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2007) arrive at one general definition of mixed methods research as the type of research where the researchers put together the elements from qualitative and quantitative approaches such as, viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and techniques which aims to gain more in-depth understanding and justification. Muijjs (2004) defines the quantitative method as the approach which aims to analyse numerical data statistically; and qualitative method is the approach which describes and explore the understanding and interpretation of the data with words (Lichtman, 2006). In other words, mixed methods research is designed to address research questions which might not be solved if a single method is applied.

2. Time and Place of the Research

The research was conducted at SMAN 1 Indramayu during the offline class. Previously, the research had got a permission from the school and agreement from the students to distribute questionnaires and conduct interviews.

3. Object of the Research

The participants of this study were students in the first grade (class MIA 1) of science classes at SMAN 1 Indramayu. The class consisted of both male and female students. The number of students in that class were 30 students which consisted of 5 males and 25 females students. These students were varying in terms of background, ability, interest, learning styles and attitudes, and so forth.

4. Technique of Data Collection

The data collected from this study were from the questionnaires and semi-
structured interviews. A questionnaire was devised to elicit students’ attitudes towards code mixing between English and Indonesian language which occurred in English classroom. The questionnaire was adapted from El-Fiki (1999) which had been modified by the researcher according to the research context. The questionnaire was also translated to Indonesian language in order to gain better understanding from the participants. The questionnaires consist of several items, to which students were asked to respond. Forty one items are on a five point Likert scale where the students must show their extent of agreement/disagreement (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). The forty-one Likert scale items fall into eight groups or categories which are general views on the language situation, students’ perception of the language mix, students’ language preference, perceived functions of the language mix, students’ reaction to the language mix, students’ view of their teacher who mixes English with Indonesia, how language is exhibited in the classroom, and perceived effects on students’ academic progress. In addition, the researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews to the students in order to elicit more comprehensive data from their attitudes. The questions were designed to find out the reasons for their responses in the questionnaires.

5. Technique of Data Analysis

The first data was collected through the questionnaires. It was designed to address the research question, “what are students’ attitudes towards code mixing in English classroom?”. To analyze the questionnaires, the researcher used descriptive statistic. The data from the questionnaires were analysed with simple frequency counts and percentages. The percentages of the score of questionnaires were interpreted to investigate students’ attitudes.

The second data were elicited from semi-structured interviews. The interviews were interpreted by the writer to strengthen the result from the questionnaires about the students’ attitudes towards code mixing in English classroom. These interviews played an important role in this research because they can give further explanation about students’ attitudes.
C. RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

To address the first research question regarding students’ attitudes towards code mixing in English classroom, the questionnaires explained the following information:

1. General views on the language situation
   In general, most of the students believed that mixing English with Indonesian in English classroom was acceptable (86%). They also perceived that it was a tune with times (70%) and it was not a threat to Indonesian language (53%).

2. Students’ perceptions of the language mix
   In this category, the majority of the students claimed that code mixing was a common phenomenon in the class (73%) and the teacher frequently used it (100%). Most of them also said that the teacher’s use of English was limited to parts of the sentences (44%).

3. Students’ language preference
   Interestingly, the data gathered from the questionnaire showed that most of the students neither wanted the teacher to minimize their use of English (47%) nor to use only English in the classroom (60%). They also did not want if their teacher spoke only Indonesian in the classroom. This shows that using code mixing is a good strategy for them to learn English.

4. Perceived functions of the language mix
   From the questionnaire, it was found the more than 66% of the overall students believed the use of English with Indonesian was inevitable and the teacher used it when he/she cannot find the equivalence (50%). It was also reported that the teacher consciously mixed English with Indonesia to achieve his/her goals in the classroom (87%).

5. Students’ reactions to the language mix
   Some interesting information was recorded in this category. For most of the students, the teacher’s mixing of English with Indonesia was not a problem (83%). They also did not get frustrated when the teacher mixed English with Indonesian in the classroom (70%). Moreover, they did not mind if English was used only as parts of sentences rather than complete sentences (57%).

6. Students’ view of the teacher who mixed English with Indonesian
   It was reported that the majority of the students believed that the teacher was
aware of his/her code mixing in English (83%), and they disagreed if the teacher used Indonesian only in English classroom (53% of the students neither agreed nor disagreed).

7. Students’ perception of the extent to which the teacher examined
The majority of the respondents claimed that the amount of code mixing exhibited in the classroom was similar to other English classes that they had attended (60%). Also, the way English was used with Indonesian in their classroom was also the same with other English classes (46% and 47% of the students neither agreed nor disagreed).

8. Perceived effects on students’ academic progress
Mostly, the respondents disagreed that their grades would be higher if the instruction was used in Indonesia only (37% and 37% of the students neither agreed nor disagreed). Furthermore, they also did not find the course would be easier if the classroom was conducted in Indonesia only (30% and 50% of the students neither agreed nor disagreed).

To elicit more comprehensive information from the respondents and to strengthen the results from the questionnaires, the researcher conducted interviews. Five students were interviewed consisting of 2 males and 3 females. They were S5, S8, S13, S16, and S25. Four questions were designed to explore their attitudes on mixing English with Indonesian in English classroom.

Regarding the importance of English. All interviewees agreed that English was so important to be learnt.

S25: Saya juga, sangat penting soalnya kan kalo misalnya didunia tuh Bahasa Inggris tuh sebagai Bahasa Internasional, jadi kita kalau misalnya kesana ya gunain Bahasa Inggris.

S16: Sama aja kayak tadi, Umm.. gara – gara kan kalo Bahasa Inggris digunai dari semua negara atau Bahasa Internasionalnya jadi kan penting juga buat interaksi sama orang luar.

S5: Ya. buat kalau kerja di luar tuh bisa ngerti Bahasa Inggris ngomongnya, lancar gitu.

S8: Ya kalau sekarang kan sudah menjadi era globalisasi jadi udah bahasanya tuh lebih mudah berkomunikasi sama orang tuh.
The fact that they all agreed that English was important, yet they had positive attitudes on code mixing.

S13: Ya kalau misalkan mencampur Bahasa Inggris dan Indonesia itu lebih mudah, lebih.. siswa nya juga lebih mengerti

S16: Penting karena kan kalau Bahasa Inggris aja kan muridnya nanti kan gak ngerti gitu, tapi gurunya harus harus itu juga, harus ngertiin juga sama siswa nya barangkali kalau pake Bahasa Inggris terus kan nanti siswanya malah jadi ribet gitu.

S5: Ya sama penting, soalnya kalo Inggris semua tuh bingung juga siswanya, kalau dicampur kan jadi lebih paham

S8: Ya, sama dengan yang lain biar ngerti dah. Gak terlalu.. gak terlalu pusing lah.

Conversely, they had negative attitudes on the use of full English in English classroom.

S13: Umm.. misalkan full English itu kan barangkali siswanya juga kan barangkali ada yang kurang bisa Bahasa Inggris jadi gak, itu tuh guru ngomong apa? Jadi gak ngerti.


S5: Ya sama kalau Inggris semua tuh jadi bingung semuanya

S8: Ya gak seneng. Ya.. soalnya nanti jadi pusing gitu karena gak ngerti

The last question of the interview was to elicit their opinions about an ideal teacher. Surprisingly, they also mentioned about code mixing.


S16: Ya kalo misalkan mengajar pake Bahasa Inggris itu, setelah ngomong pake Bahasa Inggris itu sebaiknya diartiin dulu.
In order to obtain more knowledge about students’ attitudes on code mixing in English classroom, it needs further research that have larger scopes of population in the same field. It is recommended to investigate the type of code mixing on teachers’ language use as well.

REFERENCES


D. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, AND RECOMMENDATION

1. Conclusion
To conclude, the majority of the students believed that code mixing was an acceptable style of speech. They viewed that the code mixing used by their teacher was a practical solution and strategy in the classroom. Yet, they rejected if the teacher used only Indonesian in English classroom.

2. Implication
This study provides implications for students and teachers. For the students, it increases their understanding about language learning through code mixing. For the teachers, this study can increase their awareness about a language strategy through code mixing.

3. Recommendation
Myths and realities. *New Horizon in Education*, 56(3), 75-87.


