

The Use of Code Switching in Twitter (A Case Study in English Education Department)

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ABSTRACT

This study explores some important issues, namely the occurrences of code switching types, languages used, and the reasons why the respondents switch their language in communicating in Twitter. The study involved the students of English Education Department who had already signed up as Twitter users as the respondents. In this study, the data were the tweets used by the respondents and the responses of the questionnaires. To identify code switching types in the tweets, Poplack's framework (1980) was applied. Moreover, the theories proposed by Hoffman (1991) and Saville-Troike (1986) were used as the basis of interpretation to investigate the reasons why the respondents switch their language in Twitter. The data (selected tweets and questionnaires) were analyzed by several steps, namely identifying the occurrences of code switching from the tweets, classifying the code switching in the form of tables, quantifying the frequency and the percentage of code switching, and analyzing and discussing the data obtained. The results show that there are three types of code switching, seven language combinations and six reasons of the use of code switching in Twitter. In terms of the type, *intra-sentential switching* tends to be the most frequent type of code switching (56.67%). In relation to language combinations used in the tweets, Indonesian-English is likely to be the most frequent language combination (73.33%). Moreover, in relation to the reason, real lexical need may be considered as the main reason to switch the language in Twitter (60%).

Keywords: *Code Switching, Twitter, Twitter Users, Tweets*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an important aspect in society today. People need each other to communicate in order to convey their needs and to share what they feel even if they come from different areas and have their own language. In spite of the differences that they have, they try to learn how to establish and maintain a good relationship in communicating each other.

When people interact with others in society at anytime and anywhere, they must use a language. Without a language, people will find some troubles when they do their activities. In the world with different languages, people learn and use two or more languages in order to be able to interact with others. According to Wardhaugh (2006), the preceding phenomenon is known as bilingualism, while the latest is recognized as multilingualism. As stated by Sinulingga (2009) that a bilingual individual is a person who can speak two languages. Meanwhile, multilingual individual can be defined as a person who can

use more than two languages. Scotton (1993) cited in Mesthrie (2008) argues that multilingual speakers may switch languages according to situations in a way that monolingual speakers switch styles of the same language natively. Since people are involved in multilingual communication, it is possible for them to code switch their speech. They who live in a bilingual or multilingual community have a tendency in using code switching in their speech towards the conversation in order to make a good communication each other.

Nowadays, switching languages is commonly used because it often occurs in daily conversation such as on the radio, on the television, and even on the internet. Internet is one of the most popular communication tools. It gives many advantages for people, especially to communicate with others. People tend to use internet to keep in touch with people they know through one of facilities in the internet named social networking. Up to the present time, there are several social networking that are widely used by

people, for instance Friendster, Tagged, My Space, Facebook, Twitter, and so forth. Twitter which was founded by Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, and Evan Williams in March 2006 is a social networking that allows its users to post their latest updates (CrunchBase, 2012). Twitter contains simple features to be used by millions of people. Those who use Twitter often update their tweets, texts made by Twitter users in composing the messages (Kelsey, 2010), in different language styles which will be responded by others in the same pattern of language.

Regarding the explanations above, the study is conducted to explore some important issues by conducting the use of code switching in Twitter. This study observes the types of code switching, the languages used, and the reasons of using code switching in communicating shown on Twitter. The result of the study is expected to give valuable knowledge in code switching and to enrich the literature collection of the related theories employed in the present study.

CODE SWITCHING

Code switching is a sociolinguistic phenomenon in which two or more language varieties are used in a speech community. Code switching, as Poplack and Sankoff (1984) state, is simply the alternate use of the two languages in discourse. Additionally, people are generally aware of the differences in the strength of the languages that they use, especially people who speak more than one language, or who have control over more than one variety of any language (Meyerhoff, 2006). Furthermore, Meyerhoff states that people are equally aware that in some contexts one variety will serve their need better than another. The variety shows different styles of a language that people use depending on where they are, who they are talking to, and what kind of impression that they want to communicate to the other people.

Switching from one language to another provides different ways in conveying messages. Wardhaugh (2006) says that selecting a particular code is usually required by people whenever they choose to speak and

they may also decide to switch from one code to another even sometimes in very short utterances and so create a new code. Code switching occurs between speakers' turns or within a single speaker's turn in a conversation. It can happen not only from individual choice but also from a group of speakers who must deal with more than one language in their common knowledge.

Code switching is an everyday reality in every place where more than one language are spoken in everyday communications. Language serves a range of functions in communication. This statement is in line with Holmes (2001: 2) who says that "language is used to ask for and give people information". This shows how language is used to express annoyance as well as admiration. Language provides much information that makes the use of language different across different communities. Every community has its own style in communication. Holmes (2001) states that people from different communities may use different pronunciations, vocabularies, grammar, or styles of a

language for different purposes. They may also use different dialects of a language in different contexts. As a result, people in some communities choose different languages regarding to the situation that demands them to speak.

With respect to the focus of the study on code switching in Twitter, there are three types of code switching (based on Poplack's notion of code switching, 1980) that can be observed in the selected tweets. Poplack (1980) suggests that there are three types of code switching, namely *tag switching* (the insertion of a tag, exclamation, and certain phrases in one language that is inserted into an utterance that is entirely in another language), *inter-sentential switching* (takes place between clause or sentence boundary in which each clause or sentence is in one language or other), and *intra-sentential switching* (takes place within a clause or sentence boundary).

People sometimes use code switching by considering the social circumstance they engage to. As Holmes (2001) states that when there

is some obvious change in the situation, such as the arrival of a new person, it is easy to explain the switch. Furthermore, she says that code switching may be related to a particular participant or addressee. Thus, the speaker may switch the language in conversation for social reasons. There are several important reasons that are considered by the speaker in using code switching. Hoffman (1991) states that there are seven reasons to switch the languages, namely the need to talk about a particular topic, the necessity of quoting somebody else, being emphatic about something, the essential of using interjection, the need to use repetition for clarification, the necessity of intention in clarifying the speech context for interlocutor, and the need to express group identity. To support Hoffman's theory, there is also another theory proposed by Saville-Troike (1986 as cited in Cakrawarti, 2011). The theory gives several additional reasons for people to switch their language, namely softening or strengthening request or

command, and the necessity of real lexical need.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted as a case study by using a qualitative approach. According to Robson (2002) cited in Cohen *et. al.* (2007), case study looks at a phenomenon in its real-life context. Thus, this study is used in order to explore the phenomenon of code switching found in Twitter. It describes types of code switching found in the selected tweets. Then, the study presents the languages that are used by the respondents in code switching found in the selected tweets. Afterward, the study also elaborates the reasons why the respondents use code switching in communicating in Twitter.

The data were collected from the tweets of thirty Twitter users. The tweets were purposively chosen considering the needs in trying to find the tweets related to the present study. The researcher took two tweets from each thirty Twitter users from June until September 2012. After collecting the data of code

switching in the tweets, questionnaires were used as the other instrument. The questionnaires consist of two kinds of question. The first question is formulated in the form of multiple choices. The second question is formulated in the form of open questions to give the respondents more freedom in expressing their feelings, especially their personal thought.

Types of Code Switching in the Selected Tweets

Based on the data, there are three types of code switching found in the selected tweets, namely *tag switching*, *inter-sentential switching*, and *intra-sentential switching*. Generally, the distribution of code switching types is presented below.

Types of code switching in the selected tweets

No.	Types	Frequency (F)	Percentage
1.	Tag Switching	3	5%
2.	Inter-sentential Switching	23	38.33%
3.	Intra-sentential Switching	34	56.67%
Total		60	100%

From sixty tweets, the most frequent type of code switching used by the respondents is *intra-sentential switching* (56.67%). The example of this type can be seen from tweet written by @female12, *liat city lights dari ketinggian itu sweet*. She inserted English, *city lights* and *sweet*, in the middle of her Indonesian sentence. Then, *inter-sentential switching* is in the second place (38.33%). The example of this comes from @male12, *baru beres*

nonton Perahu Kertas. Above average, but just another Indonesian romantic movie. He used Indonesian as the base language in the first sentence. Then, he used English in the next sentence. Thus, this tweet is classified into *inter-sentential switching*. The least frequent type of code switching used in the tweets is *tag switching* (5%). It can be seen from tweet written by @female6, *Oh Gosh! Pusing gini ngeliatin komputer mlulu*. She

inserted an English interjection, *Oh Gosh*, into Indonesian sentence.

Languages Occurrences on the Selected Tweets

Language combinations in the selected tweets

No.	Language Combinations	Frequency (F)	Percentage
1.	Indonesian – English	44	73.33%
2.	Indonesian – Sundanese	8	13.33%
3.	Indonesian – Arabic	3	5%
4.	Indonesian – Palembangnese	1	1.67%
5.	Indonesian – Korean	1	1.67%
6.	Indonesian – English - Sundanese	2	3.33%
7.	Indonesian – English – Arabic	1	1.67%
Total		60	100%

From sixty tweets, the most frequent language combination used by the respondents is Indonesian-English (73.33%). @male7 wrote *cinta hakiki itu seperti strategy bola Spanyol, tik tak, feedback seimbang, main pendek (no LDR/crossing ball), gol sederhana*. This tweet contains language combination of Indonesian and English. The second language combination is Indonesian-Sundanese (13.33). The example of this is written by @male15, *semalem mimpinya udah pake bahasa inggris lah aing, gaya*. Then, it is followed by Indonesian-Arabic (5%). The example of Indonesian-Arabic

Based on the data, there are seven language combinations of code switching found in the selected tweets. Generally, the distribution of language combinations is presented below.

language combination comes from @female3, *‘dan sampai pada obrolan **Habbluminallah dan habbluminannas**’*. Next language combination used is Indonesian-English-Sundanese (3.33%). The example of this is written by @female 10, *abis mandi, baca BBM. Oiado nian yang nak ngerusak mood ini. Suingke tula rrrr*. She switched her language into Palembangnese in her last sentence of the tweet. The least frequent language combinations are Indonesian-Palembangnese, Indonesian-Korean, and Indonesian-English-Arabic (1.67%).

Reasons of Code Switching in Twitter

Based on the data, there are six reasons of code switching (proposed

by Hoffman; 1991 and Saville-Troike; 1986) found in the questionnaires. Generally, the distribution of code switching reasons is presented below.

Reasons of code switching in the selected tweets

No.	Reasons	Frequency (F)	Percentage
1.	The need to talk about a particular topic	4	13.33%
2.	The essential of an interjection	3	10%
3.	The necessity of intention in clarifying the speech context for interlocutor	2	6.67%
4.	The need to express group identity	1	3.33%
5.	The need to soften or strengthen request or command	2	6.67%
6.	The necessity of real lexical need	18	60%
Total		30	100%

From thirty answers of the questionnaires, the most frequent reason of code switching admitted by the respondents is the necessity of real lexical need (60%). Based on the questionnaires, there is sometimes an expression that cannot be expressed by using Indonesian. Thus, code switching is used because of lack of respondent's vocabulary in one language. The next reason used is the need to talk about a particular topic (13.33%). The respondents admitted that they feel more convenient by using English when expressing their own feelings. The third reason is the

essential of an interjection (10%). They used this reason because it is sometimes spontaneous in using certain words in English, for example *thx*. Then, the necessity of intention in clarifying the speech context for interlocutor and the need to soften or strengthen request or command (6.67%) are the next reasons. They admitted that code switching is used to communicate with their interlocutor, in this case in Twitter. Besides, their friends from abroad can understand what they mean if using a global language. In term of the need to soften or strengthen

request or command, they use it to avoid rude sense and tickle heard from certain words in certain languages. The least frequent reason of code switching used by the respondents is the need to express group identity (3.33%). One of them admitted that code switching is used to express his identity which is Sundanese.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the study, it can be concluded that the most frequent type of code switching used in the selected tweets is *intra-sentential switching*. Based on the tweets, most Twitter users tend to switch at the level of words and phrases by emphasizing a certain word. Then, regarding to the result of the questionnaires, most Twitter users use English as their language combination. This shows the background of the respondents who major in English Education

Department. Thus, they prefer to do code switching to develop and apply their skill especially in English. They also switch into English because most of their friends use English in their tweets so that they communicate in the same language. In this study, real lexical need seems to be the main reason that triggers Twitter users to do code switching. Based on the respondents' responses from the questionnaires, it could be because of the lack of vocabulary so that they use another language to express things.

For further research related to this study, it is suggested that further studies may focus on the use of code switching performed by other students of English Education Department in various semester and in different setting. It is not only in the social network setting but also in the daily conversation setting or other written literary works, such as novels, films or drama scripts.

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