Code-mixing on Facebook postings by EFL students: A small scale study at an SMP in Tangerang

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the use of English, in terms of code mixing forms, and its motivations by EFL teenager learners. The participants of this study are three students in the age range of 12-14 year's old (grade 8th and 9th) in a junior high school in Tangerang, Indonesia. The data was a one week Facebook postings from the students Facebook page. Content analysis was used as a method for data analysis. In addition, interview was also conducted to find out the participants' motivation in using English on their Facebook posts. The research findings showed that English is frequently used by students in social media to perform code-mixing which are present in caption, status, hashtag, and comments. Using Hoffman's categorization (1991), reasons for code-mixing are identified as follows: 1) talking about a particular topic, 2) quoting somebody else's statements, 3) being emphatic about something, 4) interjection (inserting sentence fillers or sentence connectors), 5) indicating pride and 6) limited words.

Keywords: code-mixing, linguistic style, language use

Introduction

Recently, the interest of learning and using foreign languages has increased. English is one of the foreign languages frequently used besides the mother tongue. With the growing influence of globalization, English is now considered as a lingua franca that is widely learned. Many Indonesian youngsters today use English in daily conversation and as a medium of communication besides their mother tongue. It can be observed that today these youngsters tend to code-switch and code-mix English and their local languages in their social communicative setting. This phenomenon can be seen in their use of language in the social media, the means of communication that is trending among the youngsters nowadays, to express their feeling, obtain information and find new friends.

Facebook is one of the social network that is growing rapidly than other social networks. It is one of ten most popular social networking in the world used by youngsters aged 12 – 24 years old. As of January 2011, the network was estimated to have more than 600 million monthly active users worldwide (Calrson, 2011). Its wide network encourages many youngsters to

be connected with more people, to be updated with the trends and news across the globe as well as to share their interests and voices to wider audience. *Facebook* offers several features for its users to share and communicate their voices such as *status* (a feature to share a content on their profile, on their friends' walls and in *Facebook* news feeds), *caption* (a short explanation or description which includes an illustration and photo), *comment* (a note explaining, illustrating, or criticizing the meaning of writing) and *hashtag* (the users will be able to see all public content related to the keyword). These features allow the young users to explore and connect with their friends at anytime and anywhere.

Driven by the urge of wider connectedness, Indonesian youngsters tend to mix *Bahasa Indonesia* with English. Code-mixing seems to be a common language practice among the youngsters. Previous study related to code-mixing and code-switching was conducted by Fong (2011) in examining bilingual university students use of code mixing in their social media. Fong found that code-switching occurs in online written discourse and the function and reasons for switching code are similar to those of verbal communication. Another study of code-mixing in social media was conducted with Indonesian university students (Habib, 2014). Habib found that the participants who have a high proficiency in English tend to use more code-mixing. This linguistic behavior happened either accidently or unintentionally with different reasons. However, both studies focused more on university students (tertiary education) as participants who have the good English skill background. There has been little study that looks at the use of code-mixing among beginning English learners. Therefore, the purposes of the study are to analyze the code mixing produced by three secondary students on their Facebook and their reasons for code-mixing. This research was guided with the following research questions:

1. How do youngsters use code-mixing for posting in *Facebook*?
2. What motivates the students to mix Indonesian and English in *Facebook*?

Code-mixing and code-switching

According to Holmes (2001), code is used by sociolinguist to describe the linguistic choices. Code choices relate to the social factors. Thus, language is not used as a highest level, but also refers to language selection such as accent, social class or social dialect. Varieties and styles are summarized in the barrel language (polite style, respectful style, intimate style or casual style). On the other hand, Wardaugh (1986) contended that code refers to a system that is used for communication between two or more

people. The way of these shifting two languages or more when talking is known as code mixing. Wardaugh (1986) explains that a code is actually a language which people use in their conversation of any situation or system of used communication.

Code switching**,** according to Hoffman (1991, p. 104), is a switch occurring within sentence. He describes that there are three types of code mixing based on the scope of switching where languages take place. Those are inter-sentential, intra-sentential and extra-sentential code switching. Inter-sentential code mixing is the change of language occurs at a clause or sentence boundary. Meanwhile, intra-sentential code mixing is the change of language occurs within a sentence boundary. Extra-sentential code switching involves a situation in which a bilingual attaches a tag from one language to an utterance in another language (in Mukenge and Chimbarange, 2012).

Das and Gambäck (2014) identified the type of code-mixing occured especially in social media which are used by many users. They explain that these types of code-mixing come as the result of the evolution of social media text which has created many new opportunities for information access and language technology, but also many new challenges since this type of text is often characerized by having high percentage of spelling errors and other unconventional characteristics such as

1. Creative spelling is a spelling variant which is different from the common spelling of words, such as gr8 for 'great', b4 for 'before'
2. Phonetic typing is a typing variant which spelled the same as the pronunciation sound, such as micceyou for 'missyou', and lokit for 'look it'.
3. Word play is a technique which main purpose of intended effect or amusement, such as gooooood for good, profill for profil and many more
4. Abbreviation is a short form of a word or phrase such as OMG for 'oh my God', TGIF for Thanks God It's Friday', and ILYSM for I Love You So Much.
5. Meta tags are a tag that describes some aspects of the contents of a web, such as URLs Hashtag, etc.

Code-switching is a unique linguistic phenomenon. Several scholars points out that code-switching is adopted by the speakers as a communication strategies. Hoffman (1991) identifies a few reasons for people to do code mixing. These reasons are:

1. Talking about a particular topic means that people prefer to talk about particular topic in any kind of subjects that makes them

      comfortable to express their situation, particularly informal situation.

2. Quoting somebody else is restating the statement or saying famous expression written by the well-known figures.

3. Being emphatic about something is used in a empathy and sympathy situation by mixing languages.

4. Inserting sentence fillers (interjection) in certain situation of using language switching and language mixing, people tend to unintentionally or intentionally mark the interjection or sentence connector.

5. expressing group identity (pride) in this kind of situation, there is a motive using the code mixing to get people's attention and boost up their pride while communicating with others.

6. Limited Words or Unknown Translation, this kind of situation avoid the misunderstanding and be more understandable by the interlocutor, people tend to mix the languages which has no translation in Indonesia.

Based on these theories, this study aims to investigate youngsters' use of code-switching and code-mixing between Indonesian and English in their social media. I am interested to look at the form as well as their reasons of using code-switching and code-mixing found in their produced texts in Facebook.

Research Methodology

In this research, the participants of this study are three students at the age range 12-14 year's old. They are 8th and 9th graders at a junior high school in Tangerang. The participants are randomly chosen at the time when the writers decide to use youngster as the participant of the study. Recruitment of the participants is done through volunteering to the project. I firstly asked my colleagues to invite participations in the study and finally received positive respond from the three participants.

The study adopts content analysis to study the form of code-mixing in the participants' produced texts. Short interview was also conducted in gaining information on the reasons for code-mixing. Content analysis is used as the way to answer the first and third research question (i.e. the type and frequency of English code-mixing used by the students in their *Facebook*. As Krippendof (2013) explains that the purpose of content analysis method is "to examine data, printed matters, images, or sounds text in order to uderstand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed". Then, the interview is used to collect information on the participants' motivation or the reason of mixing

Indonesian and English in their produced texts on *Facebook*. The interview is also intended to support the content analysis to get a wholistic view of the code-mixing behavior of the participants. In the primary data collection, the writer uses the participant postings in the *Facebook* (namely caption, status, comment, or hashtag) at the range of one-week. The data collection started from 10 November 2016 at 0.00 AM to 17 November 2016 at 8.00 PM.

To protect the participants' privacy, the participants are addressed with codes (P1, P2, P3). Prior to the study, the purpose of this research was explained to all participants and permission was sought through the messaging service available on the website before any data was accessed and collected.

Findings and discussion

As stated previously that the types or form in social media updating status in this study will be restricted to four forms: caption, status, comment, and hashtag. The data counting is done to answer the first research question that is related to the total English amount that the participant uses in posting. For this reason, one posting could consists of more than two types of English used in *Facebook*. According to the content data analysis that has been conducted, the result could be seen as the diagram 1 below.
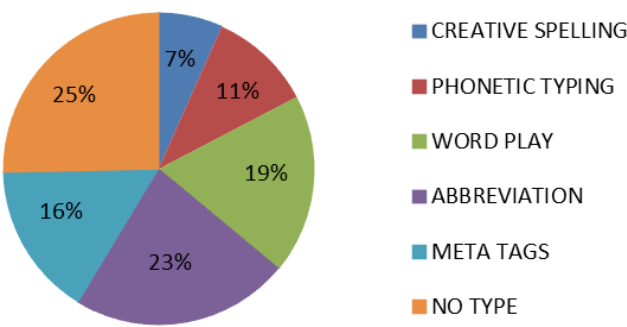
Diagram 1
Types of posting in English
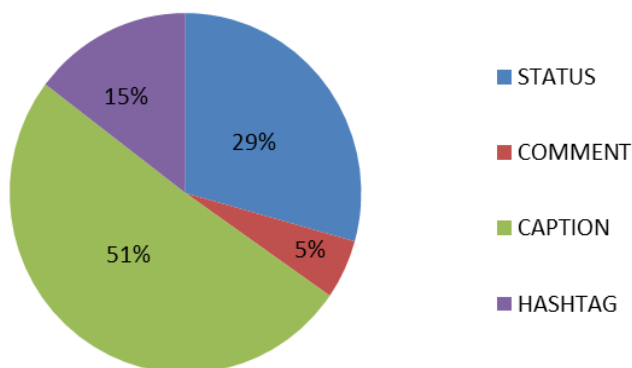
Based on the data above, the total post that the three students did on *Facebook* is 75 postings in 7 days data collection. The postings consist of 51% of captions, 29% of status updates, 15% of hashtags, and 5% of comments. From the diagram above, we could conclude that the youngster produced updating or posting activities on *Facebook* in the type of captions.

On other hand, forms of code-mixing that the youngster produced in *Facebook* postings are shown in diagram 2.

Diagram 2
Form of code-mixing in postings

| ■ CREATIVE SPELLING |
| ■ PHONETIC TYPING |
| ■ WORD PLAY |
| ■ ABBREVIATION |
| ■ META TAGS |
| ■ NO TYPE |

Since, the total of youngster posting in *Facebook* is 75 posting, the students' posting variety also shows an interesting result. From the diagram above, 25% the students prefer to use the common words in English such words as No in *NoSom, NoLoby, NoNyumpahin,* day in *kamisday, selasaday,* scout, support, and hobby.

The second highest form in students posting is abbreviation (23%). In this variety of students' posting, the students prefer to use the abbreviations that are commonly used among a wider *Facebook* community, for example, the abbreviation of "TFT" that stands for *Thanks For That,* then the word "ILYSM" (I Love You So Much). In addition, in the variety of abbreviation, the students also create some abbreviations that they have been used among the *Facebook* user in their own circle of friends. Examples of these abbreviations are as follows: BL (*Boom Like),* PS (*Photo Sampul),* PM (*Promote),* PP means (*Profil Picture).*

Next, in the third form of code-mixing in their postings is word play (19%). Word play is another form of code-mixing found in their *Facebook* texts. The participants create a unique words by adding some letters while posting in their *Facebook*. In wordplay, the common words that are often produced by the students are *ProfilL, Sooo, micceyou* (miss you), *dayy, openn.* Then, in Meta tags, 16% the students are usually use terms that are related to the features at the *Facebook* web, for example add, tag, chat, post. In phonetic typing, participants use only 11% of this variety while posting in *Facebook*. In this type of mixing, the students made use of Bahasa Indonesia grammatical system. One example is the word "Nyepam" which consists of the prefix "Nye-" (an informal form of prefix that functions to convert a noun into a verb) + spam (however, the "s" was dropped for ease of

pronunciation). So, the word "Nyepam" creates the meaning of "making a spam posting". Lastly, the amount of the students that use creative spelling is the smallest. Only 7% users in our analysis use English creative spelling. Those are *grd* for grade.

From those diagram above (diagram 1 and diagram 2), we could see the type and variety of the students preference that they use in their posting in *Facebook*. Then, we could also see a deeper analysis from those two diagrams in table 1.

Table 1
Code-mixing frequency of different types of posting

Type	Variety	Result		
		Amount	Total	Percentage
Status	Creative spelling	2	75	3 %
	Phonetic typing	4	75	5 %
	Word play	7	75	9 %
	Abbreviation	1	75	1 %
	Meta tags	5	75	7 %
	No type	4	75	5 %
Caption	Creative spelling	2	75	3 %
	Phonetic typing	4	75	5 %
	Word play	6	75	8 %
	Abbreviation	12	75	16 %
	Meta tags	4	75	5 %
	No type	9	75	12 %
Comment	Creative spelling	1	75	1 %
	Phonetic typing	1	75	1 %
	Word play	0	75	0 %
	Abbreviation	2	75	3 %
	Meta tags	0	75	0 %
	No type	0	75	0 %
Hashtag	Creative spelling	0	75	0 %
	Phonetic typing	1	75	1 %
	Word play	0	75	0 %
	Abbreviation	1	75	1 %
	Meta tags	4	75	5 %
	No type	5	75	7 %

In table 1, it can be seen that most of the users produced code-mixing text in their caption posting (49%), status updates (31%), hashtags (15%), and comments (5%). The spread of code-mixing are quite vary in status and caption texts. Abbreviation is the highest form of code-mixing found in caption postings. Abbreviation seems to be used for practical reason of communication. Participant 2 and 3 (P2, P3), in particular, produced the most abbreviation in their status posting. Some of these abbreviations are *PS*

(Photo Sampul), ILYSM (I Love You So Much), TFTime (Thanks For Time), BTW (By The Way), PM (Promote). Although most of the abbreviations adopt the Facebook-specific use, there are several cases of unique form used by the three participants that seem to be acceptable for them. The most frequent abbreviation in caption that they used is *PS* that stands for photo *sampul* (cover photo / picture). The participants explained that PS is used when they would like to give information to the people that they "tag" in their postings. This "PS" abbreviation mixes the English word "photo" and Indonesian "sampul" that follows Bahasa Indonesia noun phrase formation Noun (*foto*) + Noun modifier (*sampul*) whereas in English the formation is the other way around − modifier (cover) + Noun (photo).

Lastly, the users who use hashtag while updating their postings are P1 and P3. For P2, she only updates their posting in caption and status. Some of their code-mixing use are wordings like "Justdream" and a combination of the name of the day in *Bahasa Indonesia* and the English word "day" (e.g. Jumat*day*, kamis*day*, heroes*day).* Most of their code-mixing reflect direct translation from Bahasa Indonesia into English at word level only. As the examples above "justdream" is derived from the concept of *mimpi* [dream] *belaka* [just] in Bahasa Indonesia, but the targeted meaning is actually "wishful thinking." Another example is the use of the word "day" as a suffix in kamis*day* [Thursday]. In Bahasa Indonesia, Thursday is addressed as *hari* [day] *Kamis* [Thursday]. This code-mixing seem to be used for efficient reason, instead of using the two word formation of Noun Phrase "hari Kamis" (with a pair of two-syllables wordings), it is easier to use *Kamis*day (with only three syllables wording).

Another interesting form of code-mixing found in the text is how the participants code-mix English and Indonesian with phonetic spelling when the English word is read according to the phonology system of *Bahasa Indonesia* such as *lokit* [look it]. In Bahasa Indonesia, the letter o is usually read as /ɒ/ instead of /u:/.

Youngster motivation in mixing Indonesian and English in Facebook

In this section, the motivation of code-mixing used in Facebook is explored. There are a number of possible reasons to code switch from one language to another. As stated by Hoffman (1991, p. 116) in the book *Reasons for Bilinguals to Switch or Mix their Languages*, there are six reason or motivation of code mixing. Those are talking about a particular topic, quoting somebody else, being emphatic about something, interjection (Inserting sentence fillers or sentence connectors), pride, and limited words or unknown translation. The study uses Hoffman's (1991) categorization in analyzing the texts. Table 2 shows the result of this analysis.

We can infer from those table that the highest frequency of reasons for code-mixing is limited words or unknown translation 63%, followed by raising one's pride 21%, talking about a particular topic 7%, being emphatic about something 5%, quoting somebody else 3%, and 1% interjection (inserting sentence fillers or sentence connectors). The result is in line with the examples presented in the previous section above in which the code-mixing reflects direct translation and transfer of *Bahasa Indonesia* word structure.

Table 2
Motivations of code-mixing in postings

Type	Reasons	Result		
		Amount	Total	Percentage
Status	Talking about particular topic	3	75	4 %
	Quoting somebody else	0	75	0 %
	Being emphatic about something	0	75	0 %
	Interjection	0	75	0 %
	Pride	5	75	7 %
	Limited words or unknown translation	15	75	20 %
Caption	Talking about particular topic	0	75	0 %
	Quoting somebody else	0	75	0 %
	Being emphatic about something	2	75	3 %
	Interjection	1	75	3 %
	Pride	8	75	11 %
	Limited words or unknown translation	26	75	35 %
Comment	Talking about particular topic	1	75	1 %
	Quoting somebody else	0	75	0 %
	Being emphatic about something	2	75	3 %
	Interjection	0	75	0 %
	Pride	0	75	0 %
	Limited words or unknown translation	1	75	1 %
Hashtag	Talking about particular topic	1	75	1 %
	Quoting somebody else	2	75	3 %
	Being emphatic about something	0	75	0 %
	Interjection	0	75	0 %
	Pride	3	75	4 %
	Limited words or unknown translation	5	75	7 %

Firstly, for the 63% of user who use English in code mixing because of limited word expressions knowledge in their own vernaculars could be found at the entire participant. The participants would rather use the conventional abbreviations among the FB users such as *PM (promote), PP (Profile Picture), ILYSM (I love you so much), and btw (by the way).* There are also indications of unknown wordings in translating from *Bahasa Indonesia* to English, such as *nyepam.* As explained above, the word "Nyepam" consists of the prefix "Nye-" (an informal form of prefix that functions to convert a noun into a verb) + spam. The participants do not seem to be aware of the equivalent word of spam in *Bahasa Indonesia.* Other examples of Bahasa Indonesia influence are words like "NoSom" which consists of the words No + *Som(bong)* [to brag]. The intended meaning to be conveyed is actually the English expression of "[I] didn't mean to brag". However, the participants only use the very simple form of negation "No". Other similar example is "NoLoby" to mean do not approach [this person] and "NoPhoto".

The participants admit that their motivation to code-mix Bahasa Indonesia and English on their posting in Facebook is to raising one's pride. They took pride of their ability to add a little bit of English words with Indonesian words. The participants, in the interview, explained that they actually code-mix to get people's attention and boost up their pride when they communicate with their friends, as shared by P3 as follows:

> I : So, why do you use the word "PS" when posting the photo?
> P3: Yaah to make it sounds cool, so that many people wanted to see our photos. [my translation]

Being emphatic about something is another reason for code-mixing. P1 explains that she use words such as *TFTtoo (thanks for yout time too)* and *micceyou (miss you)* to emphasize certain emotions. They participants elaborated that when they feel sympathy and empathy towards someone or something, they would use those words. They felt that it felt much more convenient and comforting for them in saying them in English instead of in *Bahasa Indonesia.* There is also indication of expanding some words in English to suit the context of their conversation. The word *spam,* for example, is combined with the particle *-ih* to emphasize the negative affect to a subject:

> "SiapaNihh(?) Ada diGaleriGua<nyepam ih=D"
> [Who's this? There is someone in my gallery<What a nuisance=D

In the excerpt above, the word spam in *nyepam* shows that the person / people who commented her status was disturbing her. Participant 1 explained that, *spam ih* means someone who annoys other people by always giving a comment in their status or caption.

Distribution of code-mixing use in Facebook media

Table 3 shows the information on the participants' frequency of code-mixing use in various FB features.

Table 3
Participants' distribution of code-mixing use

Participant	Language	Caption	Status	comment	hashtag
P1	English	12 %	0 %	43 %	33 %
	Indonesian	88 %	100 %	57 %	67 %
P2	English	83 %	80 %	0	40 %
	Indonesian	17 %	20%	0 %	60 %
P3	English	83 %	0 %	0 %	56 %
	Indonesian	17 %	0 %	0 %	44 %

The table shows that the three participants are quite active in posting code-mixing utterances at caption and hashtag. P1, compared to other participants, seem to be more comfortable of updating her posting in Indonesian than in English. In caption, P1, only 12% she use English in posting in her *Facebook*, and the rest is in English. In posting type (status, comment, and hashtag) for P1 is also same, she prefer to use Indonesian as the language for posting in *Facebook*. P2 and P3 use of code-mixing is almost evenly spread in different type of postings.

Conclusion

From the study, it can be concluded that the participants had some interests in using English words in their postings in Facebook. The use of English is performed in code-mixing that they mostly posted in caption, status, hashtag, and comment features in Facebook. The types of code-mixing produced vary in forms. They are creative spelling, phonetic typing, word play, abbreviation, and no type. Students use of English in term of code-mixing is influenced by some reasons, such as talking about a particular topic, quoting somebody else, being emphatic about something, interjection (inserting sentence fillers or sentence connectors), pride, and limited words or unknown translation. Yet, their use of code-mixing also contain some features of Bahasa Indonesia, in terms of phonology system, word formation, and word structure.

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