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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **English Code-Switching Among Indonesian Speakers in Australia**

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**| ABSTRACT**

The present study aims to explore the practice of code-switching among Indonesian speakers in Australia. The result of this study is compared to previous studies on code-switching taking place in Indonesia (Setiawan, 2016; Sumarsih et al., 2014). The present study finds that there is no difference between code-switching among Indonesian speakers taking place in Australia and that in Indonesia in terms of the most frequent switching type. However, Indonesian speakers in Australia seem to have a different attitude to code-switch to English differently. Instead of calling English code-switch “cool,” they consider such practice “normal” to take place in Australia, making it an unmarked choice for them. Other factors such as inclusiveness, expressiveness, and audience also influence their choice to switch to English.

**| KEYWORDS**

Code-switch, Indonesian, factors, language attitude

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### **1. Introduction**

In many multilingual communities, the use of a language or variety is not necessarily restricted to specific settings or specific speakers. Multilingual speakers may alternate between languages or varieties during a single interaction in order to indicate specific communicative functions (Kaschula, 2021; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Gumperz, 1982). In sociolinguistics, such practice is usually called code-switching. The switch of codes can be realized at different levels of sentence structure. In this regard, Poplack (1980) explained that code-switching could be categorized into three categories, i.e., tag switching, intra-sentential switching, and inter-sentential switching. As suggested by the name, tag switching refers to a switch that occurs at the word level; intra-sentential switching occurs at the phrasal or clausal levels; inter-sentential switching refers to the use of code in a single sentence or cross sentences (Poplack, 1980).

Furthermore, Myers-Scotton (1993) suggested that languages or varieties used in code-switching can be divided into unmarked and marked codes. This categorization is used to indicate which language or variety is considered to be the norm or expected language or variety. While unmarked code refers to the expected language or variety, marked code is “a negotiation for some other set - a choice which all speakers are free to make, although they recognize what is normatively expected” (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p.479). For instance, the use of English words in a casual conversation between Indonesian speakers can be considered a marked choice, provided that the Indonesian language is supposedly the expected code. This marked code may indicate specific social relationships or identities.

The present study aims to investigate the occurrence of supposedly marked code in a conversation among people who share the same mother tongue, i.e., English code-switching among Indonesian speakers. Some previous studies (Setiawan, 2016; Sumarsih, Siregar, Bahri & Sanjaya, 2014) have discussed how to code-switch to English was practiced in Indonesia. I argue that there is a difference in the practice and factors behind code-switching between Indonesian speakers in Australia, where English is a dominant language, and in Indonesia. Hence, a possible explanation as to why they switch to the marked code in the conversation despite the shared mother tongue will be explored.

The present study attempts to identify the most frequent type of code switch among Indonesian speakers in Melbourne. Furthermore, the result will be compared to that of Setiawan (2016) and Sumarsih et al. (2014) finding to identify whether there are some different practices between code switches taking place in Indonesia and that in Australia. The present study will first review some key literature that motivates the study. Methodology of how the study was conducted will follow. Finding will be presented, followed by a discussion of the data in accordance with relevant theories.

## 2. Literature Review

Code-switching is an alternation between languages or varieties in a single interaction (Kaschula, 2021; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Gumperz, 1982). This practice is common in a multilingual community. With regard to the linguistic norms where the interaction takes place, the languages or varieties used can be divided into two types of code, i.e., unmarked (expected) code and marked code (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The realization of these codes may vary at the morpho-syntactic level. Poplack (1980) proposed three categorizations of code-switching in relation to the occurrence of the unmarked code, including tag switching (word level), intra-sentential switching (phrase and clause level), and inter-sentential switching (sentence and inter-sentence level).

A great number of studies have been undertaken to explore the phenomenon of code-switching and the motivation behind it. However, the present study is primarily motivated by three previous empirical studies conducted by Setiawan (2016), Sumarsih et al. (2014), and Sardar, Mahdi, and Mohd (2015). These studies will be reviewed and explained with regard to their relevance to the present study.

Setiawan (2016) examined code-switching among Indonesians whose linguistic repertoires include Indonesian, English, and the local language. Similar to the present study, the focus of the discussion is on the most frequent type of code-switching and the factors behind code-switching. Exploring an extensive range of spoken and written data, he found that Indonesian speakers tend to use code-switching at the word level. Moreover, the perception that English is more precise, concise, and prestigious motivated them to switch to English. It was also found that a keen interest in mastering English is among the reason behind code-switching. The data showed that English code-switching is practiced in numerous settings by speakers of various ages, classes, and genders.

Sumarsih et al. (2014), meanwhile, focused on spoken data of Indonesian speakers in North Sumatra. The speakers' linguistic repertoires included Batak language, Indonesian, and English. Focusing the discussion on the most frequent types and languages used in code-switching, they attempted to show how English may contribute to the standard morpho-syntactic structure of the local language Batak. They found that code-switching at the word level is the most frequent type of code-switching. With regard to the reasons behind English code-switching, they concluded that the association of English with coolness and sophistication contributed to the practice.

Unlike the two previous studies, the study was undertaken by Sardar et al. (2015) focused on Iraqi students in Malaysia. The students' linguistic repertoires include English and Arabic. Investigating the practice of code-switching in a conversation among Iraqi students, it was found that intra-sentential switching outnumbered the other types of code-switching suggested by Poplack (1980). It should be noted that the focus was on code-switching to their mother tongue, i.e., Arabic. The study further investigated the reasons behind code-switching. Using questionnaires, Sardar et al. (2015) found that limited English knowledge and maintaining national identity and solidarity were the reasons why they code-switched to Arabic.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Aims

The present study aims to investigate whether or not the practice of English code-switching among Indonesian speakers in Melbourne, Australia is different from those in Indonesia. Hence, the most frequent type of code-switching and the factors behind the code-switching are explored.

### 3.2. Participants

Participants in the present study were 8 first-year graduate students majoring in various disciplines at a university in Melbourne, Australia. There were 2 male students and 6 female students, with the age range from 24 to 38 years old when the data were taken. The participants are of Indonesian nationality but from different areas of origin. They are all under the same scholarship program at the university. Their linguistic repertoire includes Indonesian, English, and their respective local languages (e.g., Balinese, Javanese, Minang dialect, Batak language, and Sundanese). At the time when the data (both conversation and interview) were taken, they had been staying for about 4 to 5 months in Melbourne.

**3.3. Data collection technique**

The data collection included recording sessions and interviews. The recording session was to collect data on the natural conversation among Indonesian speakers. It took place in two different settings, i.e., the lunch event and the scholarship program’s gathering event. While the lunch event was only attended by the participants in the study, the gathering event was also attended by international students from different countries.

The researcher informed the participants that their conversations would be recorded. In order to minimize the change in their natural linguistic behavior caused by the recorder device, the researcher did not specify that code-switching was the conversational feature being observed. Therefore, the code-switching occurring in the data can be considered natural. The recording session in the first set was saved in two audio files, comprising 59 minutes of conversation. On the other hand, the second recording session yielded two audio files, approximately 50 minutes in total. The audio files were then transcribed. Only parts of the data that contained code-switching were orthographically transcribed. The transcription was then put into tables in order to ease the analysis. To keep the participants’ confidentiality, the name of participants and some names of persons or organizations mentioned in the conversation were coded using the reference “participant [number]” and “organization [number].”

Following the conversation data collection, the researcher contacted participants for an interview to identify his /her attitude toward English and what motivated them to switch to English. Unlike the study undertaken by Sardar et al. (2015), the interview was preferred over questionnaires because the researcher could ask for further clarification and explanation (Agheyisi & Fishman, 1970). Hence, it is expected that the data obtained can be deeper than that of using questionnaires. The data obtained from the interview were divided into categories based on the similarity of participants’ answers. Furthermore, the data were then presented in a table.

**3.4. Data analysis technique**

After the conversation data were put into a table, the researcher counted the number of code-switching based on the categories proposed by Poplack (1980). Furthermore, the results from two different settings will be compared. On the other hand, the analysis regarding the factors influencing code-switching will particularly focus on the way attitude to English contributes to code-switching. Other factors that came up in the interview will also be discussed. As the present study is eager to understand the differences between code-switching among Indonesian speakers taking place in Indonesia and in Australia, the results will be compared to previous studies conducted by Setiawan (2016) and Sumarsih et al. (2014).

**4. Results**

**4.1. Code-Switch Among Indonesian Speakers**

The results from the conversation data are presented in Table 1 below. Table 1 demonstrates the frequency of each type of code-switching occurring in the data. The data are also categorized based on the settings where they were taken.

Types of Switching	Setting 1	Setting 2
Tag switching	51	46
Intra-sentential switching	5	26
Extra-sentential switching	9	30

Table 1. Frequency of Code-Switching Based on Types in Different Settings

The results indicate that the frequency of tag switching outnumbered the other types of code-switching in both Setting 1 and Setting 2. The finding is similar to that of Sumarsih et al. (2014) and Setiawan’s (2016) studies in which they found that the frequency of code-switch to English at the word level outnumbered the other types of code-switching produced by a group of Indonesian speakers. It should be noted that the previous studies observed conversation among Indonesian speakers in Indonesia. Therefore, this finding shows that there is no difference in the most frequent type of code-switch between Indonesian speakers in Indonesia and those in an English-speaking country during the conversation with fellow Indonesians. Some examples of the switch are as follows.

a. Tag switching

Participant 4      *Kata temenku, tergantung suburbnya.*  
 My friend said it depends on the suburb.

## b. Intra-sentential switching

Participant 8 *Kalo elo make buat profile picture elo ya gak papa des.*  
If you want to make it as your profile picture, that's fine.

## c. Extra-sentential switching

Participant 7 *Dan, he is willing to be an Indonesian, so what's the big deal?*

And he is willing to be an Indonesian, so what's the big deal?

Regarding different settings, it is apparent that the frequency of extra-sentential switching greatly increases in Setting 2. It is over 50% of the frequency of tag switching in the same setting. Similarly, the frequency of intra-sentential switching also increases in Setting 2. However, intra-sentential switching is still the least frequent type of switch in either Setting 1 or Setting 2. As indicated by the results, the different setting seems to greatly contribute to the type of switch used.

#### 4.2. Attitudes toward English

The results from the interview are presented in Table 2 and Table 3. Table 2 lists participants' attitudes toward English. As indicated by the table, all participants in the study have a positive attitude to English. However, there is one participant who admitted that he also had a negative attitude to English. He mentioned that the status of English as a means of communication is acceptable but not as a must-learn language.

	Positive		Negative
	8		*1
Expressiveness/ Preciseness	English as a lingua franca	Instrumentality	Status of English as a must-learned language
2	7	2	1

Table 2. Attitude to English

Based on the table, a positive attitude to English is mostly influenced by the status of English as a lingua franca. There are 7 participants who mentioned it as the reason why they perceive English positively. The label used here, i.e., lingua franca comprises their response that English is "a global language," "universal language," and "international language." Furthermore, two participants mentioned that the expressiveness or preciseness of English to get their message across is another reason why they have a positive attitude to English, similar to Setiawan's (2016) finding. Meanwhile, two other participants noted the benefits of mastering English to their profession and any opportunities as a positive attribute to English. The distribution of this result is not even because it is based on their answers which came up during the interview. Hence, one participant may have two different answers in responding to the question of attitude toward English.

#### 4.3. Factors Influencing Code-Switch to English

Table 3 presents various factors that drove the participants to switch to English. Among 5 factors, the social function was chosen by all participants as the factor why they switched to English during the interaction. The social function here means that the code switch is used to let people outside the group of Indonesian speakers be included in the conversation. This function was particularly chosen when they referred to their linguistic behavior during interaction in Setting 2 (i.e., the gathering event where students from different countries attend). In this context of Setting 2, the outsiders refer to other international students who do not speak Indonesian. Following social function, 6 participants chose an audience with a specific level of English proficiency as the reason why they switched to English. Some participants stated that they were aware of the individuals with whom they were talking. If they know that the persons do not have a high level of English proficiency, they try not to switch to English. Meanwhile, all participants who chose this factor presumed that all Indonesians in Melbourne were competent in English.

	Audience	Language factor	Social function	Learning function	Identity marker	
	English proficiency	Closeness	Expressiveness/ Preciseness	Inclusiveness	Maintaining language proficiency	International student/community member
6	2	6	8	4	3	

Table 3. Factors Behind Code-Switching to English

Interestingly, all participants admitted that they did not have particular reasons as to why they switched to English for some words (e.g., “chicken” and “potato”), which are actually easily expressed in Indonesian.

Rec 1	21:15	Participant 5	<i>Bukan, ini</i> chicken. Nope, this is chicken.
Rec 2	11:22	Participant 5	<i>Oh itu yang minjem</i> lo tatakan potato <i>ini</i> ? Oh, it’s the guy who lent you baking tray?

Based on the data, there is no specific topic in which the participants switched to English. The participants switched to English when they talked about either academic or general subjects. Regarding their perceptions of people who speak English despite the audience being fellow Indonesians, 8 participants similarly said that it was “normal” or “common” in Melbourne. In contrast, they still viewed it as something “awkward” or “misplaced” if it happens in Indonesia. Five participants, however, explained that such practice would still be acceptable if the audience is also English competent.

#### **4.4. Discussion**

The practice of code-switching to English among Indonesian speakers in Melbourne is not much different from those in Indonesia. Code-switching at the word level is the most frequent practice during the interaction, either in Indonesia or in Melbourne. However, the difference may fall on the perception and motivation of such a practice. All participants find it common and “normal” to switch to English when they are in Melbourne. It is apparent that Melbourne, as a wider domain of the communication practice, seemingly influences the participants’ language attitude. As suggested by Fishman (1972), “domains enable us to understand that the language choice and topic, appropriate though may be for analyses of individual behavior at the level of face-to-face verbal encounters, are... related to widespread socio-cultural norms and expectations” (p.19). Provided that the wider domain of the interaction is English-speaking country, it seems to be appropriate to switch to English when interacting with fellow Indonesians. Furthermore, it apparently contributes to the presumption that all fellow Indonesians in Melbourne are proficient in English.

Perceiving the practice of code-switching to English as “normal” changes the status of English from pre-supposedly marked code to unmarked code. Myers-Scotton (1993) stated that unmarked code is associated with preferred or expected code in a given community. Code-switching to English has become more acceptable and expected among Indonesian speakers in Melbourne, provided that the wider domain puts English as a dominant language. Furthermore, it is worth noting that they actually did not have any particular reasons as to why they switched to English as it has become a habit. This means that such practice has been regularly exercised and, thus, become a part of their subconsciousness (Larson, 1997). Hence, it is useful to address their attitude toward English in order to explore the underlying reasons for such habits. Garrett (2010) defines “attitude [as] an evaluative orientation to a social object such as language” (p.20). According to the data, their positive attitude to English is mostly because English is a global language. The status of English as a lingua franca in a globalized world (Crystal, 2003) and the domain of English-speaking countries contribute to their perception that they constitute members of the international community, particularly international students. Not only is the domain an English-speaking country, but it is also a cosmopolitan country, as Australia comprises a growing number of immigrants and international students. Though in Table 3, there are only 3 participants who expressly mentioned the use of code-switching as an identity marker, it is apparent from their attitude to English that they implicitly view themselves as a part of the international community when they use English. Thus, code-switching to English is, in part, used as a way to reflect their identity as international students while still maintaining their identity as Indonesians by the use of the Indonesian language. As suggested by Myers-Scotton (1993), code-switching may become an unmarked choice if languages used in practice are linked with specific social identities and the interlocutors are keen to implicitly indicate these identities.

Another salient factor that contributes to code-switching is the social function of code-switching. Interestingly, while some studies (e.g., Auer 2021; Sardar et al., 2015; De Fina, 2007) associate the social function of code-switching as a group boundary marker, code-switching to English found in the data indicates inclusiveness. In Setting 2, the Indonesian speakers frequently switched to English though non-Indonesian speakers were not in their conversation group. However, they were aware that the non-Indonesian speakers surrounded them and might jump into their conversation at any time. In other words, code-switching is practiced in order that people from other countries can easily involve in the conversation. Instead of marking group boundaries, the switch to English was used to expand their circle so that out-group members could join their conversation. Some participants explained that such practice is a form of respect for the non-Indonesian speakers so that they do not feel excluded. In this regard, code-switching may serve as a form of, though it seems to be less precise, convergence, i.e., the change in interlocutors’ linguistic behavior with regard to the audience (Auer, 2021).

Interestingly, though the Indonesian speakers consider that code-switching to English in Melbourne is a “normal” thing, they still retain the perception that such practice is “misplaced” if it is done in Indonesia. In other words, they may still perceive English, not

as a pure means of communication in Indonesia but may contain some social symbols. In Indonesia, English is still seen as a symbol of education and sophistication (Lauder, 2008; Lowenberg, 1991; Setiawan, 2016; Sumarsih et al., 2014). It is partly due to the small number of Indonesian people who master English. Thus, it is more appropriate to use the national language, Indonesian, for conversation in Indonesia. However, some participants further emphasize the appropriateness of code-switching to English is highly likely affected by the audience and specific domain (e.g., office, language class). To be more specific, the addressee, a type of audience in Bell's (1984) work, is the one that affects the appropriateness of the switch in Indonesia. If the addressees are English competent, they find it acceptable to switch to English, though it is practiced in Indonesia.

## 5. Conclusion

The practice of English code-switching among Indonesian speakers in Melbourne is found to be similar to that in Indonesia, in which code-switching at the word level is the most frequent practice. However, their attitude to English code-switching is different. While it is considered cool and sophisticated (Sumarsih et al., 2014; Setiawan, 2016; Lauder, 2008; Lowenberg, 1991) in Indonesia, Indonesian speakers in Melbourne find it "normal" and treat English simply as a means of communication. In other words, English code-switching has become an unmarked choice for Indonesians in Melbourne. However, the perception that English code-switching in Indonesia is "misplaced" persists. While domain contributes significantly to such perception, addressees also play a role in determining the appropriateness of English code-switching in Indonesia. Furthermore, the intersection of the domain and positive attitude to English may contribute to the perception of English code-switching as a way to maintain an identity as international students. It is, therefore, also used as a way to enhance solidarity with other international students from different countries.

It should be noted that the present study used participants who are quite new in Melbourne (i.e., 4 to 5 months since arrival). Thus, it may affect the most frequent type of code-switching used. Furthermore, as the data of factors behind code-switching are based on self-reports, further observation may be needed to confirm them in a wider range of interactions (e.g., interaction with strangers and prominent Indonesian people).

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