

## Teaching English in Pesantren: The Dynamics of Code-Switching in Multilingual Classrooms

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### Abstract

*While the role of code-switching in multilingual classrooms has been widely examined in previous studies, particularly in general educational settings, only a limited number of investigations have focused on its application to pesantren settings teaching religious and secular subjects concurrently. This study investigates the use of code-switching in English teaching at a pesantren or Islamic boarding school in East Ciputat. The research found that code-switching is strategically used to explain vocabulary, check understanding, summarize lessons, and provide feedback. It was found that during complex content delivery and reflective activities, code-switching was more frequent, simplifying challenging material. Students generally showed positive reactions, but occasional confusion was observed. The study also found that other teaching styles, such as group discussions and multimedia use, further complemented code-switching. The study suggests that while code-switching enhances comprehension, teachers must strike a balance to avoid over-reliance on the native language, promoting more immersive English language learning. It calls for continued professional development for teachers in multilingual environments to optimize code-switching strategies and support students' language proficiency growth.*

**Keywords:** code-switching, English language teaching, pesantren

### INTRODUCTION

The way we teach in the classroom can determine whether learning is successful or not (Madrid, 1996). This is because the classroom is where learning happens. A classroom is where students learn about the environment around them in school. In simpler terms, switching between languages as described by the researchers is known as code-switching. In the classroom, certain activities will take place, such as teaching and learning, language interactions between teacher and students, critical thinking, and more. (Poplack, 2001).

A classroom is where learning happens and people talk about the language they use to learn. (Rogers, 2014). Teachers and students or students themselves engage in class discussions. Classroom discussions can involve multiple languages, based on the teacher and students (Valentika & Yulia, 2020). This kind of language is used during learning activities between teachers and students in the classroom. Classroom talk is a way students communicate in class, according to Rymes (2016).

Classroom discourse involves the way teachers and students communicate during lessons (Soysal, 2021). Teachers play a crucial role in helping students understand what they are learning, especially when it comes to language. Language is essential for sharing knowledge in the

classroom. One effective way to address students' struggles with learning a new language is through class discussions (Tang, 2017). Students may find it hard to understand what the teacher is explaining. Students need to be given explanations so that they can understand why learning is important.

Recent studies have explored various aspects of code-switching in educational contexts and, therefore, its role and effectiveness as a pedagogical tool. For instance, Anisah and Nasrullah (2023) investigated the positive attitudes toward code-switching among both teachers and students in ESL classrooms. Anisah and Nasrullah indicated in their study that code-switching is usually regarded positively, as it bridges the communicative gap, making lessons more comprehensible and hence allowing students to grasp what is being taught. In general, teachers and students within ESL settings use code-switching to explain complex items, retain student interest, and promote classroom interaction. This research underlines the opportunity for code-switching to be an approach that can make the teaching-learning environment more inclusive and interactive. This view is also held by many educators who find code-switching as a tool that promotes understanding and helps in managing the various linguistic backgrounds of students in multilingual classrooms (Asatiza: Jurnal Pendidikan).

Similarly, Puspawati (2022) explored the reasons behind code-switching by teachers in EFL settings, noting a few important functions of code-switching. Puspawati identifies that teachers especially resort to code-switching on elaborating any complex or sophisticated topic so that even a weak listener may have greater clarity over difficult subject matters. Code-switching in the teacher's own reasoning is used as an approach toward classroom management for instructional, directive, and corrective purposes. Puspawati's study highlights that code-switching is not only a linguistic tool but also a pedagogical strategy that supports both learning and classroom control, especially in environments where students may have limited proficiency in the target language (Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Learning).

These studies collectively add to the growing literature that positions code-switching as a resourceful, adaptive tool in language teaching, underlining its potentials to enhance communication, improve learning outcomes, and facilitate classroom management in multilingual educational settings.

Code-switching involves using multiple languages within the same conversation. The main language is supported by the mother tongue or another language that both parties understand. Mujiono (2013) describes code-switching as the use of different languages in spoken communication, occurring between utterances or different linguistic aspects. Bilinguals who practice often use code-switching to convey their ideas. According to Myers-Scotton (2000), code-switching means using more than one language in communication. Code-switching is when someone switches back and forth between two languages within the same conversation. In a discussion, two or more languages are used together to help each other. Penelope (2009) states that multilingual people switch between languages, accents, or dialects during conversations.

Code-switching can help improve learning by focusing on how it is used and its different types. The researcher used code-switching theory to observe a classroom at a pesantren in East Ciputat. Code-switching is when you speak using more than one language at the same time. The main purpose is to help people. Schmidt (2015) says students in the classroom need to see the language they're learning as a foreign language. Native languages can offer more understanding and explanations compared to languages like English that are taught in school. This study's goal is to enhance how teachers and students interact and use language to improve teaching and

learning effectiveness. This study aims to help teachers and students.

According to the study's backdrop mentioned above, the following research issues exist:  
*How does the teacher employ code-switching during English language education at a pesantren to improve communication and comprehension?*

While current literature recognizes the importance of code-switching in language learning, there is a striking paucity of concentrated research on its use in pesantren settings. This study seeks to fill this vacuum by conducting an in-depth analysis of how code-switching works in various Islamic educational contexts.

This study is unique in that it examines the junction of Islamic pedagogy and bilingual education in college pesantren using discourse analysis. Pesantren, especially at the college level, combine religious and formal education, resulting in a multilingual atmosphere in which Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, and English are frequently used interchangeably.

As English becomes more significant, teachers in college pesantren employ code-switching alternating between these languages as a dynamic instructional method to improve student comprehension, engagement, and communication. This study looks into how code-switching works in English education, offering light on how teachers manage the bilingual classroom to support students' learning while upholding religious values. The research provides important insights into multilingualism in religious education and the significance of language in college pesantren higher education.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The study used a qualitative descriptive methodology to provide a thorough knowledge of code-switching in English language classrooms at a pesantren. The researchers examine how a teacher and students utilize code-switching in English classes, documenting the various forms and functions of code-switching as they occur in the classroom. This approach enables the collection of extensive, contextual data that mirrors real-world classroom practices, as well as the flexibility to investigate the numerous factors that influence code-switching.

Classroom discussions were examined for the frequency, type, and function of code-switching. The study aimed to learn how the teacher used code-switching as an educational strategy to improve communication, engage pupils, and simplify complicated subjects. The pesantren classroom setting was chosen for its multilingual nature, with the teacher and pupils interacting in several languages such as Bahasa Indonesia, Arabic, and English.

### **Participants**

This study involved one teacher and roughly 30 students from a pesantren in East Ciputat that provides English language teaching. The teacher was chosen based on their experience teaching English at the pesantren level, particularly their use of code-switching in the classroom. Students were chosen based on their engagement in English classes and their exposure to code-switching in the classroom. A purposive sample strategy was utilized to choose the teachers and students who participated in the teaching and learning process in the setting of pesantren education.

The study included one English teacher and about 30 pupils. These participants were watched during multiple English lessons across different courses to better understand how code-switching is used in diverse teaching environments.

### **Research Instruments**

Throughout the investigation, this study employed a variety of tools to collect thorough data; (1) Classroom Observation. The observation sheet offered a formal framework for documenting various types of code-switching and their uses. The sheet has categories for the type of language transition, the context, and the purpose of the switch. This tool enabled the researchers to systematically record occurrences of code-switching in the classroom. (2) Audio recordings were used to capture real-time classroom interactions, ensuring an authentic depiction of the language spoken by the teacher and pupils. These recordings were transcribed and analyzed to detect patterns of code swapping. (3) Field Notes. This study took extensive field notes during classroom observations to supplement the information gathered from observation sheets and audio recordings. Field notes offered additional contextual information, including nonverbal cues, classroom dynamics, and other factors that influenced code-switching.

### **Technique of Data Collection**

In this study, data were collected using three main techniques: classroom observations, audio recordings, and field notes. The researchers observed several English sessions conducted in pesantren classrooms, focusing particularly on the teacher's use of code-switching. During these observations, they utilized structured observation sheets to document each instance of code-switching, including the context and the purpose behind its usage. To ensure accuracy and to capture the nuances of classroom interactions, the researchers also recorded the lessons. These audio recordings allowed for a detailed examination of the specific language used by both the teacher and the students, making it possible to identify moments of code-switching and the linguistic choices made. In addition, researchers took field notes throughout the classroom sessions to document any significant details that might not have been captured in the observation sheets. These field notes played a crucial role in contextualizing the data and deepening the understanding of the classroom environment.

### **Technique of Data Analysis**

The data analysis in this study followed a multi-step process grounded in Braun et al.'s (2017) thematic analysis framework, combined with elements of discourse analysis to provide a comprehensive examination of code-switching practices. First, all audio recordings from classroom sessions were transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate and detailed textual representation of the interactions. These transcripts served as the foundation for further analysis. Following transcription, thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring patterns and themes related to code-switching. This process involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing and defining them, and finally producing a coherent narrative that reflected the underlying meanings and functions of code-switching in the classroom context.

In addition to thematic analysis, discourse analysis was employed to explore how code-switching operated within the dynamics of classroom interactions. This involved analyzing turn-taking, adjacency pairs, and the communicative functions of language shifts between English and the local language, with attention to how these linguistic moves affected classroom discourse and pedagogical strategies. To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was applied by comparing data from different sources namely, observation sheets, field notes, and audio recordings. This cross-verification method ensured a richer and more nuanced understanding

of code-switching practices in English instruction within the pesantren setting.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings of the study based on classroom observations, audio recordings, and field notes, interpreted through thematic and discourse analysis. The data offer insights into how code-switching is practiced and perceived within the English teaching context at a pesantren. By closely examining teacher-student interactions across multiple lessons, this study identifies patterns of language alternation, their pedagogical functions, and their impact on student comprehension and engagement. Drawing from Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework and supported by discourse analytical tools, the findings are categorized around three major themes: the use of code-switching to support language comprehension, the integration of code-switching with interactive teaching strategies, and students’ reactions to bilingual instruction. These results not only provide empirical evidence of the functional role of code-switching in a multilingual religious educational setting but also contribute to the broader understanding of bilingual pedagogy in EFL contexts.

To provide a detailed overview of how code-switching was employed in classroom instruction, Table 1 presents the observational data collected from four English reading classes conducted at a pesantren in East Ciputat. The table summarizes key elements such as the date and duration of each session, the languages used, the number of code-switching instances observed, the contextual purpose of the code-switching, students' reactions, the instructional strategies employed, and additional comments from field notes. This structured documentation offers empirical insight into how code-switching was integrated into pedagogical practice, how it aligned with different teaching activities, and how students responded to these bilingual instructional approaches. The table serves as a foundation for the subsequent thematic analysis and interpretation of the classroom dynamics that characterize multilingual English instruction in the pesantren setting.

**Table 1: Classroom Observation Checklist**

Date	Class	Teacher	Duration	Language(s) Used	Code-Switching Instances	Context of Code-Switching	Student Reactions	Teaching Techniques Observed	Comments
30/10/2024	Reading Class	Mr. Ari	90	English, Bahasa Indonesia	6	Introducing new vocabulary by reading aloud	Engaged, asking questions	Think-pair-share, guided reading	Code-switching was helpful in explaining some terms clearly

06/11/2024	Reading Class	Mr. Ari	90	English, Bahasa Indonesia	5	Discussing text themes and checking comprehension	Active participation, some confusion	Small group discussions, visual aids	Students were very visually responsive to graphics, and code-switching enhanced comprehension
13/11/2024	Reading Class	Mr. Ari	90	English, Bahasa Indonesia	8	Summarizing chapters and encouraging predictions	Curious, engaged in predictions	Interactive read-aloud, prediction charts	High engagement through predictions; the code toggling kept people engaged.
20/11/2024	Reading Class	Mr. Ari	90	English, Bahasa Indonesia	7	Analyzing character development and discussing motivation	Highly engaged, collaborative	Character maps, group analysis	Complicated character motivations had to be described by code-switching

Classroom observations in the Reading class offered interesting data on the use of language, notably the usage of code-switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia, to improve comprehension and facilitate student involvement. The observations show how teachers and students handle the complexity of language use in the context of English language instruction at Pesantren. The data below emphasize the importance of code-switching, teaching approaches, and student reactions during the observed lessons.

### 1. Language Use and Code-Switching

The primary medium of teaching throughout the observed lessons was English, which was supplemented with Bahasa Indonesia via code-switching. Each class session had between five and eight code-switching instances recorded. This shows that code-switching is a regular instructional method used by Mr. Ari to help students understand complicated language and convey abstract topics.

- **Date: 30/10/2024**
  - **Code-Switching Instances:** 6 times
  - **Context:** Introducing new vocabulary through reading aloud.

Code-switching was used intentionally to introduce new terminology that students might

not have fully grasped in English. Mr. Ari used Bahasa Indonesia to explain the meaning of some words, making the content more understandable to the pupils. This strategy helped to bridge the gap between English and the students' home language, resulting in improved comprehension and less confusion.

- **Date: 06/11/2024**

- **Code-Switching Instances:** 5 times
- **Context:** Discussing text themes and checking comprehension.

Code-switching proved especially effective when discussing abstract ideas in the reading material. When students expressed uncertainty, the teacher shifted to Bahasa Indonesia to simplify and clarify the material. The use of code-switching helped engage students, allowing them to actively participate in class discussions and get a better comprehension of the topics in the reading material.

- **Date: 13/11/2024**

- **Code-Switching Instances:** 8 times
- **Context:** Summarizing chapters and encouraging predictions.

During activities focused on summarizing chapters and making predictions about the text, code-switching was essential for guiding students through complex narrative structures. The high frequency of code-switching in this session indicated that students required additional support in understanding the material. The teacher's use of Bahasa Indonesia in these cases was effective in encouraging students to think critically about the text and share their predictions.

- **Date: 20/11/2024**

- **Code-Switching Instances:** 7 times
- **Context:** Analyzing character development and discussing motivation.

Code-switching played a crucial role in explaining the deeper motivations behind characters' actions, which required more nuanced language. The teacher used Bahasa Indonesia to elaborate on characters' psychological traits, making the analysis more accessible. This helped students who might not have been familiar with the more advanced English vocabulary necessary for discussing character development.

## 2. Teaching Techniques and Student Engagement

Throughout all the observations, various teaching techniques were employed to enhance student learning, such as think-pair-share, guided reading, small group discussions, interactive read-alouds, and prediction charts. These methods were paired with code-switching, which helped in making the content more accessible and relatable to the students.

- **Think-Pair-Share and Group Discussions**

In sessions where students were asked to discuss themes or predict the direction of the story, the use of code-switching encouraged collaboration. Students were able to express their thoughts more clearly in Bahasa Indonesia before attempting to communicate them in English. This method not only enhanced understanding but also fostered a more supportive learning environment where students could exchange ideas more freely.

- **Guided Reading and Visual Aids**

In some sessions, the teacher employed visual aids, such as character maps and prediction charts, to help students visualize and organize their thoughts. Code-switching was used in these sessions to provide explanations and check comprehension. Students were highly responsive to the graphics, which, when paired with code-switching, helped solidify their understanding of complex concepts. The visual elements of the lesson made it easier for students to connect with the text and facilitated their participation in class activities.

- **Interactive Read-Aloud and Prediction Charts**

The use of interactive read-alouds, particularly in the 13/11/2024 observation, proved to be highly effective in engaging students. As the teacher read aloud, students were encouraged to make predictions about the plot, and their responses were facilitated through code-switching. This allowed students to clarify their ideas in their native language before expressing them in English, leading to more active and meaningful participation.

### **3. Student Reactions to Code-Switching**

In all of the observed sessions, students demonstrated positive reactions to code-switching, particularly when it was used to clarify complex vocabulary or concepts. The reactions varied slightly depending on the context of the lesson:

- **Engaged and Curious**

In lessons involving predictions (e.g., 13/11/2024), students appeared engaged and excited to discuss the material. Code-switching allowed them to express their ideas with more confidence, especially when they were uncertain about certain English phrases or expressions. As they practiced their predictions, the teacher's explanation in Bahasa Indonesia made the activity more approachable.

- **Active Participation with Some Confusion**

In lessons where abstract themes were discussed (e.g., 06/11/2024), students were actively involved, but some expressed confusion about the more challenging aspects of the text. Code-switching, particularly when discussing thematic content, helped clear up misunderstandings. However, a few students still showed signs of struggle, suggesting that while code-switching helped, further support or clarification was sometimes needed.

- **Collaborative Learning Environment**

In all classes, code-switching fostered a collaborative learning environment where students worked together to make sense of the content. The majority of students were comfortable asking questions when they didn't understand, and the teacher's use of Bahasa Indonesia facilitated a deeper understanding of the material.

### **Discussion**

Based on the results above, the classroom observation data highlights the significant role that code-switching plays in enhancing student engagement, facilitating comprehension, and supporting the use of English in a Pesantren context. Teachers, particularly Mr. Ari, used code-switching strategically to bridge gaps in understanding and ensure that students could fully engage with the lesson. The combination of effective teaching techniques, such as think-pair-share and visual aids, along with the judicious use of code-switching, created a dynamic and supportive learning



environment that helped students navigate complex texts and concepts. Further research is needed to explore how code-switching can be standardized across different classrooms and its long-term impact on language acquisition.

The findings from Mr. Ari's English class provide important insights into the use of code-switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia, emphasizing its pedagogical implications in a pesantren setting. This debate will expand on the frequency and context of code-switching, student participation, instructional approaches used, and the larger implications for language education in multilingual settings.

The observed code-switching ranged from 5 to 10 times over four sessions, with the highest frequency occurring during a session focused on summarizing teachings and gathering comments. This deliberate use of code-switching is consistent with prior research, which highlights its significance in aiding comprehension during difficult instructional moments (Ishak et al., 2020). The rise in code-switching within specified settings implies that Mr. Ari is aware of his pupils' linguistic demands and uses their native language to bridge understanding gaps (Soliha et al., 2020).

This finding is consistent with the work of Macaro (2018), who observes that code-switching is frequently employed by teachers when dealing with complex issues or engaged in tasks that require student input. In this study, code-switching appeared to be intentionally used to improve student comprehension, particularly when students faced more difficult content. This observation demonstrates how teachers, such as Mr. Ari, use code-switching to bridge the gap between students' English competency and comprehension of the topic. It also backs up prior research, such as that of Anisah and Nasrullah (2023), which found that code-switching can assist in clarifying complex topics and guarantee that students are actively engaged in the learning process.

According to the study, students often responded positively to code-switching by paying more attention and participating in conversations. Previous research, such as Kamaliah et al. (2023), indicated that when professors varied between familiar and target languages, pupils were more likely to engage in class. In this study, students were attentive and interested when Mr. Ari employed code-switching to teach new vocabulary and clarify concepts, demonstrating how code-switching can improve student engagement by establishing a more inclusive and accessible learning environment.

However, the diverse reactions witnessed during the November 19, 2024 session show a fundamental element of code-switching: while it can improve comprehension, it can also lead to reliance on the vernacular language. Other research has found that excessive dependence on a native language can impede students' performance in the target language (Habibah, 2015). Thus, while code-switching can be a useful tool for engagement and comprehension, educators must be careful not to let it become a crutch that stifles English language learning.

Mr. Ari used a range of participatory teaching approaches, including direct instruction, group discussions, pair work, role play, and multimedia tools. These different tactics provide a dynamic learning environment in which students are encouraged to use language in a variety of circumstances (Kamaliah et al., 2023). The combination of these strategies, together with strategic code-switching, appeared to be effective in keeping students' attention and interest.

Research suggests that using a variety of instructional strategies can improve student learning results by catering to diverse learning styles (Habibah, 2015; Susandi et al., 2020). Group projects and individual presentations allowed students to practice their English skills while

receiving clarification via code-switching. This technique not only encourages active engagement, but it also helps pupils develop confidence in their language skills.

One important educational takeaway from this study is the requirement for a balanced approach to code-switching. While code-switching can be a useful strategy for improving understanding and engagement, excessive reliance on the local language might stymie English language growth. Teachers should consider when to employ code-switching and progressively push students to use English more consistently. This is especially significant in pesantren settings, where students are learning English as a foreign language alongside other disciplines and may require additional assistance to develop their skills.

Professional development for teachers is critical in this situation. Ongoing training in successful code-switching tactics can assist educators better regulate language usage in the classroom while also improving their English proficiency (Ishak et al., 2020; Solihah et al., 2020). Such training can help teachers create an environment suitable to multilingual teaching while also preparing pupils for real-world communication challenges.

Furthermore, incorporating sociolinguistic insights into teacher training programs can help educators gain a better grasp of how language functions in multicultural classrooms (Habibah, 2015; Solihah et al, 2020). Schools may establish an inclusive environment that values linguistic diversity while improving English competence by providing instructors with knowledge of sociolinguistic dynamics and successful code-switching pedagogical approaches

## CONCLUSION

This study has illuminated the dynamic role of code-switching in English language instruction within a pesantren setting, highlighting its function as both a pedagogical tool and a communicative bridge in a multilingual classroom. Through detailed classroom observations, audio recordings, and field notes, the findings revealed that code-switching was strategically used by the teacher to introduce new vocabulary, clarify abstract concepts, summarize textual content, and manage class participation. Students generally responded positively, showing increased engagement and comprehension, particularly when Bahasa Indonesia was used to scaffold complex English instruction.

Furthermore, the integration of code-switching with interactive teaching strategies such as think-pair-share, guided reading, visual aids, and group discussions enhanced learning outcomes by allowing students to connect new knowledge with familiar linguistic and cultural frames. These techniques fostered a supportive learning environment where students felt more confident participating in discussions and articulating their ideas.

However, the study also underscores the need for balance. While code-switching supports accessibility and understanding, excessive reliance on the native language may hinder students' sustained exposure to and development of English language proficiency. As such, teachers should employ code-switching judiciously primarily as a scaffolding tool rather than a default instructional method.

The implications of this study are twofold. Pedagogically, it calls for teacher awareness and training in the effective use of code-switching to optimize learning without undermining language acquisition goals. Institutionally, pesantren and similar educational settings should support professional development programs that incorporate sociolinguistic sensitivity and evidence-based bilingual teaching strategies.

Future research should explore longitudinal effects of code-switching on English language

development and investigate how such practices vary across different pesantren or other Islamic educational institutions. Moreover, comparative studies examining students' proficiency outcomes in classrooms with varying degrees of code-switching could offer deeper insight into its long-term educational value. Overall, this study affirms that when thoughtfully employed, code-switching can be a powerful tool in fostering inclusive, responsive, and effective language education in multilingual contexts.

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