

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English has become one of the most important international languages used for communication, education, science, technology, and business. In Indonesia, English is taught as a Foreign Language (EFL) because it is not commonly used in daily communication outside the classroom. Consequently, the classroom becomes the primary environment where students have opportunities to develop their English proficiency through interaction with teachers and peers. According to Walsh (2020), classroom interaction plays a crucial role in language learning because students construct knowledge, negotiate meaning, and develop communicative competence through meaningful communication during learning activities.

Although English is a compulsory subject in Indonesian junior high schools, many students still experience difficulties in communicating using English. Their challenges are commonly related to limited vocabulary, inadequate grammatical knowledge, pronunciation difficulties, and low confidence in expressing ideas orally. As reported by Rahayu (2022), these limitations often prevent students from maintaining communication entirely in English. Consequently, students frequently employ various communication strategies to overcome these difficulties and to ensure that classroom interaction continues effectively.

One communication strategy frequently found in bilingual and multilingual classrooms is code switching, which refers to the alternation between two or more languages within the same interaction (Auer, 2020). In Indonesian EFL

classrooms, students often switch between English and Bahasa Indonesia while asking questions, answering teachers' questions, discussing learning materials, or interacting with classmates. According to Gumperz (1982), code switching is a natural communicative behavior among bilingual speakers and is often used to achieve particular communicative purposes. Therefore, in educational settings, code switching should not always be interpreted as a sign of insufficient language proficiency, but rather as a strategic linguistic resource that enables learners to maintain communication.

Recent studies have increasingly viewed code switching from a pedagogical perspective. García (2019) argues that bilingual language practices may facilitate students' understanding by connecting new information with their existing linguistic knowledge. Similarly, Macaro (2020) explains that the strategic use of students' first language can support classroom communication, reduce misunderstanding, and encourage learners to participate more confidently in English learning activities. Walsh (2020) also emphasizes that temporary linguistic support, or scaffolding, enables learners to accomplish learning tasks that they may not yet be able to perform independently. In this context, students' code switching can function as an important scaffolding strategy that helps them participate actively while gradually developing their English proficiency.

Several previous studies have investigated code switching in EFL classrooms. Alenezi (2021) found that students generally perceived code switching positively because it helped them understand learning materials more effectively. Rahayu (2022) reported that code switching assisted both teachers and students in explaining difficult concepts and maintaining classroom communication. Susanti and Muljani (2022) discovered that students

frequently switched languages to clarify meaning and improve comprehension during classroom interaction. Likewise, Yuliana and Nasir (2023) found that students used code switching to negotiate meaning, respond to peers, and sustain interaction during communicative activities.

Despite the increasing number of studies discussing code switching, several research gaps remain. First, many previous studies have primarily focused on teachers' code-switching practices as instructional strategies rather than examining students as the main users of code switching. Second, numerous studies were conducted in senior high schools or universities, where learners generally possess higher English proficiency. Consequently, relatively little empirical evidence describes how junior high school students naturally use code switching during classroom interaction, particularly in Islamic junior high schools (Madrasah Tsanawiyah). In addition, only a limited number of studies simultaneously examine students' code-switching practices, the types of code switching they use, and the pedagogical functions of those practices within a single investigation.

The researcher's interest in conducting this study emerged from preliminary observations carried out in an eighth-grade English classroom at MTs Al Khairiyah Tegal Linggah. During the preliminary observation, students repeatedly alternated between English and Bahasa Indonesia while answering questions, discussing classroom tasks, asking for clarification, and interacting with both the teacher and their classmates. Initially, the researcher assumed that this behavior merely reflected students' limited English proficiency. However, after observing classroom interaction more carefully, the researcher found that code switching actually helped students continue communicating, express ideas more

confidently, and participate actively in classroom activities. This phenomenon encouraged the researcher to investigate students' code-switching practices more deeply from both linguistic and pedagogical perspectives.

The present study involved 28 eighth-grade students who participated in two classroom observations. Throughout the observations, all classroom interactions were documented using observation sheets and audio recordings. More than one thousand student utterances were generated during the observation process. Following the data reduction procedures proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), the researcher selected only utterances that fulfilled predetermined criteria, namely utterances produced by students, containing code switching, occurring naturally during classroom interaction, and representing different types and pedagogical functions of code switching. As a result, **20 representative utterances** were purposively selected for detailed analysis because they provided sufficient information to answer the research questions and had reached data saturation.

Considering the importance of classroom interaction in EFL learning, the limited number of studies focusing on students' code-switching practices at the junior high school level, and the interesting phenomenon observed during the preliminary observation, this study investigates students' code-switching practices, identifies the types of code switching they use, and examines the pedagogical functions of code switching during English classroom interaction at MTs Al Khairiyah Tegal Linggah. It is expected that the findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of bilingual classroom interaction and provide practical insights for English teachers in utilizing code switching appropriately to support students' language learning.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

Based on the background of the study, several problems can be identified. Although English has been taught as a compulsory subject in junior high schools, many students still experience difficulties communicating in English because of their limited vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and speaking confidence. As a result, students frequently switch between English and Bahasa Indonesia during classroom interaction to express their ideas and maintain communication. Previous studies have demonstrated that code switching is a common phenomenon in EFL classrooms. However, most of these studies mainly focused on teachers' code-switching practices as instructional strategies, while relatively few studies investigated students as the primary users of code switching during classroom interaction. Furthermore, many previous studies were conducted in senior high schools and universities, where students generally possess higher English proficiency than junior high school students.

Another problem is that limited research has examined students' code-switching practices, the types of code switching they use, and the pedagogical functions of those practices simultaneously within the context of Islamic junior high schools. Consequently, there is still insufficient empirical evidence explaining how students naturally employ code switching to support communication and learning during English classroom interaction. These problems provide the rationale for conducting the present study.

1.3 Limitation of the Study

To ensure that the study remained focused and manageable, several limitations were established. This study was conducted only in one eighth-grade

class consisting of 28 students at MTs Al Khairiyah Tegal Linggah. The classroom was selected purposively because students were frequently observed using code switching during English learning activities.

The classroom observations were conducted in two meetings. These two observations were considered sufficient because similar patterns of students' code-switching practices consistently appeared during both meetings. The repetition of similar interaction patterns indicated that data saturation had been achieved, meaning that additional observations were unlikely to produce substantially different findings.

Although more than one thousand student utterances were recorded during the observation process, only 20 representative utterances were selected for detailed analysis. The selection was conducted through a data reduction process based on predetermined criteria. Only utterances produced by students, containing code switching, occurring naturally during classroom interaction, and representing different types and pedagogical functions of code switching were included in the analysis. Therefore, the selected utterances were considered sufficient to answer the research questions comprehensively.

This study focused on describing students' code-switching practices, identifying the types of code switching they used, and explaining the pedagogical functions of code switching during classroom interaction. The study did not examine the effectiveness of code switching on students' academic achievement, speaking performance, or language proficiency.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the problems identified above, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How do eighth-grade students practice code switching during English classroom interaction at MTs Al Khairiyah Tegal Linggah?
2. What types of code switching are used by eighth-grade students during English classroom interaction?
3. What pedagogical functions does students' code switching serve during English classroom interaction?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' code-switching practices during English classroom interaction. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

1. To describe how eighth-grade students practice code switching during English classroom interaction at MTs Al Khairiyah Tegal Linggah.
2. To identify the types of code switching used by eighth-grade students during English classroom interaction.
3. To analyze the pedagogical functions of students' code switching during English classroom interaction.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of English language education, particularly in studies related to classroom interaction and bilingual language use.

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the literature on code

switching, classroom interaction, and bilingual communication in EFL contexts. The findings may also provide additional empirical evidence regarding how junior high school students employ code switching as a communication strategy during English learning. Furthermore, this study contributes to the understanding that code switching is not merely a sign of limited English proficiency but can also function as a pedagogical resource supporting communication, comprehension, and classroom participation.

2. Practical Significance

For English teachers, this study provides a better understanding of how and why students switch between English and Bahasa Indonesia during classroom interaction. The findings may assist teachers in developing more effective classroom language policies and utilizing code switching strategically to support students' learning.

For students, the findings are expected to increase their awareness of their own language use during English learning. Students may better understand when code switching can support communication and when they should attempt to use English more independently to improve their language proficiency.

For future researchers, this study may serve as a useful reference for further investigations concerning bilingual classroom interaction, code switching, classroom discourse, and English language learning in different educational settings.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding and ensure consistency throughout this study, several key terms are defined as follows.

1. Code Switching

Code switching refers to the alternation between English and Bahasa Indonesia within a single interaction, utterance, or conversation. In this study, code switching specifically refers to students' alternation between the two languages during English classroom interaction (Auer, 2020; Macaro, 2020).

2. Students' Code-Switching Practices

Students' code-switching practices refer to the ways students naturally alternate between English and Bahasa Indonesia while participating in classroom interaction. These practices include asking questions, answering teachers' questions, discussing learning tasks, expressing opinions, negotiating meaning, and interacting with classmates during English lessons.

3. Types of Code Switching

The types of code switching examined in this study consist of inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag switching as classified by Auer (2020) and Macaro (2020).

4. Pedagogical Functions

Pedagogical functions refer to the educational purposes served by students' code switching during English classroom interaction. In this study, these functions include clarifying meaning, supporting comprehension, reducing students' anxiety, and maintaining classroom interaction (Macaro, 2020; García, 2019).

5. Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction refers to the communicative exchanges occurring between teachers and students as well as among students during the English

teaching and learning process. According to Walsh (2020), classroom interaction is the primary medium through which language learning takes place because students develop communicative competence through meaningful participation in classroom discourse.

