THE USE OF L1 IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION: A CASE STUDY IN POETRY CLASS

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ABSTRACT

The study on the use of L1 in the Classroom interaction among the participants (between teacher and students) of a Second and Foreign Language (SFL) Program is not a new issue anymore. It has become a debate for a very long time. Teachers of a Second and Foreign Language programs mostly believe and also state a policy that it is a must for them (not only for students) to use the target language, i.e. English in this context, as a language of instructions in their classes, regardless whether it is a skill courses or content courses. As a matter of fact, teachers sometimes use L1 for a number of reasons, though they do not always aware or deliberately switch the code they use during the class.

This study aims to describe the function of switching the code by the teacher from English (target language) into Indonesian (L1/First language) in the Poetry class during the teaching and learning process. The activities in this class are mostly lecturing and class discussion. In order to get the data for this study, the researchers will observe one or two meetings of a Poetry Class. The instrument used in this study are the recording and interview sheet. The data will be collected by recording the teacher talk and her interaction with students during the teaching learning process. The transcription of the recording will be classified then analyzed to figure out the situations in which teachers decided to switch the code.

It is hoped that this research will give an overview on the practice of the common policy in the use of L1, in the SFL Learning process in one of the content courses offered.

Key terms: code switching, target language, first language (L1), Second and Foreign Language (SFL), classroom interaction.

Introduction

One of the main challenge for the teachers and learners of a foreign or second language in the L2 learning program is how to be faithful to the L2 (target language) in the classroom interaction of particular content courses. As a bilingual even multilingual, it is sometimes unavoidable for both teacher and learner to think and ultimately are tempted to speak in L1. Even if the teacher has tried to be loyal to the L2, the learner might be not or vice versa. The situation then automatically may lead to the switch of code or language. However the reason to switch the code could be different for both parties.

In this situation, teacher as the leader of the class usually has to make a policy to oblige or encourage all the class participants to use only L2 in the teaching and learning process.
Definitely, it is not always easy to make it into practice. They need to find the way or solution to temporarily put aside their L1 in the L2 classes. The different nature of skill courses and content courses can become another challenge of using L1 in the classroom interaction. Most people believe that, as suggested by its name, the content courses more focus on the understanding of the content although it is still under the language umbrella. Whereas (foreign or second language) skill courses are perceived as the courses which particularly aim to enrich and provide learners with the skill, not only knowledge, in order to be proficient in the L2.

This study is trying to find out the function of the teacher's code switching from English (target language) into Indonesian (L1/first language) in the Poetry class during the teaching and learning process.

Literature Review
Code Switching
There are various reasons for the speaker to choose particular code in a conversation. In this term, a code refers to a language or a variety or style of a language. It seems to be usual if a speaker or conversant uses more than one code in the conversation, even in a single utterance, in order to either to convey certain message or to reach their goals. The use of more than one code in a speech event (conversation) is usually called code-switching. Gal (1998) in Wardhaugh (1992:103) defines code as “a conversational strategy used to establish, cross, or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations.”

Ronald Wardhaugh (1996: 106) distinguishes two kinds of code-switching, situational code-switching and metaphorical code-switching. According to him, situational code-switching occurs when the conversant switch the code because of the change of the situations where the conversant involved in without changing the topic. On the other hand, metaphorical code-switching occurs when the conversant change the code due to the change of topic. Nevertheless, the conversant is not always aware of the existence of code switching in their utterance as well as the reason why they choose certain codes. It can be chosen spontaneously in the course of conversation among the speakers.

Classroom Interaction
In teaching and learning process, teachers have many roles. According to Brown (2001), teachers can be function as a controller, director, manager, facilitator or resource. Teacher as controller can be seen in the way where he or she can decide what the students must do or not to do. But in classroom interaction, the teacher can make an atmosphere in which the students can express themselves also. As a director, teacher can arrange the class so that he or she can be like a director of a drama. Teacher as manager can be seen in the way in which teacher plans the lesson, modules, etc. Teacher as facilitator allows the teacher to facilitate the learning process by helping the students. The last one is teacher as resource which means that he or she is available for consultation or giving advice for the students.

Function of Using L1 in the Classroom
Eventhough the use of L1 in teaching English has become a debate, but many researchers still can see the benefit of using L1. There are many studies about the use of L1 in L2 class. One of them is by Nzwanga (2000) in Grim (2010). In the study, code-switching was found ‘to translate, practice discovery and rote learning, explain/expand a teaching point, bridge communication gap, and enhance students’ reflection. Another study by Castellotti (2001) in Grim (2010) stated that L1 can be used for communicative and pedagogical organization and management, guidance, facilitation of exchanges, comprehension check and assessment, metalinguistic explanations and reflection with learners. In a more recent study, Wilkerson
(2008) in Grim (2010) found that teachers use L1 ‘to save time, demonstrate authority, and reduce ambiguity.’

Grim (2010) examines the use of L1 of 11 French high school and college teachers. The result of the study shows that the use of L1 can be categorised as follows: metalinguistic explanation, task instruction, class management/discipline, empathy/solidarity, immediate translation, and delayed translation. In metalinguistic explanation, teacher uses L1 to focus on grammatical forms. In task instruction, teacher uses the L1 to give instructions for an activity or a task. Teacher uses L1 in class management/discipline to deal with lack of concentration, noise, talk, etc. In a sense of closeness with students teacher uses the L1 for empathy/solidarity either to show understanding or to create a friendly rapport. In immediate translation, teacher uses the L1 to give the translation of a word or expression without asking students for the meaning or checking students’ comprehension. The last one, in delayed translation, teacher uses L1 to give translation of a word or expression, using a prompt to ask students for the meaning.

Method
This research is a case study, “...a case is literally an example of something – a unit of analysis – in which the something could be a school, person, a political system, a type of management and so on, depending on the particular interest of the researcher and the field in which he or she works.” (Hammond, 2013: 16) Since this is a case study, it means that the result could not be generalised.

Participant
The participant of this research was one lecturer. The lecturer has been teaching for about 10 years. The courses that she teaches usually related with her major, that is literature. In this research, the researchers got the data from one of her class, that is poetry. This class is compulsory for the students to take, and it could be categorised into content courses. There were 2 class meetings that were being recorded in order to get the data for this research.

Procedure
The procedure of this research covers the pre-research activity up to the analysis of the data. First of all, the researchers ask permission to the lecturer of the selected class to record the teaching and learning process. Audio recorder was used in this class to capture the class interaction between the lecturer and the students. Because of time limitation, there were only two class meetings which were being recorded. Next, the researchers transcribe the recorded audio. After transcribing the recorded audio, the researchers classified and analysed the data to find out in what ways teacher use L1.

Discussion
This study will use Grim (2010) categories, i.e. metalinguistics explanation, task instruction, class management/discipline, empathy/solidarity, immediate translation and delayed translation as the guide. From the finding there were only 5 categories found in the study. Those categories are: task instruction, class management/discipline, empathy/solidarity, immediate translation and delayed translation.

1. Task instruction
In this category, there are only 4 times in which the researchers found the use of L1 related to the task instruction as the data of this study. The following two examples will show how the teacher used L1 when she gave instructions to the students to carry out a task.

Example 1:
T: If you read once, twice, you’ve got nothing. What is meant to be. So you read it out loud, not make it in silence. Because you will not see the beauty of the poem. **Coba puisinya dibaca dulu.**

Here, the teacher explained to the students in L2 that it is important to read the poem out loud for several times to see the beauty of the poem. At last, she used L1 when she asked students to read the poem at once. She switched into L1 might be because she wanted to make her instruction easily understood by the students.

*Example 2:*

T: *...find the poems and try to find using the musical devices, rhythm, tone. You will find, puisi ini masuk ke dalam apa, itu yang sonet karakteristiknya seperti apa?*

To have more specific, detailed, and systematic analysis of a poem, the teacher asked the students to find a poem by themselves and then analyze the characteristics of the poem using musical devices. At the time she would like to explain any specific things expected to be considered in the analysis, she switched the code into L1. The code switching might be driven by the willingness to clarify her instruction, as in example 1 above.

2. **Class management/discipline**

For class management or discipline category, the teacher only used the category once from the two recorded meetings.

*Example 3:*

T: Now, it’s time for you to share your mirror poem ... to the person on your right ... One person. Explain first and then, satu-satu dulu, ya, kalau hadap sana semua nanti siapa yang mendengarkan. Gantian-gantian dulu.

The excerpt of those lecture talks shows that the students were asked to share the poems they got to their classmates. After giving the task to the students, the teacher determined how the task would be done. She tried to explain procedures that should be followed by the students. She used L1 in this part to arrange the flow of this class activity and to explain reason why students should follow the procedures. By using L1, perhaps the teachers aimed to avoid noise or to get students’ attention, besides to clarify her instruction.

3. **Empathy/solidarity**

The most frequent use of L1 is in this category. There are 28 utterances in that teacher used L1 to show her empathy/solidarity. Examples 4 and 5 are the samples:

*Example 4:*

T: First, of course everybody have read the poem right? **Walaupun terbata-bata ya?**

Here, the teacher showed her empathy to the students by using the L1. She tried to understand students’ feeling and problems when they read the poem. By using L1, the teacher could express her empathy that became more apparent by the addition of L1 final tag expression, *ya*, at the end of her utterance.

*Example 5:*

T: your time?
S: yes, jaman dulu.
T: *o. jaman dulu.*

In this example, the teacher used L1 to show her solidarity or a sense of closeness with the student who used L1 to answer the teacher’s question. Moreover, by using L1, she also might want to assert her agreement and openness to the students’ idea. Perhaps, because the teacher wanted to encourage students to actively participate in the class discussion, she used L1 under this category higher in frequency than others.
4. Immediate translation
The second frequent use of L1 is in this category, which was 9 times. Below are the examples.

Example 6:
T: Remember, the speaker is not necessarily the poet. Jadi yang berbicara di puisi itu tidak selalu pengarang. Tidak selalu penulis.

From the example above, it is clear that the teacher directly translate her explanation into L1. Even, she did not only give the translation to the utterance she mentioned before, but also gave more information for her own explanation. It means that the translation in this example is applied in the sentence level.

Example 7:
T: While the rhythm of the poem is just like your heart beat. Seperti detak jantung.

Here the teacher immediately translate ‘heart beat’ into ‘detak jantung’. Different with the immediate translation done by the teacher in the example 6 above, in this utterance, instead of translating the whole or most part of the sentence into L1, she translated only one important phrase or the last part of the utterance.

Both examples then show that the immediate translation was possibly applied by the teacher range from the small part (unit) of sentence to the larger one.

5. Delayed translation
Like in class management category, the researchers only found the delayed translation once in the data transcription. The following is the teacher’s utterance.

Example 8:
T: The first sentence (reading the poem) ‘so you will not see me stopping here to watch this woods, It’s that kind of curi-curii, ya? you will not see me stopping here’

From the above sample, the teacher tried to translate the poem but not directly. She used the words ‘curi-curii, ya?’ to give a clue to the students about the meaning of the first sentence of a poem. She interrupted herself, for a while, reading the poem to translate a part of the poem and at the same time asking students a question tag in L1. By using a question tag, the teacher might also have managed to attract students’ attention and made them curious about the message conveyed through the poem.

Conclusion
From the findings, it can be concluded that the most frequent use of L1 in this context is to show empathy/solidarity. The teacher used the L1 in this category for 28 times. Another finding is that in this study, the researchers can not find metalinguistic explanation used by the teacher. The reason, probably because of the class is considered as content course. It means that the focus will be in the content and not the grammatical error. The transcription of the recorded data clearly shows that the teacher was in general trying to use L2, as the target language of this class, in accordance with the language policy of this class. However, in a few number of cases she must have done a conversation and delivered lecture in L1 in apparently because she would like to show her empathy and solidarity to the students. However, this is only a small-scale research that still needs more in-depth study to get the better result.

References
