



Exploring Code-Switching Practices in Indonesian Digital EFL Classrooms: Functions and Implications for Language Learning

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Abstract

Background: Code-switching is a common phenomenon in multilingual EFL classrooms, particularly in Indonesia, where students frequently alternate between English and Indonesian during classroom interactions. The growing use of digital learning platforms has further influenced language use and communication practices in educational settings.

Aim: This study aims to examine code-switching practices among Indonesian EFL students in digital classrooms by identifying their forms, functions, influencing factors, and implications for language learning.

Method: This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using the PRISMA framework. Relevant studies published between 2020 and 2026 were identified, screened, and analyzed through thematic analysis.

Results: The findings reveal that inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching are the most frequently used forms of code-switching in digital EFL classrooms. Code-switching serves various functions, including facilitating comprehension, supporting classroom interaction, reducing language anxiety, and increasing learner participation. Its use is influenced by language proficiency, instructional objectives, and digital learning environments.

Conclusion: Code-switching plays an important role in supporting communication and learning in Indonesian digital EFL classrooms. When used strategically, it can enhance student engagement and create a more inclusive learning environment.

Introduction

English has become an essential language in global communication, education, and professional development. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) and plays a significant role in supporting students' academic and career opportunities. However, the learning process often occurs in multilingual environments where students utilize more than one language to facilitate communication and understanding (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021).

One of the most common linguistic phenomena in multilingual EFL classrooms is code-switching. Code-switching refers to the alternation between two or more languages within a single conversation, utterance, or interaction (Poplack, 1980). In educational contexts, students and teachers frequently switch between English and their first language to clarify meanings, explain complex concepts, and maintain classroom interaction (Gumperz, 1982). As a result, code-switching has become an important communicative strategy that supports language learning in multilingual settings.

The rapid development of educational technology has transformed traditional classroom interaction into digitally mediated communication. Online learning platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Learning Management Systems (LMS) are now widely used in EFL instruction. These platforms provide various opportunities for students to communicate through written, oral, and multimodal forms of interaction, influencing the way languages are used during learning activities (Wei, 2018).

Recent studies indicate that code-switching frequently occurs in digital EFL classrooms. Students often alternate between English and Indonesian when participating in online

discussions, asking questions, responding to instructors, and completing collaborative tasks. Such practices enable learners to overcome language barriers, improve comprehension, and actively engage in classroom communication (Fithriani, 2021; Putrawan, 2022). In addition, code-switching has been reported to reduce language anxiety and increase students' confidence in expressing ideas during English learning activities (Herawati & Fitriani, 2021).

Alongside the concept of code-switching, recent developments in applied linguistics have introduced translanguaging as a framework that emphasizes the flexible use of multiple linguistic resources. This perspective views multilingual language practices as valuable assets that support learning and communication rather than as obstacles to language acquisition (García & Wei, 2014; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). In digital learning environments, students often combine English, Indonesian, local languages, and various digital resources to construct meaning and facilitate interaction.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of code-switching and translanguaging in supporting communication and learning in EFL classrooms. Fithriani (2021) found that code-switching facilitated students' comprehension of instructional materials, while Putrawan (2022) emphasized the role of translanguaging in promoting learner participation. Similarly, Ramadhani Ningrum and Sahiruddin (2023) reported that multilingual language practices contributed positively to classroom interaction in higher education settings.

Despite these contributions, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, most studies have focused on face-to-face learning environments, while research specifically examining code-switching practices in digital EFL classrooms remains relatively limited. Second, previous studies were generally conducted in specific educational contexts, making it difficult to identify broader patterns across different learning environments. Third, findings regarding the forms, functions, influencing factors, and educational implications of code-switching are dispersed across multiple studies and have not been comprehensively synthesized. Consequently, a systematic review is needed to provide a more integrated understanding of code-switching practices among Indonesian EFL students in digital learning environments.

Therefore, this study aims to examine code-switching practices in Indonesian digital EFL classrooms by reviewing previous research on the topic. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the forms of code-switching employed by students, explore its functions in classroom interaction, examine factors influencing its use, and analyze its implications for language learning. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive and effective language teaching practices in digital learning environments.

Literature Review

Concept of Code-Switching

Code-switching is generally defined as the alternation between two or more languages within a conversation, discourse, or communicative event. Poplack (1980) describes code-switching as the use of elements from different linguistic systems within the same interaction. In multilingual societies, code-switching is a natural phenomenon that reflects speakers' linguistic competence and communicative flexibility.

Gumperz (1982) argues that code-switching serves various social and communicative functions, including expressing identity, emphasizing messages, and facilitating understanding. In educational settings, code-switching is often utilized as a pedagogical strategy that supports classroom interaction and language learning. Rather than indicating limited language proficiency, contemporary perspectives view code-switching as a valuable linguistic resource that enables learners to maximize their communicative potential (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2014).

Types of Code-Switching

According to Poplack (1980), code-switching can be categorized into three main types: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag switching. Inter-sentential switching occurs when language alternation takes place between sentences. Intra-sentential switching occurs within a single sentence, while tag switching involves inserting words, phrases, or tags from another language into an utterance.

Studies conducted in Indonesian EFL classrooms indicate that inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching are the most frequently observed forms of code-switching. These forms allow students to express ideas more effectively while maintaining communication during learning activities (Azzahra et al., 2025; Junaid et al., 2025).

Code-Switching in EFL Classrooms

Code-switching has become a common practice in EFL classrooms, particularly in multilingual contexts where learners possess different levels of English proficiency. Both teachers and students frequently alternate between English and their first language to facilitate communication, explain learning materials, and maintain classroom interaction (Macaro, 2005). In many cases, code-switching functions as a pedagogical strategy that helps learners understand difficult concepts and participate more actively in classroom discussions.

Research has demonstrated that code-switching can contribute positively to language learning. Fithriani (2021) found that Indonesian lecturers employed code-switching to provide explanations, clarify instructions, and ensure students' understanding of lesson content. Similarly, Herawati and Fitriani (2021) reported that learners with lower English proficiency perceived code-switching as beneficial because it reduced communication barriers and increased learning confidence.

Furthermore, code-switching may support learner engagement by creating a more inclusive learning environment. Students often use their first language when expressing complex ideas, seeking clarification, or interacting with peers. Such practices enable learners to remain actively involved in classroom activities while gradually developing their English proficiency (Zainil & Arsyad, 2021). Consequently, many scholars argue that code-switching should be viewed as a pedagogical resource rather than a limitation in language learning.

Digital Classrooms and Language Learning

The integration of digital technology into education has significantly transformed language learning practices. Digital classrooms refer to learning environments that utilize online platforms and technological tools to facilitate teaching and learning processes. Common platforms used in EFL instruction include Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Learning Management Systems (LMS).

Digital learning environments offer opportunities for students to engage in both synchronous and asynchronous communication. Through video conferencing, online discussions, chat features, and collaborative digital tasks, students can interact with instructors and peers regardless of geographical limitations. These technological affordances provide greater flexibility and accessibility in language learning while simultaneously influencing learners' communication patterns (Wei, 2018).

In digital classrooms, language use extends beyond spoken interaction. Students communicate through text messages, discussion forums, emojis, voice notes, and multimedia resources. Such multimodal communication encourages learners to utilize various linguistic resources to convey meaning effectively. As a result, multilingual practices, including code-switching, become increasingly visible in digital learning environments (Ramadhani & Maharsi, 2024).

Several studies suggest that digital learning platforms create spaces where students can communicate more comfortably and confidently. The availability of multiple communication

channels allows learners to negotiate meaning, seek clarification, and participate in classroom interaction using different linguistic resources. Consequently, digital classrooms have become important sites for examining contemporary code-switching practices among EFL learners (Putrawan, 2022; Setya Ningrum & Sahiruddin, 2023).

Translanguaging and Multilingual Learning

Recent developments in applied linguistics have expanded discussions of multilingual language practices through the concept of translanguaging. Unlike traditional views that separate languages into distinct systems, translanguaging emphasizes the flexible use of a speaker's entire linguistic repertoire to facilitate communication and learning (García & Wei, 2014).

Translanguaging allows learners to draw upon all available linguistic resources to construct meaning, solve problems, and engage in social interaction. This perspective recognizes multilingual competence as an integrated system rather than a collection of separate languages (Otheguy et al., 2015). Consequently, language alternation is viewed as a natural and valuable component of communication in multilingual settings.

In EFL classrooms, translanguaging has been associated with improved comprehension, learner participation, and identity development. By allowing students to utilize both English and their first language, educators can create more inclusive learning environments that acknowledge learners' linguistic backgrounds and experiences (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

The emergence of digital learning environments has further strengthened the relevance of translanguaging practices. Students frequently combine English, Indonesian, local languages, visual images, emojis, hyperlinks, and other digital resources during online communication. Such practices illustrate how meaning-making processes in digital classrooms involve multiple linguistic and semiotic resources simultaneously (Wei, 2018).

Several Indonesian studies have reported that translanguaging practices support classroom interaction and facilitate learning in digital EFL contexts. Students often perceive multilingual language use as beneficial because it enables them to understand course materials more effectively while maintaining active participation in classroom discussions. Therefore, translanguaging provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding contemporary code-switching practices in digital learning environments.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize and evaluate previous research on code-switching practices among Indonesian EFL students in digital classrooms. A systematic review enables researchers to identify, assess, and integrate findings from multiple studies in a transparent and structured manner (Snyder, 2019). To ensure methodological rigor, this study followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines, which provide standardized procedures for identifying, screening, selecting, and reporting relevant literature (Page et al., 2021).

Research Site and Participants

As a literature review study, this research did not involve direct participants or field observations. Instead, the units of analysis consisted of published journal articles discussing code-switching, translanguaging, multilingual communication, and digital EFL learning environments. The selected studies focused on Indonesian EFL learners across different educational levels, ranging from secondary schools to higher education institutions (Fithriani, 2021; Setya Ningrum & Sahiruddin, 2023).

Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a structured data extraction form developed based on the PRISMA 2020 framework to ensure a systematic and transparent literature review process (Page et al., 2021). The instrument was designed to collect, organize, and synthesize relevant information from the selected studies. Data were extracted using predetermined categories to ensure consistency during the review process (Snyder, 2019).

The extracted information included publication details, research characteristics, forms of code-switching, pedagogical functions, influencing factors, and major findings. These categories enabled the researcher to compare and analyze findings across studies systematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Table 1. Data Extraction Categories

Category	Description
Author(s) and Year	Information regarding the author(s) and publication year of the study
Research Objective	The main purpose or research question addressed in the study
Research Design	Research methodology employed (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods)
Participants	Characteristics and educational level of participants
Educational Context	Learning setting where the study was conducted
Digital Platform	Platforms used in learning activities (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, LMS)
Forms of Code-Switching	Types of code-switching identified, such as inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching
Functions of Code-Switching	Purposes of code-switching, including comprehension, interaction, clarification, and participation
Influencing Factors	Factors affecting code-switching practices, such as language proficiency, instructional objectives, and technology
Major Findings	Key findings and conclusions reported in the study
Implications	Educational implications and recommendations for language learning

Data Collection

Relevant studies were retrieved from academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus-indexed journals, and other reputable open-access databases. The search process utilized keywords such as *code-switching*, *translanguaging*, *digital classrooms*, *online learning*, *EFL students*, and *Indonesia*. Systematic database searching is essential to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature and minimize selection bias (Snyder, 2019).

The inclusion criteria consisted of peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2026, focusing on code-switching or translanguaging practices in Indonesian EFL contexts. Articles that were not directly related to language learning, lacked methodological clarity, or were not available in full text were excluded from the review (Page et al., 2021).

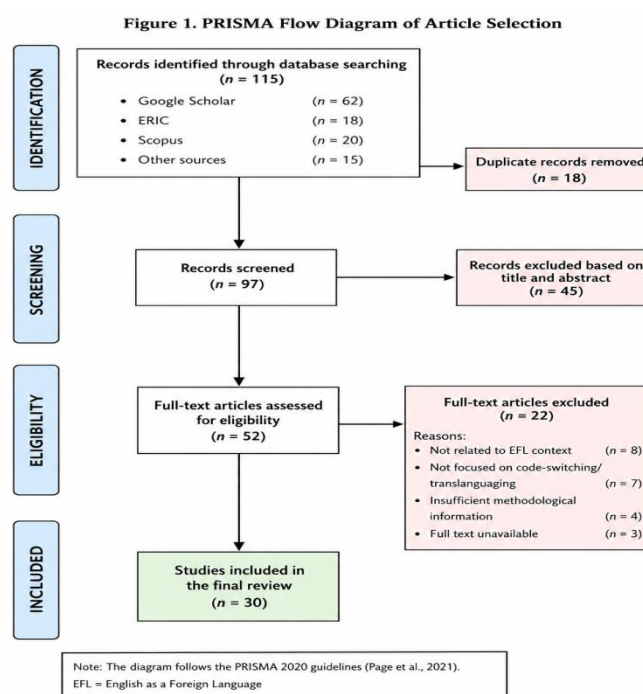


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Article Selection

Data Analysis

The selected studies were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes across the literature. Thematic analysis allows researchers to systematically categorize findings and generate meaningful interpretations from qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis focused on four major themes: forms of code-switching, pedagogical functions, influencing factors, and implications for language learning. Similar approaches have been widely used in previous review studies examining multilingual practices and language education (Wei, 2018).

Table 2. Distribution of Major Themes

Theme	Number of Studies (n=30)	Percentage
Forms of Code-Switching	30	100%
Pedagogical Functions	27	90%
Influencing Factors	24	80%
Learning Implications	26	86.7%

Results and Discussion

Results

A total of 30 studies published between 2020 and 2026 were reviewed to examine code-switching practices among Indonesian EFL students in digital classrooms. The selected studies were conducted across various educational contexts, including secondary schools, vocational schools, and higher education institutions. The findings revealed four major themes: (1) forms of code-switching, (2) pedagogical functions of code-switching, (3) factors influencing code-switching practices, and (4) implications for language learning (Fithriani, 2021; Putrawan, 2022).

Table 3. Major Themes Identified in the Review

Theme	Description
Forms of Code-Switching	Inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching were commonly identified in digital EFL classrooms.
Pedagogical Functions	Code-switching facilitated comprehension, clarification, interaction, and classroom participation.
Influencing Factors	Language proficiency, instructional objectives, and technological platforms influenced language alternation practices.
Learning Implications	Code-switching supported learner engagement, confidence, and communication effectiveness.

Forms of Code-Switching in Digital EFL Classrooms

The review found that inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag switching were the most frequently observed forms of code-switching among Indonesian EFL students. Inter-sentential switching occurred when students alternated between English and Indonesian across different sentences, while intra-sentential switching involved language alternation within a single sentence. Tag switching was commonly observed through the insertion of short expressions, discourse markers, or phrases from Indonesian into English utterances (Poplack, 1980; Azzahra et al., 2025).

Among the three forms, intra-sentential switching appeared to be the most dominant in digital learning environments. Students frequently combined English and Indonesian vocabulary within chat discussions, online forums, and virtual classroom interactions. This practice enabled learners to express ideas more effectively while compensating for vocabulary limitations in English (Setya Ningrum & Sahrudin, 2023; Ramadhani & Maharsi, 2024).

Pedagogical Functions of Code-Switching

The reviewed studies consistently indicated that code-switching served several pedagogical functions in digital EFL classrooms. One of the most prominent functions was facilitating comprehension. Students often switched to Indonesian when discussing difficult concepts or seeking clarification regarding learning materials. This strategy helped learners understand instructions and academic content more efficiently (Fithriani, 2021; Herawati & Fitriani, 2021).

Another important function of code-switching was supporting classroom interaction. Students utilized both English and Indonesian during discussions, collaborative activities, and question-and-answer sessions. The use of multiple languages enabled learners to maintain communication despite linguistic challenges and encouraged more active participation in learning activities (Junaid et al., 2025; Maflukha et al., 2025).

Additionally, code-switching contributed to reducing language anxiety. Several studies reported that students felt more confident when they were allowed to use Indonesian alongside English. This flexibility reduced the pressure associated with speaking exclusively in English and encouraged learners to communicate more freely in digital learning environments (Herawati & Fitriani, 2021; Zainil & Arsyad, 2021).

Factors Influencing Code-Switching Practices

The review identified several factors influencing students' code-switching practices in digital classrooms. Language proficiency emerged as one of the most significant factors. Students with limited English proficiency tended to switch languages more frequently to compensate for vocabulary gaps and difficulties in expressing ideas (Fithriani, 2021).

Instructional objectives also influenced the use of code-switching. Instructors often encouraged language alternation when introducing complex topics or providing detailed explanations. Consequently, students adopted similar practices to ensure effective

communication and understanding during learning activities ([Munawaroh et al., 2022](#); [Junaid et al., 2025](#)).

Furthermore, technological affordances played an important role in shaping language use. Digital platforms provide multiple communication modes, including text messaging, voice notes, discussion forums, and video conferencing. These features create opportunities for students to utilize multilingual resources more flexibly than in traditional classrooms ([Wei, 2018](#); [Ramadhani & Maharsi, 2024](#)).

Implications for Language Learning

The findings suggest that code-switching has positive implications for language learning when used strategically. Most studies reported improvements in learner participation, classroom engagement, and comprehension. By allowing students to utilize their first language alongside English, educators can create more inclusive learning environments that support diverse linguistic backgrounds ([García & Wei, 2014](#); [Cenoz & Gorter, 2020](#)).

However, several studies also highlighted potential challenges associated with excessive code-switching. Overreliance on the first language may reduce opportunities for English exposure and limit learners' target-language production. Therefore, balanced and purposeful implementation of code-switching is necessary to maximize its educational benefits while maintaining opportunities for English language practice ([Macaro, 2005](#); [Yuvayapan, 2019](#)).

Discussion

The findings of this review demonstrate that code-switching remains a significant component of communication in Indonesian digital EFL classrooms. Consistent with Poplack's (1980) typology, inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag switching were identified as the dominant forms of language alternation. The prevalence of intra-sentential switching suggests that students are capable of utilizing linguistic resources from multiple languages simultaneously to facilitate communication and learning.

The pedagogical functions identified in this review support previous arguments that code-switching serves as a valuable instructional resource rather than a sign of linguistic deficiency. Students use code-switching to negotiate meaning, clarify information, and maintain participation during classroom interaction. These findings align with Gumperz's (1982) perspective that language alternation fulfills important communicative functions in multilingual settings.

The results also reflect contemporary translanguaging perspectives, which emphasize the flexible use of linguistic repertoires in educational contexts. Rather than separating languages into rigid categories, students integrate English and Indonesian dynamically according to communicative needs. Such practices are particularly evident in digital learning environments where multiple communication channels are available simultaneously ([García & Wei, 2014](#); [Wei, 2018](#)).

Another important finding concerns the role of technology in facilitating multilingual communication. Digital platforms provide learners with opportunities to interact through written, oral, and multimodal formats. Consequently, students are able to utilize code-switching more naturally while engaging in online discussions, collaborative tasks, and classroom communication. This finding supports recent research suggesting that digital learning environments promote flexible language practices and learner-centered communication ([Putrawan, 2022](#)).

Although code-switching offers numerous benefits, the findings also indicate the importance of maintaining a balance between the use of English and the first language. Strategic code-switching can support comprehension and participation, whereas excessive reliance on the first language may limit exposure to English input. Therefore, educators should

carefully manage code-switching practices to ensure that they contribute positively to language learning outcomes (Macaro, 2005; Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022).

Implications

The findings of this review have several implications for language teaching and learning in digital EFL classrooms. First, educators should recognize code-switching as a pedagogical resource that can facilitate comprehension, classroom interaction, and learner engagement rather than viewing it solely as a barrier to English acquisition (García & Wei, 2014; Fithriani, 2021). Strategic use of code-switching may help students understand complex concepts and participate more confidently in learning activities.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of developing instructional approaches that acknowledge students' multilingual backgrounds. Digital learning environments provide opportunities for learners to utilize multiple linguistic resources while engaging in academic communication. Therefore, language educators should consider integrating flexible multilingual practices into classroom instruction to support meaningful learning experiences (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Wei, 2018).

Third, educational institutions should provide training and professional development programs that help teachers effectively manage code-switching practices in technology-mediated learning environments. Such training may assist teachers in balancing the use of English and students' first language to maximize learning outcomes while maintaining sufficient exposure to the target language (Munawaroh et al., 2022; Junaid et al., 2025).

Limitations and Future Research

Despite providing a comprehensive overview of code-switching practices in Indonesian digital EFL classrooms, this study has several limitations. First, the review focused only on studies published between 2020 and 2026. Consequently, relevant studies published outside this period were not included in the analysis (Page et al., 2021).

Second, the review primarily examined studies conducted in Indonesian EFL contexts. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent code-switching practices in other multilingual educational settings. Future studies may compare findings across different countries and educational contexts to obtain a broader understanding of multilingual communication in digital learning environments (Snyder, 2019).

Third, many of the reviewed studies employed qualitative research designs and relatively small sample sizes. While these studies provide rich descriptions of code-switching practices, future research could incorporate larger-scale quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to examine relationships between code-switching and learning outcomes more systematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Future research should also investigate the role of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), adaptive learning systems, and virtual learning environments, in shaping multilingual communication practices. Exploring the relationship between code-switching, digital literacy, and learner achievement may provide valuable insights for language education in increasingly technology-driven learning contexts (Wei, 2018).

Conclusion

Code-switching remains a prominent feature of communication in Indonesian digital EFL classrooms. Based on the reviewed studies, the most common forms of code-switching include inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag switching. These practices are widely utilized by students to facilitate comprehension, support classroom interaction, reduce language anxiety, and increase participation in learning activities (Poplack, 1980; Fithriani, 2021).

The findings further reveal that language proficiency, instructional objectives, and technological affordances significantly influence students' code-switching practices. Digital

learning environments provide flexible communication spaces that encourage multilingual interaction and enable learners to utilize various linguistic resources according to their communicative needs (Setya Ningrum & Sahiruddin, 2023; Ramadhani & Maharsi, 2024).

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that code-switching functions as a valuable pedagogical resource in Indonesian EFL digital classrooms. When implemented strategically, it can contribute positively to language learning by promoting engagement, comprehension, and communication while supporting students' multilingual identities (García & Wei, 2014; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

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