

The Use of Code-Crossing in EFL Classroom Interaction

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were to find out the forms and factors that cause code-crossing in EFL classroom interaction. This research was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach. The researchers selected thirty participants from the English Education Department at *Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong* (Muhammadiyah University of Sorong). The researchers took participants from the fourth semester. The researchers observed the activity in the class during the teaching process. The data of this study were collected by using classroom observation and interview. The researchers used five stages in analyzing the data, which are data cleaning, data coding, descriptive analysis, comparative analysis, and interpretation of results. The research revealed that the way lecturers and students engage in code-crossing, using both high and low codes, is shaped by social status, social distance, and mutual familiarity. Findings indicated that classroom interactions involved two main types of codes: high and low codes. Students predominantly employed high code, whereas lecturers were more inclined to use low code. Key determinants for code selection included the lecturer's social status and age differences. Additionally, factors such as social distance, familiarity, and cultural background also played role in influencing the use of high code by both lecturers and students during classroom exchanges. These findings suggest that language within educational contexts serves purposes beyond mere communication. It reflects cultural norms, social expectations, and interpersonal relationships. Understanding how lecturers and students engage in code-crossing offers valuable insights into enhancing classroom interaction, inclusivity, and mutual respect. The key contribution of this research lies in its empirical evidence showing that code-crossing, often perceived as informal or peripheral, actually plays a crucial role in shaping effective classroom communication and fostering social cohesion.

Keywords: *classrom interaction; code-crossing; EFL classroom*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the key for language users to communicate and switch their language from one language to other languages, such as Indonesian-English or vice versa. People speak some language in some places, and some end themselves. As stated by Moats (2020), some people have difficulty in communication; they cannot understand and express the idea. Lecturers and students engaging in interaction and communication within the classroom also require an effective communication strategy to ensure a successful English teaching process. In contemporary society, various phenomena influence the success of internal classroom interactions. One of these is the practice of power and domination in relation to the cultural aspects of communication. As noted by

Fitriani et al. (2025), teachers' teaching methods may still be ineffective in supporting students in English Language Teaching (ELT).

The existence of these languages is important to know and study and this existence also makes the majority of Indonesians bilingual and multilingual. The phenomenon of code-crossing does not only occur in everyday life situations but also occurs in the classroom during the teaching process and learning included in the English class. In the teaching and learning process, communication between lecturers and students is considered an important element for conducting effective learning. When communicating, students should develop their own knowledge frameworks in order to identify the most effective techniques (Wael et al., 2025). It means that learners need to build **personal knowledge structures** or **schemes**-organized ways of understanding information so that they can determine which methods or strategies work best for them. Through lectures delivered by lecturers, it can be inferred that the lecturer plays a crucial role in the success of the teaching and learning process, as students are able to grasp the material.

They speak for the success of all learning, which starts with class opening, teaching materials, asking questions, and managing behavior in classes. The intention of communication is to express ideas, needs, thoughts, feelings, and knowledge. The interactions that occur between lecturers and students and between fellow students in classroom interactions are the most significant part of the teaching and learning process. Classroom interaction is a place where the use of high and low codes by lecturers and students is carried out. This type of communication **switches between different language codes or varieties** depending on the social context and participants. The phenomenon that occurs encourages researchers to explore the emergence of code-crossing in the classroom.

However, the majority of communication between lecturers and students regarding the use of code-crossing can enhance the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process, as both parties often select different codes depending on the situation. According to Ferguson (2003), the classroom is not just a formal learning space but also a social and emotional environment in its own right. Lecturers and students may opt for a specific code or variety because it facilitates easier discussion of a particular topic, regardless of the setting. Wardhaugh (2010) also asserts that individuals are almost always required to choose the appropriate code when speaking.

A *code* refers to a system used by individuals to communicate with one another. According to Augustine and Sembiring (2021), communication enables people to share valuable goods and services. When individuals engage in communication, they must select a particular code to express their thoughts and emotions effectively. Stockwell (2002) defines a code as "a symbol of nationalism used by people to speak or communicate in a particular language, dialect, register, accent, or style on different occasions and for various purposes." Similarly, Wardhaugh (2010) explains that the term *code*, derived from information theory, refers to any system employed by two or more people to facilitate communication. These perspectives emphasize the essential role of codes in human interaction. Moreover, understanding the dynamics of code-crossing and its implications is crucial for improving language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom (Simpuruh & Halim, 2023).

In addition, Wardhaugh (2010) also stated that code can be defined as "a system used for communication between two or more parties on any occasion." It means when the people communicate with each other in speech, we can call the system of communication a code. Therefore, people are usually required to select a particular code when they speak. Sometimes they decide to switch or mix the language. However,

according to Rampton (2020), code-crossing is defined as "code-alternation by individuals who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language they use."

Previous studies on code-crossing and classroom interaction (Nisa, 2024; Purwati et al., 2019; Wajdi & Bali, 2018; Simpuru et al., 2020) have primarily concentrated on identifying the use of high and low codes during teacher–student interactions. Most of these studies focused on describing formal and informal speech patterns without exploring the underlying social or contextual factors influencing such linguistic choices. Although Simpuru et al. (2020) briefly mentioned the role of communication context, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis linking code-crossing with sociolinguistic variables such as social status, age differences, and social distance within the classroom setting. Therefore, a research gap exists in understanding how these sociolinguistic factors shape the dynamics of code-crossing in EFL classroom interactions. This research seeks to fill that gap by investigating the relationship between high–low code usage and the interplay of social status, age, and social distance among teachers and students in classroom communication.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative method with descriptive qualitative. The participants were two English lecturers and the thirty students of the English Education Department. As mentioned by Creswell (2012), qualitative research is a study aimed at exploring and understanding the meanings that individuals or groups attach to a social or human problem. It seeks to uncover the reasons behind and the processes through which a social phenomenon occurs. The researchers collected the data using observation and interviews. The source of the data was taken from observation data. Observation was used to study the interaction between lecturers and students during the class, while interview-based data was used to gain the information and strong reasons regarding the use of code-crossing in classroom interaction clearly. The observation was carried out four times during the class. After conducting the observation, the researchers did the interview to get the strong data out of code-crossing on classroom interaction.

The data were analyzed through several systematic steps: the first step involved data cleaning which included identifying utterances on interaction in the classroom about the highs and lows of code-crossing and outliers in the data collected from the observation and interview. The second stage was data coding, during which all responses from the observation and interviews were coded for deep analysis. The data were then categorized into high and low code crossing. Subsequently, a descriptive analysis was conducted to compute the frequency and distribution of code-crossing instances within each utterance, thereby illustrating the patterns of language alternation in classroom interactions. This was followed by a comparative analysis, where two modes of code-crossing were examined to determine participants' overall tendencies and preferences. Finally, the interpretation stage involved synthesizing the findings and discussing them in light of the research objectives, with particular attention to the pedagogical implications of code-crossing occurrences during classroom lectures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. The Form of Code-Crossing Occurs in EFL Classroom Interaction

The findings of this research showed that the interaction between lecturers and participants involved the use of a form of code-crossing high and low codes during classroom interactions.

a. High-Code

The lecturer used Indonesian as the source language of instruction and built effective communication and interaction in the classroom context. However, as the lecture progressed, instances of code-crossing appeared unexpectedly.

Data 1: Lecturer-Student Interaction

Lecturer:

"Jika kalian terlambat, kalian akan miss beberapa audio-record."

"If you are late, you will miss some audio records."

Students:

"Yes, sir."

The data above shows the interaction between lecturer and students. For example, when explaining the consequences of lateness, the lecturer began by stating *"If you are late, you will lose some audio recordings."* (*Jika kalian terlambat, kalian akan miss beberapa audio record*). This utterance was followed by a response from the students *"Yes, sir."* This shows that the lecturer and students both used high code in interaction. The students' answers in this case included high code. It can be seen in the use of the word *"Sir"* which indicates the high status of the lecturer that needs to be upheld by the students. This is influenced by the social status and age difference of the interlocutors. This was followed by the student's answer *"Yes, sir."* This interaction happened between the lecturer and students, while the interaction between student and lecturer can be seen as follows:

Data 2: Lecturer and student Interaction

Lecturer:

"Silahkan angkat tangan kalian."

"Please, raise your hand."

Students:

"Saya, sir!"

"Me, sir!"

The data above shows the interaction happened in the classroom when the lecturer finished playing the audio recording in listening class; the lecturer then gave the instruction *"raise your hand"* (*Silahkan angkat tangan kalian*). Then, the student raised his hand by saying *"I am, sir!"* The use of the word *"sir"* by the student shows a high code to the lecturer. Therefore, it can be observed that in this conversation, both the lecturer and students use a high code, which is influenced by the social status between them. In this context, the lecturer dominates the conversation in the classroom as part of the instructional process.

Data 3. Lecturer-student Interaction

Lecturer:

"Kalian bisa menggabungkannya, tetapi hanya satu kata, satu saja."

"You can combine them, but use only one word, only one"

Student:

"Ok, baik sir."

"Yes, sir."

The data above shows the interaction between lecturer and student. The lecturer said, "*You can combine them, but use only one word, only one word.*" Here, this type of instruction was delivered in the most direct manner. It is categorized as the lecturer's high code. Moreover, students applied a high code by using the greeting "*yes sir*". Therefore, it could be seen from the interaction that the lecturer and student applied code-crossing in the classroom. The lecturer applied high code because of his high social status, while student applied high code to show her social status as a student.

Data 4: Student–Lecturer Interaction

Lecturer:

"*Coba liat dari segi apa sih bisnis franchise ini? What kind of business of franchise?*"

"Let's see from what perspective this franchise business is? What kind of business a franchise is?"

Students:

"*Saya bisa jawab, sir. Dia seperti bisnis kerja sama kan sir*".

"I can answer, sir. It's like a business partnership."

Lecturer:

"Yaa, Yuni".

The data above shows that the lecturer asked about what he had explained after playing the audio recording. The lecturer asked to find out the extent of the students' understanding of the material listened to. In this case, he showed a high code to the students. He showed a direct question that turned into a level of politeness. The student then replied, "*I am, sir*" while raising her hand. Thus, the student applied a high code when addressing the lecturer, driven by their lower social status and the need to comply with the lecturer's instructions, as the lecturer consistently holds a dominant role in classroom interactions.

Data 5. Lecturer -Student Interaction

Lecturer:

"*Apakah kalian mengerti maksud saya?*"

"Well, Do you get my point?"

Students:

"*Iya, sir.*"

"Yes, sir."

The data indicated that the lecturer provided explicit guidance on what the students should say and addressed their mispronunciations during the speaking class. However, the lecturer perceived that the students had not completely grasped the explanation. He then asked, "*Do you understand what I mean?*" In this situation, he used a high code with the students. He showed a direct question that turned into a level of politeness. The student then replied, "*yes, sir.*" Thus, the student employed a high code in addressing the lecturer, reflecting the students' subordinate status and the lecturer's dominant role in classroom interactions.

Data 6: Student–Student Interaction

Student 1:

"Kak, kenapa pertemuan minggu kemarin tidak hadir?"

"Sis, why did not you attend last week's meeting?"

Student 2:

"Iya saya kemarin sakit, dek."

"Yes, I was sick yesterday."

Based on the data above, the students also applied code-crossing when communicating with each other. Student 1 (S1) was older than the other student 2 (S2). The younger one asked, *"Sis, why didn't you attend last week's meeting?"* The used of *"Sis (Kak)"* to honor the senior in this quote showed the speaker (S2) applied a high code. The older student said, *"Yes, I was sick yesterday, Dek."* The term *"Dek,"* used to show respect to juniors, demonstrates the use of high code in code-crossing. Therefore, the data suggest that students of similar age and social status used a high code in their interactions, promoting both politeness and interpersonal intimacy.

b. Low Code

Besides the presence of high code in classroom interactions as a form of code-crossing, instances of low code were also identified during the teaching and learning process. The data are presented below:

Data 1: Student-Lecturer Interaction

Lecturer:

"Delika, apa rutinitasmu sehari-hari?"

"Delika, what is your daily routine?"

Student:

"Bukan sa sir, delika yang sana!"

"Not me sir, Delika is over there."

Lecturer:

"Kenapa kalo sa liat ke ko? Tidak bolehkah?"

"Why if I look at you, can't I?"

Data above show that the interaction between lecturer and student is indicated as low code. It can be seen from the utterance *"Delika, what is your daily routine?"* The lecturer in this case used the direct pronoun "you" after mentioning the student's name, which is categorized as low code. After that the student answered by saying, *"Not me sir, Delika is over there"*. Then the lecturer interrupted by saying *"Why can't I see you?"* In this case the lecturer made a joke because the lecturer wanted to break the atmosphere by giving a joke to provide a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom. This is categorized as a way of direct address, which shows that the lecturer dominates the conversation in the classroom because of his social status as a lecturer. Therefore, it can be concluded that the lecturer and students use code-crossing in classroom interactions. Thus, the use of low code between the lecturer and students is influenced by the lecturer's dominant status in the classroom.

Data 2: Lecturer – Student Interaction

Lecturer:

"Sa beri waktu 2 menit ya, I'll wait for you"

"I'll give you two minutes, I'll wait for you"

Student:

"Iya, baik sir kita bisa sir."

"Yes, we can sir."

The data above shows that the lecturer speaks in class to the students to create a unique set of language codes. Two notable examples that epitomize code-crossing are the phrases, *"Give me 2 minutes, I will wait for you"* and *"You can combine them, but only one word"*. To which the student responded by saying *"Yes, sir"*. In data, the lecturer started the sentence in Indonesian, by saying *"Sa beri waktu 2 menit ya, sa tunggu eh."* (*I'll give you two minutes; I'll wait for you*). *"Sa"* means *"I"* with Papuan communication styles. This example of code-crossing clearly shows that the lecturer implies that students should do what he instructs in class. This indicates the low code that conveyed in the classroom interaction. Then, the student said *"we can, sir"*. The low code usage in this part was influenced by the social status and power of the lecturer, who is dominant in the classroom.

Data 3: Student – Student Interaction

Student 1:

"Sa mo tanya ko kah?"

"I want to ask you?"

Student 2:

"Kenapa tanya sama sa jih."

"Why are you asking me."

The data above shows that the interaction happened between students indicated using low code. It can be seen from the word *"ko"* (*ko* means *"You"* in Papuan communication styles) pronunciation. This is categorized as low code because it is not representative of politeness feature at all. The use of the pronoun *"ko"* in the question quote comes from the pronouns that Papuans usually say to people who have the same age and status with the speaker. However, some students also responded directly by saying, *"kenapa tanya sama sa jih"* (*Why are you asking me*). The use of the word *"jih"* indicates a very direct, casual, and informal tone, which is categorized as low code.

2. The Factors Affecting the Occurrence of Code-Crossing in EFL Classroom Interaction

The findings revealed that several factors influence the use of code-crossing in EFL classrooms, particularly during interactions between lecturers and participants. However, it is including the social status, age differences, and social distance.

a. Social Status

The social status also determines the occurrence of language selection. The existence of differences in the social status of students' speech can lead to differences in social control. The data can be seen as follows:

"Saya menggunakan code-crossing bentuk high code saat berinteraksi dengan dosen karena saya menghargai statusnya sebagai dosen"

(I use high code-crossing when interacting with lecturers because I respect their status as lecturers). [Student's Interview]

The data above shows that social status can be the power of using code-crossing. Moreover, this social status leads to differences in language use. The phenomenon of

language use is due to differences in social status. This phenomenon of language use due to social status differences appears in speech events involving participants with higher status differences, equal social status, and social status differences, higher status, equal social status, and lower social status.

b. Age Difference

Age is one of the factors that allow for language variation. Basically in speaking, age will categorize people into children, teenagers, and adults. The distinctive feature of language variation originating from this age is that the language variation that a person has in childhood will gradually be abandoned by the owner if they become old.

"Saat saya berkomunikasi dengan teman yang seumuran, saya lebih dominan menggunakan bahasa sehari-hari, tapi ketika dengan yang usianya jauh lebih tua, saya akan menggunakan perkataan yang lebih sopan."

(When I communicate with friends who are the same age, I am more dominant in using colloquial language, but when with those who are older, I will use more polite words). [Student's Interview]

The data above shows that using high or low code when communicating with someone depends on who the communication is happening with. Age difference is another influential factor in code-crossing practices. Younger students tend to apply high codes. Low codes are primarily used due to the familiarity among the students, as well as their similar status levels and age differences.

c. Social Distance

The intent of social distance is the social distance between one individual and other individuals in social life. The data of social distance can be found as follows:

"Jika saya berinteraksi dengan teman sekelompok saya atau teman yang saya sudah akrab dari pertama kali masuk, interaksi saya ke mereka pasti selalu menggunakan bahasa sehari-hari".

(When I interact with my groupmates or friends that I've gotten along with from the first time I joined, my interactions with them always use everyday communication). [Student's Interview]

The existing social distance also determines the choice of language in an utterance. Based on the nature of the relationship, social distance can be divided into two kinds, namely familiar social distance and social distance that is tenuous or distant. Familiar social distance relationships can be divided into two, namely based on family relationships and based on friendship relations.

Discussion

1. The Form of Code-Crossing Occurs in EFL Classroom Interaction

The result of this research indicated that there are two forms of codes found in the classroom interaction. They are high code and low code. High code usually appears a lot in the classroom, especially in the interaction between lecturers and students. This can be seen from the use of polite and well-mannered words and utterances such as the use of the word "sir" to address the lecturer. High code mixing is also seen in the use of direct instructions in most of the excerpts. The lecturers are seen using high code in classroom interactions. The lecturer applies low code to create a warm classroom atmosphere due

to the familiarity and closeness created. In conversations between students themselves, it can be seen that students also apply high code by using the word "*Kak*."

However, low code is more commonly used because of the students' familiarity with one another and their similar status and age. In the use of high code, there are three types of interaction, including Lecturer-Student, Student-Student and Student-Lecturer. The use of high code turns out to occur not only in Student-Lecturer interactions, but such communication occurs among students themselves due to the age difference of the student younger than his classmates. Likewise, with the findings in low code, the interactions that occur can also occur in formal situations, such as in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, these findings strongly align with existing theories and findings that emphasize the importance of language use and code-crossing in classroom communication. As noted by (Nisa, 2024; Purwati et al., 2019; Wajdi & Bali, 2018; and Simpuluh et al., 2020), such linguistic practices play a crucial role in shaping interactional meaning, promoting engagement, and enhancing mutual understanding between lecturers and students.

2. The Factors Affecting the Occurrence of Code-Crossing in EFL Classroom Interaction

High code usually arises due to factors including social status and age differences; the age difference between lecturers and students dominates the occurrence of high code. As for the low code, many factors influence the occurrence of low code, which is more dominant towards students with interactions between students. The existence of social distance factors and differences in cultural backgrounds are found in the findings in classroom interactions.

This finding is consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Simpuluh et al. (2020), which underscores the crucial role of language use and code-crossing in shaping classroom interactions. Both studies affirm that code-crossing is determined by several sociolinguistic variables, such as differences in social status, age, social distance or familiarity, and the degree of intimacy between lecturers and students.

The findings provide empirical evidence that supports the related theory. They offer a detailed exploration of the occurrence of code-crossing within the EFL classroom at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of language use and bilingualism. The qualitative research design is employed in this research. The research expands upon the related theory by providing specific insights into the code-crossing practices within the context of interaction at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong. The findings highlight the role of power dynamics, age differences, social distance, and intimacy in shaping code-crossing patterns. They contribute to the existing body of knowledge in EFL pedagogy, offering practical implications for English language teaching practitioners in creating effective classroom interactions that embrace linguistic diversity.

The results of the research on code-crossing in EFL classrooms at Muhammadiyah University of Sorong are highly compatible with related theories. The research's exploration of the factors influencing code-switching and detailed analysis of the language interactions in the classroom provide valuable insights for educators and researchers. In this study, it can be observed that code-crossing occurs in the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom due to various individual and social differences. This code-crossing helps bridge the communication gap between teachers and students, fostering effective classroom interactions.

These findings are in line with the results and theories proposed by Purwati et al. (2019), Wajdi & Bali (2018), and Simpuruh et al. (2020). Both research findings and related theoretical frameworks highlight that code-crossing is shaped by multiple factors, such as differences in social status, age, social distance, and the level of intimacy between lecturers and students. These elements collectively influence how language is used strategically in classroom communication. Furthermore, the findings provide strong empirical support for the theoretical claims, demonstrating that code-crossing serves as a dynamic and context-dependent tool for fostering interaction and understanding in EFL settings.

CONCLUSION

This research highlighted the phenomenon of code-crossing between lecturers and students in classroom interactions, revealing that linguistic choice is strongly shaped by social status, age, and cultural familiarity. The findings indicate that lecturers predominantly use low codes, while students tend to use high codes, reflecting the asymmetrical relationship between authority and subordination within academic discourse. This linguistic behavior is not arbitrary; rather, it represents a sociolinguistic reflection of hierarchy, respect, and power distance that naturally occurs in educational communication.

The research also demonstrates that factors such as age differences and the degree of social closeness significantly influence code preference, suggesting that language serves both as a medium of instruction and as a tool for negotiating identity, familiarity, and authority. In interactions among students, the use of high and low codes similarly reflects social positioning, where younger students tend to employ low codes and older peers exhibit greater use of high codes to signal maturity or authority. The broader implication of these findings is that language in educational settings functions beyond its communicative purpose; it embodies cultural norms, social expectations, and interpersonal relationships. Understanding how lecturers and students engage in code-crossing provides valuable insights for improving classroom dynamics, inclusivity, and mutual respect.

The main research contribution lies in its empirical evidence that code-crossing, often viewed as informal or peripheral, actually plays a central role in shaping effective classroom communication and social cohesion. This study extends sociolinguistic theory by emphasizing how power relations and social hierarchies manifest through everyday language use in formal educational contexts. Further research should expand this investigation into multilingual or digital learning environments, where the complexity of language choice may further evolve due to technological mediation and cultural diversity. Therefore, educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers are urged to recognize the sociolinguistic dimensions of classroom communication and integrate language-awareness training that promotes equality, respect, and intercultural understanding in academic settings.

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