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A CASE STUDY OF CODE MIXING IN AN EFL CLASSROOM: EVIDENCE FROM AN ENGLISH TEACHER IN A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of code mixing by an English teacher in an EFL classroom at SMPN 1 Kefamenanu, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The study aims to identify the types of code mixing employed, determine the dominant type, and explore the pedagogical reasons underlying its use during classroom interaction. A qualitative case study design was employed involving one English teacher teaching ninth-grade students in the academic year 2025/2026. Data were collected through non-participant classroom observation, audio recordings, and an open-ended questionnaire. Classroom interactions were transcribed and analyzed using Muysken's typology of code mixing, which includes insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. The findings revealed 55 utterances containing code mixing, consisting of insertion and alternation, while congruent lexicalization was absent. Alternation emerged as the dominant type, accounting for 43 utterances (78%), whereas insertion occurred in 12 utterances (22%). The teacher predominantly employed code mixing to facilitate comprehension, clarify instructional content, support students with limited vocabulary, maintain effective classroom communication, and create a more comfortable learning environment. The findings suggest that code mixing functions as a purposeful pedagogical strategy in multilingual EFL classrooms, particularly in contexts where students have limited English proficiency. This study contributes to sociolinguistic research on classroom discourse by providing empirical evidence from a junior high school context in Eastern Indonesia, which remains underrepresented in previous studies.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Classroom Interaction, Code Mixing, EFL Classroom, English Teacher

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a fundamental role in human life as a means of communication and social interaction. Through language, individuals convey ideas, express feelings, exchange information, and construct meaning in everyday activities. Patel and Praveen (2008, as cited in Sari, 2022) define language as a system of communication consisting of sounds and written symbols used by members of a particular community. However, language is not merely a structural system governed by grammatical rules. It is also a social phenomenon that reflects identity, cultural values, and social relationships. Therefore, the study of language must consider the social context in which it is used.

In sociolinguistics, language is examined in relation to society, including patterns of language use, speakers, and communicative settings. Wardhaugh (2002), as cited in Wardhana, Membrasar, Dewi, and Novi (2023) states that sociolinguistics seeks to

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understand how language functions in communication and how social structures influence linguistic choices. Wahyuni, Aeni and Hasriani (2023) emphasize that language is inseparable from cultural and communicative systems, while Haryati and Prayuana (2020) further argue that social factors such as age, occupation, gender, social status, economic background, and educational level shape linguistic patterns. These perspectives indicate that language variation, including bilingualism and code mixing, emerges naturally in multilingual communities.

One of the prominent phenomena in sociolinguistics is bilingualism. Bilingualism refers to an individual's ability to use two languages in communication based on contextual demands. Pratiwi, Rahmawati, and Sa'diah (2023) define bilingualism as the functional ability to use a foreign language, while Astri and Fian (2020) distinguish bilingual from multilingual speakers based on the number of languages used. Hanafiah, Rantika, and Yusuf (2018) clarify that bilingualism does not require equal proficiency in both languages but rather effective communicative competence. However, Wagner, Bialystok and Grundy (2022) state that one aspect to determine whether someone is a bilingualism or not is proficiency level. Furthermore, bilingualism is not an aspect to stand alone, assuming that every learner is responsible to their own learning. Rather, it requires other supporting factors. Sepiol mentions that bilingualism needs to be supported by government policies to improve bilingual learners' achievement (2025). Besides proficiency level and suitable policies, teachers' role is also significant to facilitate their bilingualism students, so that learning process in the classroom can be effectively conducted (Mawonga, 2026). In bilingual environments, including Indonesia, speakers frequently combine or alternate between languages, giving rise to code mixing and code switching.

Indonesia represents a multilingual society in which regional languages coexist with Bahasa Indonesia as the national language and English as a foreign language. In educational contexts, English is taught as a compulsory subject at the junior high school level. Furthermore, English proficiency is essential in the era of globalization for accessing knowledge, technology, and international communication. Nevertheless, many students face challenges in vocabulary mastery, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and fluency. These challenges may hinder comprehension and classroom participation. Consequently, teachers adopt strategies to facilitate students' understanding and maintain effective interaction.

One strategy frequently used in multilingual EFL classrooms is code mixing. Rahmat (2020) explains that code mixing occurs when lexical items and grammatical features from different languages appear within a single sentence. Code mixing is considered an effective tool to help with the learning of a language, particularly in multilingual milieu (Karubaba & Rahman, 2025). Thus, by integrating code mixing in teaching and learning of a new language, students' vocabuary can be enhanced and students from multilingual background can be benefited. Muysken (2000) as cited in Sakina and Haryanto (2025) classifies code mixing into three types: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. Insertion involves embedding words or phrases from one language into another language structure. Alternation occurs when a speaker switches between languages at clause or sentence boundaries. Congruent lexicalization refers to mixing elements from different languages that

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share similar grammatical structures. This theoretical framework provides a systematic basis for analyzing bilingual discourse in classroom interaction.

The use of the first language can support comprehension and create a more comfortable learning environment. However, some scholars argue that excessive reliance on the first language may reduce exposure to the target language (Utami & Andharu, 2025). This ongoing debate highlights the importance of examining bilingual practices within specific educational contexts.

Several previous studies have investigated code mixing and code switching in educational settings. Pratiwi, Rahmawati, and Sa'diah (2023) found that Indonesian-English code mixing among senior high school students occurred in various forms, including words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. Fadliyah, Dollah, and Muhayang (2023) reported that insertion was the most dominant type of code mixing used by EFL students in university during classroom presentations. Putri, Claria, and Umiyati (2024) identified pedagogical reasons for teachers' use of code mixing in teaching English at a private course. These findings indicate that bilingual instructional practices are common and served as communicative as well as pedagogical purposes. In addition, SMPN 1 Kefamenanu, located in East Nusa Tenggara, represents a multilingual educational environment where students commonly use local languages and Bahasa Indonesia in daily communication.

Despite extensive studies on code mixing in EFL classrooms, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, most previous studies primarily focus on students' code mixing practices (Matin & Rozak, 2026; I. E. Pratiwi et al., 2023), while limited attention has been given to teachers' code mixing during classroom interaction, even though teachers play a crucial role in shaping classroom discourse. In addition, many studies tend to describe code mixing only in general terms of forms and functions without applying a more detailed structural framework such as Muysken's typology, which classifies code mixing into insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. As a result, a deeper understanding of how bilingual elements are systematically organized in classroom discourse remains limited.

Furthermore, previous research has largely concentrated on senior high school, university-level, or general EFL contexts (Asani, Abduh, & Muliati, 2024; Fadliyah et al., 2023; Nurdiana, Arid, Wahyudi, & Marhum, 2026; I. E. Pratiwi et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2024; Wulandahri, Ilma, & Desvitasari, 2025), while studies conducted in junior high school settings remain relatively limited. Since learners at different educational levels possess varying linguistic competence and learning needs, patterns of bilingual language use may also differ. Moreover, multilingual regional contexts, particularly in Eastern Indonesia, are still underrepresented in sociolinguistic classroom research despite the strong influence of local languages on classroom interaction. In particular, classroom language practices in areas such as SMPN 1 Kefamenanu have not been widely explored.

In the context of English teaching at SMPN 1 Kefamenanu, the teacher frequently combines English and Indonesian during classroom interaction. However, the types of code mixing employed, the dominant pattern, and the pedagogical reasons underlying its use have not yet been systematically examined in this setting. In addition, few studies have explicitly connected the structural types of teacher code mixing with their pedagogical purposes in authentic classroom discourse. Most previous studies tend to focus either on structural

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analysis or functional explanation separately without integrating both perspectives. Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps by analyzing the types, dominant patterns, and pedagogical reasons for code mixing used by an English teacher in a junior high school EFL classroom.

Top of FormBottom of FormAs a result, this study aims to analyze the types of code mixing used by the English teacher in teaching English at SMPN 1 Kefamenanu, determine the most dominant type based on Muysken's classification, and explore the reasons underlying its use in classroom interaction. By examining both structural and functional aspects of code mixing in a regional junior high school setting, this research contributes to sociolinguistic studies in EFL classrooms and provides practical insights for bilingual instructional practices.

This study is important because it examines the authentic use of code mixing by an English teacher at SMPN 1 Kefamenanu, where English, Indonesian, and the local language interact in daily classroom communication. Understanding this practice provides meaningful insight into how code mixing supports instruction, clarifies difficult material, and enhances student comprehension in a multilingual setting. The findings also contribute to sociolinguistic research by documenting language use in a context that has received limited attention, while offering practical implications for improving English teaching strategies in similar multilingual schools.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate the use of code mixing by an English teacher in an EFL classroom at SMPN 1 Kefamenanu, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore naturally occurring language practices and understand the pedagogical purposes underlying the teacher's use of code mixing in classroom interaction. Rather than measuring variables statistically, the study focused on describing and interpreting language phenomena within a natural educational setting.

The case study design was selected because it enabled an in-depth investigation of code mixing within a specific instructional context. According to qualitative inquiry, a case study is useful for examining a bounded system in real-life situations and for gaining a comprehensive understanding of social and linguistic practices in context. In this study, the bounded case was one English teacher's classroom interaction during English instruction at a junior high school. This design allowed the researchers to capture authentic classroom discourse and to explore how code mixing functioned pedagogically in supporting communication and students' comprehension.

Participants

The participant of this study was one English teacher teaching ninth-grade students at SMPN 1 Kefamenanu during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participant was selected through purposive sampling, considering the teacher's active involvement in English instruction and frequent use of bilingual language practices during classroom teaching. The

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teacher regularly combined English and Indonesian when explaining learning materials, giving instructions, and interacting with students, making her an appropriate participant for investigating classroom code mixing.

The focus on a single participant was intended to obtain detailed and contextualized insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Since the objective of qualitative case study research is depth rather than generalization, the use of one participant enabled the researchers to conduct a focused examination of classroom interaction in a real educational setting. Nevertheless, the researchers acknowledge that the findings may not be generalized to broader educational contexts due to the limited number of participants and the context-specific nature of the study.

Instruments and Data Collection

This study employed three instruments for data collection: classroom observation, audio recordings, and an open-ended questionnaire.

First, non-participant classroom observation was conducted to observe naturally occurring classroom interaction during English instruction. In this process, the researchers observed the teaching and learning activities without directly participating in the classroom to minimize disruption and maintain the authenticity of communication. Observation was used to identify teacher utterances containing code mixing during instructional activities.

Second, audio recordings were utilized to ensure accurate and complete documentation of classroom interaction. Recording the teaching session enabled the researchers to revisit the data repeatedly and transcribe teacher utterances verbatim. The recorded data were subsequently transcribed into written form to facilitate detailed linguistic analysis.

Third, an open-ended questionnaire was administered to the English teacher to gather information regarding the pedagogical reasons for using code mixing in classroom instruction. The questionnaire focused on the teacher's perspectives on the functions, benefits, and considerations behind the use of bilingual language during teaching and learning activities.

The data collection procedure consisted of several stages. Initially, the researchers obtained permission from the school and arranged an observation schedule with the participating teacher. Subsequently, one classroom teaching session was observed and audio-recorded. After the classroom observation, the researchers transcribed the recorded interaction verbatim and identified utterances containing code mixing. Finally, the questionnaire was distributed to obtain supporting information concerning the teacher's rationale for employing code mixing in classroom communication.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. The analysis began with transcribing the teacher's classroom utterances from the audio recordings into written text. The researchers then carefully read and reviewed the transcripts to identify utterances containing code mixing.

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After identification, the utterances were classified according to Muysken's (2000) typology of code mixing, namely insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. Each occurrence of code mixing was categorized based on its structural characteristics. The frequency of each type was then calculated to determine the dominant form of code mixing used during classroom interaction.

Furthermore, the responses from the open-ended questionnaire were analyzed using thematic analysis. The researchers categorized the teacher's responses into recurring themes related to the reasons for using code mixing, such as facilitating comprehension, maintaining classroom communication, supporting vocabulary understanding, and creating a comfortable learning environment.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researchers employed data triangulation by combining classroom observation, audio recordings, and questionnaire data. The use of multiple data sources helped strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the teacher's use of code mixing in the EFL classroom.

RESULTS

From the results of the observation and the audio recordings, the researchers found 55 utterances contained code mixing, used by the English teacher. The researchers presented the representative description of code mixing used by the English teacher in Table 1. The writing in bold show code mixing used; ICM stands for insertion code mixing, ACM represents alternation code mixing, and CLCM refers to congruent lexicalization code mixing.

Table 1. Types of code mixing used by the English teacher

No	Teacher Utterances	Time	Types of code mixing		
			ICM	ACM	CLCM
1.	Tadi pertama itu ada kata <u>visited</u> atau mengunjungi.	0:05	√		
2.	Sekarang now dari lima kata itu <u>based on the five words</u> kita akan melengkapi …	1:01		√	
3.	<u>It tasted sweet and sour</u> itu rasanya manis dan asam	5:28		√	
4.	<u>I hope I can visit lestari nasional park one day</u> saya berharap saya akan mengunjungi taman nasional lestari suatu hari nanti	5:00		√	
5.	Pohon – pohon itu masuk di <u>second area</u>	9:23	√		
6.	<u>Monita visited the flowers area</u> monita mengunjungi area bunga – bunga	9:30		√	

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7.	Read the caption below and answer the question jadi kita lihat foto –foto yang galang posting itu	3:37	√
8.	Foto yang ketiga itu Galang berdiri di depan tulisan Karimun Jawa dengan caption this was my experience going to Karimun Jawa it was really fun ini adalah pengalaman pertama saya ke Karimun Jawa itu sangat menyenangkan	4:15	√

As displayed on the table above, insertion code mixing used by the English teacher is in form of word insertion and phrase insertion. In practice, word insertion dominated insertion of phrase. Initially, the teacher inserted an English word into an Indonesian sentence as can be seen in the following excerpt:

"*Tadi pertama itu ada kata visited atau mengunjungi*."

Furthermore, insertion of an English phrase was also used in a complete sentence:

"*Pohon-pohon itu masuk di second area*."

Alternation code mixing was occurred in the same pattern throughout the classroom interaction. The teacher first mentioned an English utterance, followed by Indonesian version. The teacher also used alternation code mixing in two ways. First, the code mixing was in an Incomplete Sentence (IS), and the second was in a Full Sentence (FS). The next two excerpts provide the examples.

"*Sekarang now dari lima kata itu based on the five words kita akan melengkapi .....*" (IS)

"It tasted sweet and sour itu rasanya manis dan asam." (FS)

After analyzing the types of code mixing, the researchers calculated the number and percentage of each code mixing type. The results of the calculations were displayed in the following table.

Table 2. The dominant types of code mixing used by the English teachers in teaching learning process.

No	Types Of Code Mixing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Insertion Code Mixing	12	22
2.	Alternation Code mixing	43	78
3.	Congruent lexicalization	-	-
	Total	55	100

Furthermore, to answer the third research question, the researchers distributed a questionnaire to the subject of the study. By distributing questionnaire to the teacher, the

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researchers collected data on the reasons and benefits of code-mixing in the learning process. Below are the results of the questionnaire filled out by the teacher.

There are reasons and advantages of using code mixing in the EFL classroom. The English teacher said that code mixing was used because she wanted to facilitate a smooth communication with her students. The learning process will run smoothly if the teacher and the students can communicate well. She added that code mixing can create a more meaningful, responsive and comfortable learning environment. The need of comfortable learning environment for the students is significant to facilitate effective learning. In this context, the students can express their ideas or opinions about the material without feeling of fear or hesitation. Another reason was to help with lesson understanding as using only English will minimize engagement of low proficiency students. As the students' lack of vocabulary is one of the main factors affecting their understanding of the material provided by the teachers, the use of two languages in the English learning process with make it easier for the students to understand the material provided by the teachers. Furthermore, code mixing usage encourages the students to be more active in the learning process. However, code-mixing should be applied appropriately so that students continue to develop their ability to use English independently in the future.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that two types of code mixing were used by the English teacher, namely insertion and alternation. Congruent lexicalization code mixing was absent from this study. Between these two types, alternation was found to be the most dominant type, with 43 utterances/sentences (78%), followed by insertion with 12 utterances only (22%). These results indicate that the teacher frequently switched between Indonesian and English at the clause or sentence level rather than merely inserting single English words and phrases into Indonesian sentences to support students' comprehension. In EFL classrooms where students have limited English proficiency, this strategy enables the teacher to explain concepts in English and then reinforce meaning in Indonesian. The dominance of alternation is consistent with the findings of Melansari, Wahyuni, Adu, and Narni (2023) who also reported that alternation frequently occurs in EFL classroom interaction, compared to other types of code mixing. This similarity suggests that alternation is commonly used in teaching contexts where comprehension is prioritized, as students are not familiar yet with some vocabulary or have low level of proficiency. Furthermore, the same level of students being involved in these two studies, junior high school, becomes the main reason why alternation was the majority of code mixing. The present study suggests that this dominance is closely related to students' need for clearer and more detailed explanations during instruction. As a result, alternation functions as a pedagogical tool to ensure clarity and facilitate understanding of the lesson.

The use of code mixing is influenced by several pedagogical factors, including students' limited vocabulary, the need to create a supportive learning environment, and the teacher's intention to enhance comprehension. In this sense, code mixing serves as a deliberate instructional strategy that reduces students' anxiety and promotes active participation. This

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is in line with Muysken's view (2000, as cited in Sakina & Haryanto, 2025)that code mixing plays an important role in improving understanding in bilingual communication.

Insertion is mainly used when introducing specific English vocabulary within Indonesian sentences. This suggests that insertion functions as lexical support to help students recognize and acquire new English terms. Meanwhile, the absence of congruent lexicalization is because it requires a higher level of bilingual competence and is less commonly used in structured classroom discourse. Since the students in this study were in junior high school level, their English proficiency is still in low level, which causes congruent lexicalisation code mixing is not possible.

Differences across studies can be explained by variations in teaching strategies, classroom interaction patterns, and students' language proficiency levels. In this study, alternation dominates because the teacher needs to ensure comprehension by switching between languages at the clause level. In contrast, Rahmat (2020), Sitinjak, Pakpahan, and Saragi (2026), Santosa, Sakina, and Kulsum (2023), and Purnamasari, Putra, and Suwastini (2016) found insertion as the dominant type, which suggests that students in that context required less extensive explanation and mainly needed vocabulary clarification. This can be caused by proficiency level of students in that EFL classroom. While learners in the previous studies were university students (Rahmat, 2020; Santosa et al., 2023) and senior high school students (Purnamasari et al., 2016; Sitinjak et al., 2026), the students in the current study were EFL students in junior high school level. Despite these differences, both studies confirm that code mixing functions as a pedagogical strategy in EFL classrooms. The variation in dominant types reflects differences in learner needs and instructional contexts rather than differences in teaching effectiveness. Therefore, code mixing can be understood as a flexible strategy that adapts to classroom conditions and students' proficiency levels.

This code mixing pattern occurred also in other context other than EFL classroms (Le, 2021; N. I. Pratiwi et al., 2026; Sakina & Haryanto, 2025; Samola, Mamentu, & Kemur, 2023; Syafryadin & Haryani, 2020). The studies of Pratiwi, Sakina & Haryanto focused on a social media platform, instagram, with insertion found as the most dominant type of code mixing. Furthermore, other study emphasized code mixing in written discourse such as magazine and online newspapers (Le, 2021; Syafryadin & Haryani, 2020). Both these research indicated that insertion was the majority of code mixing in the discourses. Thus, two conclusions are made based on the findings. First, insertion is more dominant in written or media-based communication, while alternation is more common in spoken classroom interaction. Finally, code mixing is strongly influenced by context and communicative purpose.

In contrast to studies in digital media contexts which highlights insertion for casual and stylistic communication (Asmoro & Annaningtyas, 2023), this current study shows that classroom interaction prioritizes alternation to ensure instructional clarity, facilitate students' understanding, and create supportive learning atmosphere. This emphasizes the role of educational settings in shaping language.

To conclude, research on code mixing provide information on how they enable a two-way communication. Furthermore, although the dominant type of code mixing varies across studies, insertion dominates bilingual communication, which underscores the dominance of

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someone's first language. However, in EFL classrooms milieu, the primary goal of using code mixing is to facilitate effective learning. This confirms that code mixing is a natural and functional strategy in EFL teaching, where it supports comprehension, interaction, and effective learning. Additionally, code mixing also makes communication easier (Datta, 2025).Top of Form On the other hand, the use of code mixing in other contexts such as social media is a preference.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the English teacher at SMPN 1 Kefamenanu employed two types of code mixing during classroom interaction, namely insertion and alternation, while congruent lexicalization was not identified. Among these types, alternation emerged as the dominant form, indicating the teacher's tendency to switch between English and Indonesian at the clause or sentence level to support students' understanding. The findings also reveal that code mixing was intentionally used to facilitate communication, clarify instructional content, overcome students' limited vocabulary, and create a more supportive and comfortable learning environment. These findings suggest that code mixing functions as a purposeful pedagogical strategy in multilingual EFL classrooms, particularly among learners with limited English proficiency.

This study contributes to sociolinguistic and EFL classroom research by providing empirical evidence of teacher code mixing practices in a junior high school context in Eastern Indonesia, an educational setting that remains relatively underexplored in previous studies. The findings further highlight that the form and function of code mixing are strongly influenced by classroom needs, students' linguistic competence, and instructional goals.

Nevertheless, this study is limited to one English teacher and a single classroom context, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to involve a larger number of participants across different educational levels and regions to gain broader insights into code mixing practices. Further research may also examine the relationship between code mixing and students' learning outcomes, such as vocabulary acquisition, speaking performance, or classroom engagement, using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches.

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