

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of research

Language acquisition among international students is a dynamic process influenced by various sociolinguistic factors. When individuals learn a second or foreign language, their ability to acquire and use it effectively is shaped by interactions with native speakers, exposure to different linguistic environments, and personal motivations (Ellis, 1989). Social networks, cultural identity, and institutional language policies also play a crucial role in determining how international students acquire and use the new language in both formal and informal settings (Duff, 2020). For international students in Palembang, the process of acquiring the Indonesian language is particularly influenced by their linguistic backgrounds and the social dynamics of their interactions within the community.

Moreover, international students often navigate between multiple languages in their daily interactions, leading to varied linguistic experiences. The extent to which they acquire and utilize the local language is largely dependent on their level of immersion and the necessity of using the language in different contexts, such as academic discussions, daily communication, and social engagements (Kramsch, 2021). The diverse linguistic environment in Palembang, where Indonesian and local dialects coexist, creates a unique setting for international students to develop their

language proficiency through active engagement with both peers and the local community.

One prominent phenomenon observed in multilingual communities is code-switching, which refers to the alternating use of two or more languages within a conversation. Code-switching is a natural and common practice among bilinguals and multilinguals, serving various communicative functions such as clarification, emphasis, and identity expression (Gardner-Chloros, 2020). In the context of language acquisition, code-switching often occurs as a cognitive and social strategy to facilitate understanding, particularly when speakers encounter linguistic limitations in one language and compensate by borrowing elements from another language (Muysken, 2022).

In academic settings, code-switching is frequently observed among international students as they adapt to different linguistic expectations. Research indicates that code-switching can be an effective strategy in language learning, enabling students to bridge linguistic gaps while developing their proficiency in the target language (MacSwan, 2021). Furthermore, it serves as a tool for fostering social cohesion, as students who share similar linguistic backgrounds may switch between languages to establish a sense of belonging and solidarity within their peer groups (Canagarajah, 2019).

Palembang, as a growing educational hub in Indonesia, attracts students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. These students often engage in code-switching as

they interact with local speakers, peers, and educators. The social and academic environments play crucial roles in shaping their language use. Socially, international students may code-switch to establish rapport, overcome language barriers, or express cultural identity. Academically, code-switching can function as a learning tool, aiding comprehension and facilitating discussions in multilingual classrooms.

Understanding the social and academic factors that drive code-switching behavior among international students in Palembang is essential. Social factors, such as peer interactions, cultural identity, and exposure to multiple languages, influence students' linguistic choices. Meanwhile, academic factors, including instructional language, classroom dynamics, and academic discourse, impact the extent to which code-switching supports or hinders their language acquisition.

Furthermore, investigating how code-switching affects language acquisition provides insight into its benefits and challenges. While code-switching may enhance communicative competence and cognitive flexibility, excessive reliance on it might slow the mastery of the target language. By exploring this phenomenon, this study aims to shed light on the role of code-switching in language development and adaptation among international students in Palembang especially in Universitas Bina Darma.

In addition to its communicative functions, code-switching also plays a role in identity negotiation and social integration. As noted by (Grosjean, 2020), bilingual speakers often switch languages to signal group membership and navigate different

cultural contexts. International students in UBD may use code-switching to align themselves with local students, demonstrating their willingness to adapt to the linguistic and cultural norms of their environment. At the same time, they might code-switch to maintain ties with their native linguistic and cultural identities, particularly when interacting with fellow international students. The dynamic nature of code-switching in these settings suggests that it is not merely a compensatory strategy for linguistic deficiencies but an essential tool for managing social relationships and academic interactions. Understanding these aspects can provide valuable insights into how language acquisition unfolds in multilingual educational settings.

Ethnographic theory, as articulated by Poplack (1980), offers a crucial lens for examining code-switching in the language acquisition of international students in Universitas Bina Darma. This theory posits that code-switching is not just a linguistic tool but a reflection of social identities and relationships shaped by cultural contexts. For international students, their language choices are influenced by interactions within diverse social networks, including local peers and fellow students. Poplack emphasizes that code-switching facilitates effective navigation of multilingual environments, aiding social integration and academic engagement. By applying this ethnographic perspective, the study can reveal how international students use code-switching to negotiate their identities and enhance their language learning, highlighting the interplay between language, identity, and community in their educational experiences.

The phenomenon of code-switching among international students at Universitas Bina Darma provides valuable insights into language acquisition and sociolinguistic dynamics in a multicultural academic setting. As Palembang grows as an educational hub, understanding how international students navigate linguistic challenges becomes crucial.

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it explores how students from diverse linguistic backgrounds use code-switching to adapt socially and academically. Second, it examines how code-switching aids identity negotiation and cultural integration, helping students connect with peers while maintaining their linguistic heritage. Third, it highlights the role of code-switching in academic settings, identifying strategies that enhance comprehension and engagement in multilingual classrooms.

By adopting an ethnographic approach, this study captures the lived experiences of international students, providing context-specific insights into code-switching as a social practice. The findings can inform language policies and teaching strategies at Universitas Bina Darma, fostering a more inclusive learning environment and improving support for international students.

1.2 Problems of The Study

Based on the description on the background, the problem discussed in this study are:

1. What types of code-switching are used and which one is more dominant?

2. What are the social and academic factors influencing international students' code-switching behavior in Palembang?

1.3 Objectives of The Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify types of code switching: to categorize and analyze the different types of code switching employed by international students in Palembang during their language acquisition process.
2. To explore social factors influencing code switching: to investigate the social factors that affect the code switching behaviour of international students, including peer interactions, cultural influences, and social identity.

1.4 Significance of The Study

The research contributes to sociolinguistics and second language acquisition by exploring code-switching as a linguistic strategy. It enhances understanding of bilingual and multilingual communication in higher education and supports theories on language contact, bilingualism, and communicative competence.

The findings benefit educators, policymakers, and international students. Educators can develop teaching strategies that integrate multilingual abilities while fostering language proficiency. Policymakers may use the insights to create inclusive language policies in academic institutions. For international students, this study raises awareness of how code-switching influences their language development, aiding their academic success and social integration.

1.5 Limitation of The Study

This research focuses on international students in Universitas Bina Darma, limiting its applicability to other regions or diverse linguistic backgrounds. It examines code-switching in social and academic settings. This research focuses on international students at Universitas Bina Darma, specifically examining the code-switching practices of two male students: one from Mali with the initial B and the other from Egypt with the initial A.

