

USING CODE-SWITCHING AS THE TEACHING STRATEGY IN CLASSROOM FOR LOW ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study is aimed to find the function of teachers' code-switching (CS) to support low proficiency learners in learning English and to determine the benefits of CS practiced by the teachers in the EFL learning. The data of this study were obtained from two English teachers at Junior Islamic Boarding School of Darul Ihsan, Aceh Besar. The observation sheet and questionnaire were used to collect the data. Two English classes were observed in two sessions respectively. All of the conversation in the classroom was recorded and the code-switching parts were then transcribed and analyzed. The results showed that the teachers used CS for clarification, explaining difficult grammatical terms, building connections between teacher and students, quoting specific terms that is not available in English, adding specification, repeating message which previously said in English, explaining message qualification, and emphasizing a particular issue. The results of the questionnaires showed several benefits of implementing CS for students, such as enjoying communication during learning activities, feeling satisfied and comfortable in the learning situation, feeling less tense and rigid, focusing more on the lesson, improving their ability to understand new words, and helping them understand difficult concepts and grammar in English.

Keywords: *code switching, EFL classroom, teaching strategy.*

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, learning a foreign language in a formal classroom is the most visible form of learning English in Indonesia. Árvai and Medgyes (2000) suggested that in the EFL classroom, significant differences can be found in teaching behavior of both native and non-native speaking teachers in terms of communicative competence and subject matter. In other words, the classroom is a basis to gain comprehensible input, which is now developing not only inside the classroom but also on the outside. As such, English teachers in Indonesia are faced with many challenges and must have the best strategy to teach their students. One way of overcoming these challenges is to switch languages from English to the mother tongue during the teaching in order to attract the learners' attention on the target language. Hence, teachers are required to use code-switching for instruction to complete the tasks. They employ CS strategy as a means of providing opportunities for students to communicate and enhance their understanding.

Code-switching refers to "a situation in which a speaker uses a mixture of distinct language varieties as discourse process. This occurs quite commonly in everyday speech..." (Akmajin, et al., 2003, p. 209). Fromkin, Rodman, and Hymas (2011, pp. 461-462) defined CS "as a unique speech style to bilinguals, in which fluent speakers switch languages between or within sentences". Dimiyati and Mudjiono (2013) described CS as a linguistic situation in which a speaker will use an alternative language code with others who have a similar linguistic repertoire.

Many researchers claimed that using code-switching is necessary in the classroom. It plays an important function to giving instruction, explaining difficult context, and controlling class atmosphere. Greggio and Gill (2007) believed that CS can be a useful tool in language teaching and learning process. Teachers can use code-switching to help students understand the teaching instruction and manage the time. The students can answer or respond to the instruction without consuming much time to analyze the meaning of the instruction. It also implies that using L1 in an EFL classroom is not always an indication of the limited language mastery.

Tien and Liu (2006) stated that low proficiency students consider CS as a helpful strategy for thorough comprehension as well as better learning instruction. In the ELT classroom, CS is used either in the teachers' or the students' discourses (Sert, 2005). It implies that

students who have difficulties expressing their ideas in one language may switch to other languages to help them communicate in the classroom. This view believes that CS is one of the important reasons for switching languages.

Martin (1999) as cited in Nordin et al. (2013) stated that there are some reasons why teachers need to switch during the teaching process, such as a signal of the transition between preparing for a lesson and the start of the lesson, to distinguish 'doing and lesson' from talking about the lesson, question from a written text, classroom management, and bring out the voices of different characters in a narrative. Teacher also used CS for beginners to tackle grammar explanation, class instructions, students monitoring/assisting and activities correction, and attracting learners' attention (Greggio and Gill, 2007).

Ahmad and Jusoff (2009) in their study on teachers' code-switching for low English proficient learners in giving instruction found that the switch helped learners to enjoy their learning since they're able to comprehend the input. The comprehensible input toned down their level of stress and helped them be more comfortable in learning. It implies that psychological support put the learners at ease during the class. When they feel that they can follow the lesson, and do not feel lost, they would look forward to learn more about English.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Sehiling and Setiawan (2014) on the students' attitudes toward the instructor's CS in the EFL classroom found that low proficiency students were not confident to communicate in English with the CS practiced by teachers. They prefer to use Indonesia because they were afraid of making mistakes. However, the students did try to speak in English when they were spoken to their teachers, and they will switch back to Indonesia when they encounter an unfamiliar word. The results also showed that the students preferred the teacher to use more Indonesia than English. They admitted that they faced difficulties in understanding the meaning of the speech when the instructor used full English during teaching.

Ngaisah (2013) conducted a study on CS in the first grade students of SMPN 1 Karangrejo. The data showed that there were four kinds of CS that were used by teachers during the learning process: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, emblematic switching, and establish continuity. The purposes of CS ranged from strengthening the request, giving motivation, giving further explanation, explaining the meaning of new words, testing the students' understanding.

In general, the study about CS has been done by many linguistic experts in Indonesia. However, there has never been any research that focuses on the low proficient learners in Aceh, especially Aceh Besar. Thus, the writer is interested in conducting research on code-switching that occurred in an EFL classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-switching (CS) has been defined in many ways by different researchers over time depending on the point of view of their study. Trousdale (2010) refers code-switching to a situation in which a speaker uses alternative code between two varieties (codes) in conversations with other people who have similar linguistic repertoires. It means that code switching requires similar linguistic knowledge among the speakers in order to have the same understanding toward the switched code. This shared knowledge links the communicative choice to which codes to use and switch to/with (Romaine, 2000). The knowledge also links the communicative code to which strategies to employ to build or destroy group boundaries (Wardhaugh, 2006) in order to evoke interpersonal relationships between people who share similar language backgrounds. The function of code switching in this situation is to assist the conversation flowing that usually involves language transition (Chaer & Agustina, 2004), and to express an appropriate social meaning (Gumperz, 1983, as cited in Mukti, 2016). In short, code switching refers to a language transition from one code to another.

In teaching learning context, code switching is used to overcome the common problems of communication gab (Modupeola, 2013) such as students' lack of understanding toward certain explanations. It provides students the opportunity to speak and understand the concepts and facilitating the flow of teaching in classroom, clarifying, emphasizing meaning, and emphasizing the importance of content. A teacher, in this case, tends to look for other utterances in other languages that are more familiar to students to help them understand the teaching material. It is a teaching strategy that is used to ensure the interaction and communicative event in the language classroom.

Isaac (2011) sees code switching as a necessity in class instruction to improve the learning process. When students are faced with lack of adequate vocabulary of the target language, they tend to

alternate the word with a new lexicon to get communication flows. Brown (2000) stated that permitting the use of several words from a student's first language can make the class move forward. By allowing students to express themselves using L1, the class will be more fun and help them mastering the new L2 vocabulary with the help of L1 concept. Cook (2000) believed that allowing L1 in L2 classrooms is a humanistic approach towards the learners, where they have the opportunity to speak their mind without the deficiency of not knowing the right vocabulary and the fear of making mistakes. In this way, CS plays its main functions to help students have a better grasp of understanding on the subject and encourage them to speak freely in English.

Poplack (2000) clarified three types of code-switching: inter-sentential code-switching, intra-sentential code-switching and tag-switching.

Table 1. Poplack's (2000) clarification of code-switching categories

No.	Type of CS	Languages and Speakers' Orientation	Example
1	Inter-sentential; Occurs in a sentence or between speakers' turns (Eldin, 2014).	- Two languages flow fluently. - Speakers follow the rules of the two languages	<i>Itula. Mama dah agak dah. Adik ni demam ni. Pity you. Your voice was also different already.</i> "That's why. I knew it. You are having a fever. Pity you. Your voice sounds different" (Stapa & Khan, 2016).
2	Intra-sentential; - Occurs at clausal, sentential, and word level. - More complex than inter-sentential	- Two languages flow fluently. - Speakers follow the rules of the two languages.	<i>Sometimes I'll Start a Sentence in English Y termino en espanol.</i> "Sometimes I'll Start a sentence in English and finish it in Spanish" (Cakrawarti, 2011).
3	Tag-switching Inserting a 'tag' in one language into a phrase that is entirely in another language.	- Happens among low proficiency bilinguals. - Inserting a tag.	Common English tags such as; I mean, you know, and I wish

In the bilingual and multilingual contexts of knowledge transfer to learners, CS is one of the common educational strategies that can be used to help learners acquire proficiency of a second language. Within the scope of appropriate implementation, it can empower learner, describe bilingual and multilingual speakers' ability to express themselves in two languages and to demonstrate its sociolinguistic impact among people who use it (Auerbach, 2016). In the classroom context, the teacher and student switch their language to find the most effective way of delivering materials. Thus, it's important that both parties have the same linguistic background or language mastery. Otherwise, listener with different L1 will fail to get the points of the conversation.

The reason behind code-switching in the language classroom is vary. In everyday context, some people use CS because they are unable to express themselves adequately in one language hence its necessity to us CS to keep the communication flowing. Others use it to show connections within a social group or to exclude a certain speaker from the group. In this situation, CS is a symbol of inclusion within certain background identity. Additionally, it can also be used as the signal of the speakers' attitudes toward the listener and personality whether he is friendly, irritated, distant, ironic, humorous, or so forth (Crystal, 2003).

Cook (2000) mentioned several reasons why code-switching exists in a classroom. She believed that CS is a systematic switching that happens as a way to get into the meaning of the target language, a shortcut in explaining the task, a way of explaining grammar, and a way of demonstrating classroom immersion into a second language situation. Another reason why teachers engage in CS is to accomplish a specific task, such as instructional and conversational tasks, and to convey social information (Dehrab, 2002). However, Dehrab added that CS was the teachers' instructional strategy and the students' surviving strategy that manifested from cross cultural knowledge and educational backgrounds.

Zabrodska (2007) added that CS accommodates a perpetual problem of students' need on full understanding of any unclear part of the lesson. Fatimah (2007) believed that CS is a teaching strategy for an effective learning. It contributes to classroom interaction in the conversational functions and as an indirect translation and extended explanation. Within a sociolinguistic spectrum, CS can be used when classes are difficult to control, facilitating understanding, especially with poor-achiever students, saving time and enabling teachers to cope

with the demands of the syllabus, obtaining a better response, and creating intimacy and promoting a lively classroom atmosphere. In terms of linguistics, code-switching helps students understand the lesson, enables them to learn two languages co-extensively, as a medium of learning L2 and L3, to explain difficult terms in textbook, and to substitute words that correspond with English pronunciation.

Furthermore, Mattson and Burenhult (1999) proposed three main functions of CS. They are (1) topic function; teacher uses L1 to explain certain grammatical structures. It work in both ways, students will learn new input while teacher aims to direct students' attention to the new knowledge of L2 by using the L1. (2) Affective functions; to express emotions and build relationship between teacher and student. In this way, the students will enjoy their learning process more since they were able to comprehend the input. It will also help them relax, focus and concentrate. (3) Repetitive function; is the teachers' recurring strategy of using CS in transferring knowledge and providing clarity. It was used to emphasize a point.

There is a significant correlation between teachers' code-switching and student's low proficiency in learning a foreign language. Tien and Liu (2006) claimed that low proficiency students prefer the teacher to use CS during learning as so to help them gain a better comprehension in their EFL classes. It is beneficial in providing a comprehension input as well as giving classroom instruction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilized the descriptive qualitative method. The participants of this research were two EFL teachers and 60 eighth grade students of MTsS Darul Ihsan Krueng Kalee, Aceh Besar. The data were obtained from classroom observation. Two instruments were used to collect the data; observation sheets and questionnaire. The former was adapted from Poplack's (2000) checklist observation sheet and specified for the teacher. It was used to find out the teachers' strategy and the code-switching tendency that occurred in the classroom as well as the benefits and drawbacks of using code-switching in teaching and learning English. Meanwhile, the latter was distributed for both teachers and students. Its main purpose was to find out the benefits of using code-switching in teaching and learning English to students with low English proficiency. It consisted of eight yes/no Likert questions relating to the students' satisfaction and perceptions on the benefits of

teacher's code-switching. Furthermore, all classroom activities such as teaching activities, classroom behavior, students' language behavior, physical settings, and student attitudes and feelings were recorded during the classroom observation.

Subsequently, the recorded classroom conversation between the students and the teacher were transcribed. The transcription of code displayed followed the conventional transcription symbols from Yusuf (2006). To analyze the data, the researcher used Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (2014) three stages of data transcription analysis procedural standards: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions and verifying. Additionally, the data from the questionnaires were also analyzed using a percentage formula by Sudjiono (2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Functions of the Teachers' Code Switching to Support Low Proficiency Learners in Learning English

The primary data regarding the teacher's code-switching for students during learning activities were obtained from classroom observation. The researcher found that both teachers frequently used code-switching in all aspect of classroom activities.

Table 2. The function of teachers' code switching according to teachers

No	The function of teacher code switching	Yes	No
1	To clarify something	✓	
2	To explain difficult term in grammar	✓	
3	To build solidarity between teacher and student	✓	
4	To quote the specific term which is unavailable in English		✓
5	To addressee specification	✓	
6	To repeat a message which has been said in English before	✓	
7	To explain message qualification	✓	
8	To emphasize particular issue	✓	

The teacher used CS to clarify something and to explain difficult items or an unfamiliar vocabulary in grammar. In this case, CS was used to help students understand the pattern of sentences. The teacher explained the basic formula of negative sentences and interrogative sentences. To help students understand, the teacher translated vague sentences that usually involved sentences that consist of different meaning if it was to be translated word-by-word into Indonesian.

Furthermore, the teacher also used CS to repeat a message which has been said in English before. They will show the students the meaning of the previously mentioned vocabularies to make sure that the students understood. They also used CS to praise the students. It also functions to build connections between students and teachers. Moreover, the teacher also used CS to quote specific terms which are unavailable in English. The teacher explained the meaning of “*dayah*” in English and provides an example of it by mentioning the name of a school (Darul Islam Boarding School). The term is not available in English and Indonesia. Code-switching is also used to emphasize a particular issue. In this context, CS was used by the teacher to handle a chaotic classroom activity, usually by saying “Pay attention please! *Coba jangan ribut dulu!*”.

The Benefits of Using Code-Switching in Teaching and Learning English for Low English Proficiency Students

Based on the findings of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that teacher’s CS in EFL classroom helped low-ability students learn the basics grammar of English. The questionnaire focused on situations in which students believed that CS could be used beneficially. Table 3 illustrates the level of students’ satisfaction on teachers’ code-switching.

Table 3. The students’ responses to the benefits of teachers’ code-switching in class

<i>No</i>	<i>Learners’ Affective State</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
1	Students enjoy their communication during learning activities.	52	8
2	Students Feel satisfied with the learning situation.	49	11
3	Students feel comfortable to learn.	50	10
4	students feel less tense and not rigid	53	7
5	students feel like they didn't lose concentration and focus on the lesson.	47	13
6	Helping students to understand new words.	55	5
7	Helping students to understand difficult concepts.	45	15
8	Helping students to understand English grammar.	51	9

The result shows that code-switching helped students enjoy their learning experience and encourage them to communicate during classroom activities. Almost 52 students stated that CS helped them to enjoy their EFL learning. However, 8 students disagreed with the statement. It means that the majority of the students agreed that they

enjoyed learning activities when the teachers used code-switching during the English learning. Furthermore, the majority of the students were satisfied with the teaching-learning activities when the teachers switched the language into Indonesian. The table shows that 49 students were satisfied when the teacher did not fully speak in English when teaching the lesson. However, there were some students (14) disagreed with this argument. While ten of the students showed their dissatisfaction, the majority of the students (50) agreed that they feel comfortable in learning English if the teachers use code-switching to explain a topic or material related to English lessons.

The questionnaire result (53) also proved that using code-switching in teaching English allows the students to be more active without feeling tense and rigid when expressing their opinions. However, there are 7 students who experienced the opposite situation. Furthermore, students also agreed that using CS during EFL learning helped them concentrate and focus on the lesson. A total of 47 students agreed that teacher's code-switching strategy boost their concentration and helped them focused during the lesson. However, a minority of the students (13) did not agree with this statement. Allowing students to use code-switching as a bridge between a familiar and an unfamiliar vocabulary can make conversing in the target language much easier and more comfortable. This strategy can assist new word learning. According to the students' responses (50), teacher's code-switching make new word leaning much easier. Only five students were unable to improve their English vocabulary with code-switching strategy.

Code-switching is also beneficial when the teacher were trying to teach difficult concepts that are difficult for students to comprehend if it was completely explained in English. Students believed that CS made it easier for them to understand the subject that being taught. A total of 45 students agreed with the statement while 15 others showed their inclination. The last one is code-switching can help students understand grammar. Almost all of the students (51) recognized this benefit by agreeing that code-switching indeed helped them learn and understand grammar better. However, there were nine students who did not affect by this strategy.

The results of the questionnaire show that the majority of the students had a positive response on the use of code-switching in the English teaching and learning process. It leads to the idea that CS is a good teaching strategy in helping low proficiency students to comfortably learn English without feeling tense. The students were

satisfied and enjoyed their learning without losing their concentration even though the teacher used L1 in the teaching process.

Discussion

The finding of this study indicates that both teachers and students at Dayah Darul Ihsan, Aceh Besar, mainly used code-switching in language learning interaction. It means that code-switching can be a useful strategy to help students understand the English language. The result shows that the function of using code-switching is to help students comprehend English grammatically and speak it fluently. Using two languages, Indonesian and English, can help students understand the meaning and grasp the language's patterns.

Based on the observation result regarding the switching used by English teachers at Dayah Darul Ihsan, it was found that the teacher used CS for several purposes. First, it was used to clarify the learning instruction without using too many words. CS gives students the opportunities to communicate effectively and help them understand the teaching material without spending too much time (Modupeola, 2003). It means that code switching helps the teachers in creating a communicative classroom atmosphere. Sert (2005) claimed that using code-switching has the benefit to deliver necessary knowledge. The teachers use their mother tongue to clarify the meaning and to stress the importance of the language content for an efficient comprehension.

Furthermore, the teacher also used code-switching to explain a difficult grammatical structure in sentences, the word arrangement, etc. In some cases, they also use CS to build connections between the students by praising and thanking them. The teacher praised the students by saying "*bagus (good)*" after they read a text in English because she found that their willingness to read even though they have difficulties pronouncing some words is a good start. The expression of thanks and praise indicates the teacher's positive feeling toward the students' attitudes (Rihane, 2007).

CS is also used by the teacher to quote specific terms which are unavailable in English and to address specification. However, the teachers frequently used CS to repeat a message which has been said in English before, to explain message qualification, and to emphasize a particular issue in order to make the students really understand the explanation and instruction. Hoffman, as cited in Mukti (2016), said that teachers interject a CS to make students understand what they were emphasizing about important things. As a result, teachers employ code-

switching to ensure that students comprehend the relevant information and emphasize the necessity of efficient comprehension and clear instruction.

The teacher also used Indonesia in order to confirm students' understanding and to get their attention. Nerghes (2011) claimed that using CS will attract students' attention and motivate the audience to pay attention to the information presented. Rihane (2007) stated that using code-switching is an effective way to make the audience realize that they need to give their attention to the speaker.

The results from the questionnaire shed light on the students' different perceptions toward teachers' code-switching, which was based on their satisfaction during English learning. The study found that code-switching helped learners enjoy their learning since they were able to comprehend the input. The input allowed them to feel less stressful and be more comfortable to learn. Schweers (1999) explained that once teachers are comfortable with the environment without any unnecessary anxiety, the learners can successfully focus and participate in the classroom activities. Thus, psychological support makes learners feel more relaxed when learning language. When they feel that they can follow the lesson, and do not feel lost, they would look forward to learning more English. Schweers (1999) also stressed on the importance of providing a psychologically conducive learning environment for the learners. Furthermore, the exposure to code-switching at an early stage of learning allows learners to gain a head start towards effective and successful learning and to gradually become users of the target language.

The overall findings suggested that teachers' code-switching does help improve students' English skills. The students also agree that code-switching has helped them understand difficult concepts. They also agree that CS took a significant part in their successful learning. There were satisfactions whenever the teachers switched the language to accommodate the learning process. In fact, low proficient learners can comprehend the subject and the classroom activities they engaged in.

In short, successful learning reflects on students' ability of using English. It comes from their understanding of input that was generated through the CS strategy designed by the teacher to help low proficiency students. CS assists a comprehensible input of learning environment that can decrease students' level of stress and helps them relax. It helps students to be active in expressing their idea without feeling stress

(Burden, 2001).

Relating to general views on code-switching, different people have different attitude toward code-switching. Coogan (2003) stated that attitudes toward code-switching vary greatly among members of different speech communities and even among the speakers who code switch themselves. Gumperz (1983) concluded that different community members display different attitudes toward code-switching. Some see it as a lack of fluency in one code over the other, whereas others see it as an informal style of speaking. Whatever attitudes they display, attitudes toward code-switching may differ in a different situation.

In this research, both teachers have a positive view of code-switching. They practiced code-switching not for their lack of knowledge but to help students learn English. In fact, both teachers had good proficiency in English. They agreed that speaking in Indonesia during the learning process can help students understand the topic being discussed. Otherwise, some students might misunderstand the topic since they had limited ability in English. Promnath and Tayjasa (2016) argued that code-switching is beneficial for students' understanding. During learning, code-switching saves time and makes students feel more confident and comfortable. The use of code-switching helps students with lower performance to be able to follow the lessons better than using full English. It reduced their stress by not worrying about what to say because they could switch to Indonesia.

Yletyinen (2004) also claimed that CS helps the less competent students in answering a question that being asked. CS during the instruction was intended to help the low performance students understand the question so that they can answer the question. Furthermore, code-switching greatly accommodate their understanding on instruction during the teaching process (Wardhaugh, 2006). Skiba (1997) added that CS is a teaching strategy that can help students get a better understanding. It keeps the conversation in the classroom flow given that code-switching helps in transferring information between the teacher and the students.

Ngaisah (2013) in her research stated that teacher used CS to strengthen the request, to give motivation, to give more explanation, to explain about the meaning of new word, and to test the students understanding. In this research, the teacher also explained the meaning of words in Indonesia to make sure that the students understand the meaning of new vocabularies and their use based on the appropriate

context. The teachers also motivate and thank the students in L1 in order to build connections. Moreover, in several cases, the teachers also strengthen the request in L1 to make sure the students understand the teachers' instructions.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The teachers used CS for several purposes. In general, CS was used to clarify the instruction and to clarify the specific use of some vocabularies. Furthermore, it is helpful to be used in explaining a difficult grammatical system of a sentence, the word arrangement, etc. In several cases, the teachers also used CS to build connections with the students by praising them and saying thanks. Code switching is also used by the teacher to quote specific terms which are unavailable in English. However, the teachers frequently used code switching to repeat information which has been previously said in English, to explain message qualification, to emphasize particular issues, and to make the students understand the teachers' explanation and instruction in L2.

The result of this study is equally beneficial for both teachers and students because it provides a better understanding of the nature, types, and functions of code-switching and its benefits in accelerating the learning of foreign languages, especially English. Directly this study will also contribute to the existing literature on code-switching, specifically on the use of code-switching in the speaking class. Information obtained from this research will also provide insight into the reasons for using code-switching in language skills classes and their function as language tools in speaking skills classes. Furthermore, this research will provide a more in-depth information and as a platform for future researchers to explore a new dimension of code-switching as an important language tool.

Overall, the results indicate that the students have a positive perception of teacher's CS in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, the researcher would assume that code switching can be a useful strategy in bilingual class instruction. A further analysis on the students' attitudes toward CS in the foreign language classroom is needed. This research can give input and contribution for the readers who will do the same research to analyze the use of code switching that is seen from not only the teachers' perspectives but also the students' perspective.

There are some beneficial impacts on the students by

implementing CS in the EFL classroom. It makes learning enjoyable thus helps learners comprehend the input. Subsequently, the comprehensible input reduces their stress level and creates a comfortable learning atmosphere. A successful learning is reflected on the learners' ability to use English that comes from learners' understanding of teachers' input that was generated through learners' successful completion of tasks or activities designed by the teachers. It means that CS is a useful teaching strategy to improve student proficiency in English learning. However, this study was conducted on limited two-time meetings of different and separated lesson plan. The result is only a surface image of the situation and not a universal view. Therefore, a longer period of investigation is most likely present a bigger picture of the situation.

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