

Humor and Linguistic Creativity through Code-Switching: A Pragmatic-Sociolinguistic Analysis of Indonesian–English Youth Podcasts

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: ABSTRAK

This study examines the use of humor, code-switching, and linguistic creativity in Indonesian–English bilingual podcasts oriented toward adolescents, with a particular focus on their pragmatic functions in digital communication, social interaction, and audience engagement. Grounded in sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives, particularly Gumperz's (1982) theory of interactional code-switching and the General Theory of Verbal Humor proposed by Attardo and Raskin (1991), the study explores how bilingual practices are mobilized in podcast discourse. Employing a qualitative discourse-pragmatic approach, selected podcast excerpts are analyzed to identify patterns of humor including situational humor, self-deprecating humor, wordplay, and absurdity as well as strategic code-switching and linguistic creativity devices such as metaphors, neologisms, and creative categorization. The findings indicate that humor and code-switching function synergistically to convey social meanings, articulate speaker stance, and enhance audience appeal, while linguistic creativity expands the expressive potential of the discourse. These findings contribute to the growing scholarship on humor and code-switching in the Indonesian digital media context and offer practical implications for podcast-based language pedagogy aimed at fostering bilingual competence and pragmatic awareness.

Keywords:

Humor;

Kreativitas Linguistik;

Alih Kode;

Pragmatik;

Media Digital Remaja.

ABSTRACT

Humor dan Kreativitas Linguistik melalui Alih Kode: Analisis Pragmatis-Sosiolinguistik Podcast Remaja Berbahasa Indonesia–Inggris. Penelitian ini mengkaji penggunaan humor, alih kode (code-switching), dan kreativitas linguistik dalam podcast dwibahasa Indonesia–Inggris yang berorientasi pada remaja, dengan menekankan fungsi pragmatiknya dalam komunikasi digital, interaksi sosial, dan keterlibatan audiens. Berlandaskan perspektif sosiolinguistik dan pragmatik, khususnya teori alih kode interaksional Gumperz (1982) serta General Theory of Verbal Humor dari Attardo dan Raskin (1991), studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana praktik dwibahasa dimobilisasi dalam wacana podcast. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif diskursus-pragmatik dengan menganalisis kutipan terpilih untuk mengidentifikasi pola humor meliputi humor situasional, self-deprecating, permainan kata, dan absurditas serta alih kode strategis dan perangkat kreativitas linguistik seperti metafora, neologisme, dan kategorisasi kreatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa humor dan alih kode bekerja secara sinergis dalam menyampaikan makna sosial, menegaskan sikap penutur, dan meningkatkan daya tarik audiens, sementara kreativitas linguistik memperluas potensi ekspresif wacana. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian humor dan alih kode dalam konteks media digital Indonesia serta memberikan implikasi praktis bagi pedagogi bahasa berbasis podcast.

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Introduction

The rapid growth of digital media in Indonesia has fundamentally reshaped patterns of language use in everyday social interaction, generating dynamic spaces for bilingual and multilingual communication that are increasingly informal, interactive, and performative (Crystal, 2006; Dynel, 2009). Among various digital platforms, podcasts have emerged as a particularly salient site of spoken digital discourse, characterized by spontaneity, dialogic engagement, and linguistic playfulness (Berry, 2016). Unlike institutional or scripted media, podcasts allow speakers to negotiate meaning in real time, making them a productive locus for examining pragmatic phenomena such as humor, creativity, and code-switching. Despite the expanding body of scholarship on digital communication, systematic investigations into how bilingual practices operate within Indonesian podcasts especially in relation to humor and linguistic creativity remain limited. This gap is particularly striking given the prominence of youth audiences as active participants and cultural producers in Indonesia's digital media ecology (Setiawan & Ardi, 2021).

Despite increasing scholarly attention to digital media, systematic studies examining how code-switching operates in Indonesian podcasts especially in relation to humor and linguistic creativity—remain limited. Insights from recent Southeast Asian and global studies on online multilingualism highlight that digital youth content provides unique opportunities for spontaneous bilingual interaction and identity negotiation (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Lee, 2017). These observations underscore the importance of examining how Indonesian–English podcast participants employ code-switching and linguistic creativity in humorous segments, which can reveal culturally specific strategies as well as parallels to broader digital multilingual practices.

Within sociolinguistic research, code-switching has long been conceptualized not merely as linguistic alternation but as a socially meaningful practice embedded in interaction (Gumperz, 1982; Clyne, 2003). Distinctions between structural approaches, which foreground formal linguistic patterns, and interactional perspectives, which emphasize pragmatic and social functions, have been central to this field (Auer, 1998). From an interactional standpoint, code-switching functions as a strategic resource through which speakers enact identity, align with interlocutors, and manage discourse goals. In Indonesian podcasts, the frequent alternation between Indonesian and English often through performative switches, borrowings, and evaluative expressions reflects contemporary youth culture and globalized linguistic repertoires. Such practices enable speakers to construct nuanced social meanings and co-negotiate identities within digitally mediated interaction (Liu, 2020; Indah, 2018).

Humor constitutes a particularly salient pragmatic domain in which code-switching becomes interactionally consequential. Far from serving solely as entertainment, humor operates as a mechanism for stance-taking, social bonding, and face management within conversation (Attardo & Raskin, 1991; Morreall, 2009). In bilingual discourse, humorous effects are frequently intensified through linguistic contrast, incongruity, and audience alignment, allowing speakers to foreground punchlines, index group membership, or subtly negotiate power relations (Dynel, 2009; Kuiper, 2006; Holmes, 2006). In the context of Indonesian–English podcast interactions, code-switching thus functions not only as a reflection of bilingual competence but also as a pragmatic trigger for humor that relies on shared cultural knowledge and linguistic awareness.

Closely related to humor is linguistic creativity, which extends beyond conventional wordplay to encompass innovative metaphor use, playful stance construction, metapragmatic commentary, and identity indexing (Vershure, 2013; Indah, 2018). Bilingual speakers draw on multiple linguistic resources to craft novel expressions that enrich interaction and enhance humorous meaning-making (Clyne, 2003; Liu, 2020). These creative practices foreground the cognitive and social dimensions of pragmatic innovation, situating bilingual humor at the intersection of discourse studies, sociolinguistics, and cognitive linguistics (Attardo, 1994; Holmes, 2006). In youth-oriented podcast discourse, such

creativity becomes especially visible as speakers exploit linguistic hybridity to engage audiences and construct an informal yet socially meaningful communicative style.

Previous studies have examined code-switching and verbal humor as distinct phenomena (Gumperz, 1982; Clyne, 2003; Attardo & Raskin, 1991), yet relatively few have explored their intersection within Indonesian digital communication. While existing theoretical models provide valuable analytical foundations, their application often remains generalized, insufficiently accounting for the sociolinguistic specificities of Indonesian bilingualism and youth-mediated digital discourse (Indah, 2018; Setiawan & Ardi, 2021). By drawing on insights from multimodal humor research (Dyner, 2009) and studies of digital spoken interaction (Berry, 2016), the present study responds to this limitation by situating code-switching and humor within naturally occurring, publicly accessible podcast conversations.

Accordingly, this study investigates how humor and linguistic creativity emerge through code-switching in Indonesian–English youth-oriented podcast interactions. To guide the analysis, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How is code-switching employed in humorous segments of Indonesian–English podcast conversations? (2) What pragmatic strategies underlie the production of humor through bilingual language use? (3) How does linguistic creativity contribute to the construction of social meaning and audience engagement in these interactions?

By adopting an integrated pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspective, this research elucidates how humor, code-switching, and linguistic creativity operate synergistically within digital spoken discourse. Focusing on Indonesian–English youth podcasts, the study highlights the interactional functions of bilingual resources in informal media settings and addresses an empirical gap in contemporary sociolinguistic research. In doing so, it advances the understanding of digital-mediated language practices in Indonesia while contributing to broader discussions in bilingual pragmatics and humor studies (Berry, 2016; Setiawan & Ardi, 2021).

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using discourse-pragmatic analysis to examine naturally occurring conversations in Indonesian–English bilingual podcasts. This approach was selected to capture the interactional and pragmatic functions of humor, code-switching, and linguistic creativity within digital youth-oriented discourse. Data were purposively sampled from ten podcast episodes across different series based on three criteria: frequent bilingual interaction, spontaneous humorous exchanges, and relevance to youth audiences, thereby ensuring variation in topics and interactional contexts. Audio data were obtained from publicly accessible platforms and transcribed verbatim using a standardized protocol that included verbal and paralinguistic features such as pauses, intonation, laughter, and emphasis. Data collection was conducted over a three-month period, with transcripts cross-checked for accuracy. Analysis integrated thematic and discourse-pragmatic techniques, involving iterative coding of code-switching instances, humor types, and creative linguistic devices, guided by the General Theory of Verbal Humor, multimodal humor frameworks, and sociolinguistic theories of bilingual interaction. Intercoder reliability was ensured through secondary coding of 20% of the data. Ethical considerations were addressed through anonymization and responsible use of public data, and NVivo 12 software was utilized to support data organization and analysis.

Result and Discussion

The analysis of the selected Indonesian podcast episodes reveals three interconnected and mutually reinforcing patterns: (1) the deployment of multiple humor types, (2) strategic Indonesian–English code-switching, and (3) diverse forms of linguistic creativity. Rather than functioning as isolated phenomena, these patterns co-occur to construct engaging, expressive, and socially meaningful digital discourse. Humor operates as a pragmatic strategy for audience engagement, code-switching indexes stance, identity, and professionalism, while linguistic creativity enables speakers to articulate

complex emotional and conceptual experiences that resonate with contemporary Indonesian youth audiences.

Humor emerged as a multifaceted pragmatic resource, functioning not merely to entertain but to manage interaction, negotiate identity, and sustain audience engagement. The data indicate that humor in Indonesian podcast discourse is realized through situational incongruity, self-deprecation, wordplay or verbal slapstick, nonsensical repetition, and absurdity. These humor types recur across episodes and perform distinct pragmatic roles within conversational interaction.

Table 1. Summarizes the Frequency and Representative Examples of Humor Types Identified in The Data.

Timestamp	Humor Type	Example Excerpt	Linguistic Mechanism	Pragmatic Function
0:32–0:42	Situational/ Incongruity	“Nina is already asleep before Aca”	Reversal of temporal expectation	Creates subtle comedy, engages listener
3:06–3:12	Self-deprecating/ Observational	Speaker admits small social circle	Honest acknowledgment, social relatability	Promotes rapport, social connection
7:54–8:00	Wordplay/Verbal Slapstick	Misinterpretation of “gas” as “gas melon”	Linguistic ambiguity	Generates laughter, playful effect
10:22–10:37	Nonsensical/ Repetition	Confusion of “vocal gland” with “mammary gland”	Repetition, absurdity	Amusement through absurdity
18:04–18:08	Absurd/ Situational	Response “itchy” to serious question	Subversion of expectation	Creates surprise, comic effect

The patterns summarized in Table 1 demonstrate that incongruity, self-deprecation, wordplay, repetition, and absurdity are recurrent strategies, with wordplay and absurd humor appearing most frequently (approximately two to three instances per episode). Situational humor relies on the disruption of listeners’ expectations, prompting cognitive re-evaluation that aligns with incongruity-based theories of humor (Attardo & Raskin, 1991). For instance, the revelation that one speaker is asleep before another subverts normative temporal assumptions, generating amusement through unexpected reversal.

Self-deprecating humor functions as a relational strategy, allowing speakers to position themselves as approachable and socially aligned with listeners. This supports prior findings that humor in informal digital discourse fosters intimacy, solidarity, and audience alignment (Holmes, 2006; Dynel, 2009; Palani & Bakar, 2024). Meanwhile, wordplay and nonsensical repetition exploit linguistic ambiguity and absurdity to sustain playful interaction, reinforcing humor as a collaborative achievement between speaker and audience rather than a one-sided performance.

Within the Indonesian sociocultural context, these humor strategies reflect conversational norms that privilege indirectness, shared amusement, and collective interpretation. Thus, humor in podcasts operates as a culturally embedded pragmatic practice rather than a purely individual expressive act.

Code-switching between Indonesian and English emerged as a strategic communicative resource rather than random alternation. Speakers employed English insertions to index formality, professionalism, emotional emphasis, and cognitive processing, demonstrating the functional versatility of bilingual resources in podcast discourse.

As shown in Table 2, English expressions are strategically embedded at moments requiring heightened formality, emphasis, or conceptual clarity. Phrases such as “based on experience” function

to enhance speaker credibility and signal experiential authority, while professional terms like “exhibition art” index institutional knowledge and expert stance. These patterns align with sociolinguistic accounts of code-switching as a marker of identity, stance-taking, and pragmatic emphasis (Gumperz, 1982; Clyne, 2003).

Table 2. Presents Representative Examples of Code-switching and Their Pragmatic Functions.

Timestamp	Code-Switch	Function	Pragmatic Effect
0:42–1:32	“Based on experience”	Emphasis, literary	Formal nuance, credibility
8:43–8:47	“Exhibition. Exhibition art. Pilih satu.”	Professional/ Instructional	Conveys authority, professional tone
14:04– 14:14	“Perayaan”/“celebration”	Emotional	Enhances affective depth
20:33– 20:44	“Kosa kata... Apa lagi ya kosa kata”	Cognitive/Creative	Reflects thought process, creative reasoning

The alternation between Indonesian and English also serves affective and cognitive functions. Emotional pairings such as perayaan and “celebration” intensify expressive nuance, while self-referential switches during lexical searching reveal metacognitive awareness and creative reasoning. A visual schema (Figure 1) illustrates that peaks in English usage coincide with moments of professional framing or reflective discourse, underscoring code-switching as a discourse-organizing mechanism.

In the Indonesian podcast context, these practices reflect broader dynamics of youth bilingualism, global media exposure, and the symbolic value of English as a resource for professional and creative self-presentation (Nur’aini & Fitriana, 2024). Code-switching between Indonesian and English was strategically employed for stylistic, expressive, and professional purposes. Such bilingual alternation resonates with findings in networked multilingual environments, where speakers navigate identity, stance-taking, and social alignment through language choice (Androutsopoulos, 2015). Moreover, the patterns observed in Indonesian podcasts reflect global trends in digital multilingualism, demonstrating that online youth media afford opportunities for creative linguistic expression and pragmatic nuance (Lee, 2017). These examples strengthen the argument that humor, code-switching, and linguistic creativity function synergistically in producing social meaning and engaging digital audiences.

Linguistic creativity emerged as a salient feature of podcast discourse, manifesting through metaphor, personification, abstraction, neologism, and creative categorization. These devices allow speakers to convey complex emotional and conceptual meanings while maintaining audience engagement.

Table 3. Summarizes Key Instances of Linguistic Creativity Identified in The Data

Timestamp	Device	Example Excerpt	Function/Effect
8:59–9:15	Metaphor/ Imagery	“This sadness is like a moth, loving fire...”	Conveys complex emotion, imagination
13:04–13:13	Personification	“My pen does not always wound. Instead, it heals.”	Highlights therapeutic, transformative power
15:00–15:32	Abstraction/ Generalization	“Losing a momentum that... was very good...”	Expands personal experience to universal reflection
11:52–12:04	Neologism	“Kelinjar”, “kelinjarin”	Adds originality, expresses tactile/emotional sensation
15:08–15:11	Creative Categorization	“Objects, pets... everything falls into that category”	Organizes personal experiences imaginatively

The data indicate that metaphor and personification generate vivid imagery that facilitates emotional resonance, while abstraction enables speakers to extend individual experiences into shared,

universal reflections. Neologisms such as *kelinjar* and *kelinjarin* are particularly noteworthy, as they represent localized linguistic innovation rather than mere adoption of global youth slang. These forms creatively extend existing morphological patterns to articulate tactile and emotional sensations, illustrating how Indonesian speakers actively reshape linguistic resources to meet expressive needs (Attardo, 1994; Daulay et al., 2024).

Creative categorization further demonstrates how speakers structure narratives by grouping diverse experiences into coherent conceptual frameworks. This practice enhances narrative cohesion and supports audience identification, reinforcing linguistic creativity as both a cognitive and social strategy (Dynel, 2009; Holmes, 2006).

Crucially, these creative linguistic devices do not merely embellish discourse but actively shape social meaning and listener engagement. By inviting shared interpretation, emotional alignment, and playful participation, metaphor, neologism, and creative categorization function as interactional resources that sustain audience attention and reinforce a sense of communal intimacy within Indonesian podcast discourse.

Across the dataset, humor, code-switching, and linguistic creativity frequently co-occur, forming an integrated system of meaning-making. Humor often relies on creative linguistic devices and strategic language alternation to intensify incongruity, emphasize punchlines, and signal group membership. Figure 2 presents a conceptual model illustrating the intersections between humor types, code-switching functions, and linguistic creativity devices.

These findings extend the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo & Raskin, 1991) by demonstrating that bilingual alternation enriches incongruity and resolution processes in digital discourse. In the Indonesian podcast context, humor operates simultaneously as entertainment, identity work, and social bonding, shaped by culturally specific communicative norms.

The results have pedagogical and practical implications. In language education, podcast discourse that integrates humor and code-switching offers authentic material for teaching pragmatics, discourse strategies, and creative writing in bilingual contexts (Yip, 2025; Nur'aini & Fitriana, 2024). In digital media studies, the findings illuminate how Indonesian youth leverage multilingual resources to construct engaging narratives and maintain audience attention, contributing to broader discussions on digital bilingual communication (Li & Zhu, 2022; Dynel, 2009; Crystal, 2006).

Future research may explore comparative podcast genres, larger datasets for enhanced generalizability, and audience reception to bilingual humor and creativity. By situating the analysis within pragmatic and sociolinguistic frameworks, this study demonstrates that humor, code-switching, and linguistic creativity collectively define the expressive and culturally resonant character of contemporary Indonesian podcast discourse.

Conclusion

This study employed a qualitative research design using discourse-pragmatic analysis to examine naturally occurring conversations in Indonesian-English bilingual podcasts. This approach was selected to capture the interactional and pragmatic functions of humor, code-switching, and linguistic creativity within digital youth-oriented discourse. Data were purposively sampled from ten podcast episodes across different series based on three criteria: frequent bilingual interaction, spontaneous humorous exchanges, and relevance to youth audiences, thereby ensuring variation in topics and interactional contexts. Audio data were obtained from publicly accessible platforms and transcribed verbatim using a standardized protocol that included verbal and paralinguistic features such as pauses, intonation, laughter, and emphasis. Data collection was conducted over a three-month period, with transcripts cross-checked for accuracy. Analysis integrated thematic and discourse-pragmatic techniques, involving iterative coding of code-switching instances, humor types, and creative linguistic devices, guided by the General Theory of Verbal Humor, multimodal humor frameworks, and sociolinguistic

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