

Code-Mixing and Bilingualism in Indonesian Language Classrooms: A Case Study of Seventh-Grade Students in Riau

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Abstract

This study explores the forms, functions, and social meanings of code-mixing and code-switching in a digital youth podcast broadcast on the TikTok platform. Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach and grounded in Grosjean's critical sociolinguistic framework, the research analyzes the transcript of a conversational podcast episode featuring two Indonesian teenage girls discussing the topic of boyfriends versus best friends. The analysis reveals that code-mixing serves not only as a communicative strategy but also as an identity marker, a symbol of modernity, and a medium for expressing social solidarity among urban female youth. Conversely, code-switching is employed to mark topic shifts, emphasize emotions, and manage interpersonal dynamics during the podcast interaction. These bilingual practices reflect a process of glocalization, wherein youth flexibly mobilize multilingual resources within digital, media-rich contexts. The study underscores the pedagogical relevance of integrating authentic, digitally mediated discourse into language learning to enhance multilingual literacy and critical awareness. It also contributes to bilingualism studies by highlighting how identity and symbolic power are constructed through everyday linguistic practices in online spaces.

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Introduction

Language is a reflection of social life and individual identity, especially among urban youth growing up in the digital era. One of the most common linguistic phenomena that emerges in their interactions is code-mixing and code-switching between Indonesian and English. This practice is not merely a matter of word choice; it also carries sociocultural values, identity markers, and specific pragmatic functions. This phenomenon is widely recognized as bilingualism. Bilingual communication in the digital age has been increasingly mediated by online platforms such as social media, where linguistic hybridity becomes the norm (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Garcia, 2009).

In Indonesia, this trend is visible through the extensive use of bilingual expressions among teenagers on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, where Indonesian-English blends serve various social functions. According to We Are Social (2023), TikTok is the third most-used application by Indonesian youth, and the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo, 2022) reports that more than 90% of youth engage in multilingual content creation or interaction. These behaviors demonstrate not only linguistic creativity but also reflect a broader sociocultural transformation in the ways Indonesian youth relate to local and global identities.

Despite the growing prevalence of bilingual practices among Indonesian youth, especially in digital spaces, scholarly attention has primarily focused on classroom code-switching or teacher-student interaction. There is a noticeable gap in research that examines naturally occurring bilingual discourse in youth-generated content, such as podcasts, where language choice is more spontaneous and expressive. Podcast discourse offers a rich site for exploring how bilingual speakers construct their social world, particularly in terms of peer relationships, emotional expression, and identity performance (Fadillah et al., 2025; Wahyuni et al., 2023).

Bilingualism is classically defined as an individual's ability to actively use two languages in daily life (Grosjean, 1982). However, contemporary scholarship, such as that of Pennycook (2007) and Blommaert (2010), reframes bilingualism as a dynamic and context-dependent linguistic resource. It is not just about language proficiency but about how speakers negotiate meaning, social positioning, and membership in different communities. Busch (2012) emphasizes that multilingual competence today is as much about discursive intelligence as it is about formal linguistic knowledge.

Previous research on Gen Z language practices has shown that code-switching is often used to indicate familiarity, simplify interaction, or mark social solidarity (Kandiawan, 2023). On the other hand, code-mixing can signify trendiness, global orientation, or prestige in semi-formal digital spaces like podcasts (Fadillah et al., 2025). However, few studies have closely examined how these practices are used to negotiate gender and social roles within peer discourse. Similarly, there is limited focus on how

digital-born youth navigate language fluidity in unscripted or peer-to-peer conversations, leaving a research gap that this study addresses.

This study analyzes the transcript of a youth podcast discussing comparisons between boyfriends and best friends to trace patterns of code-mixing and code-switching, and to interpret their pragmatic functions, social identity expressions, and emerging gender constructions. It explores three main aspects: (1) the types and forms of bilingual language use, (2) the pragmatic functions of bilingual expressions (e.g., referential, expressive, emphatic, stylistic), and (3) the role of these linguistic choices in constructing social and gendered identities in the digital sphere. The podcast format allows for naturalistic data capturing spontaneous language performance, peer interaction, and real-time identity negotiation.

This study is crucial for expanding academic understanding of language dynamics in bilingual digital communities and their contribution to identity studies and modern pragmatics. It contributes to current sociolinguistic research by documenting authentic bilingual discourse in youth media, a domain rarely analyzed in the Indonesian context. Moreover, the study's findings have pedagogical implications for language educators seeking to develop curricula that acknowledge and incorporate students' real-world language practices. It also opens opportunities for future research on how digital media reshape linguistic norms and identity performances in multilingual societies.

Method

This study is a descriptive qualitative research aimed at examining the phenomena of code-mixing and code-switching in youth podcast discourse. A qualitative approach was chosen because it aligns with the study's objective to explore the social meanings and linguistic strategies employed by speakers in a digital communication context. According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach allows researchers to explore language phenomena within their natural settings and to interpret meaning from language use in relation to social environments. The method employed is sociolinguistic discourse analysis, which focuses on the relationship between language, culture, identity, and power. Fairclough (1995) emphasizes that discourse analysis not only investigates linguistic structure but also reveals how language reflects and reproduces social ideologies and relations. In this study, code-mixing and code-switching are interpreted as sociopragmatic acts that carry communicative and identity-related meanings in youth discourse. The data source is a podcast episode titled *Perbandingan Antara Pacar dan Sahabat* ("Comparison Between Boyfriend and Best Friend"), uploaded to TikTok by the account *Unscripted by Darin & Taka*. The speakers, two young adults in their early twenties, a male and a female, represent urban Indonesian youth who engage in informal, bilingual interactions.

Although only two voices were analyzed, their dialogic interplay presents a microcosm of wider youth language practices, making their selection theoretically relevant, though limited in generalizability. The episode, lasting approximately 2 minutes and 54 seconds, was selected due to its spontaneous, bilingual nature and its relevance to contemporary youth interactions. Data were collected using observation and note-taking techniques, followed by complete transcription of the audio. The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, utterances containing code-mixing and code-switching were identified. Then, these utterances were classified based on Muysken's (2000) typology of code-mixing, which includes insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. To further explore the pragmatic dimensions of the code choices, Gumperz's (1982) conversational functions of code-switching, such as quotation, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization versus objectification—were employed. Additionally, the analysis incorporated García and Wei's (2014) translanguaging framework to understand the fluid negotiation of multiple linguistic resources as a means of identity construction. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring the public availability of the podcast content, anonymizing identifiable personal references in transcription, and adhering to digital content usage norms under fair use for academic research. The use of code-mixing and switching was not only viewed as linguistic behavior but also as strategic action shaped by the social position, communicative intention, and discursive creativity of the speakers. Through this integrated approach, the study reveals how bilingual discourse in podcasts functions as a medium for youth to express identity, align socially, and navigate multilingual realities in contemporary digital spaces.

Results and Discussion

Results

The data obtained from the youth podcast titled “Perbandingan Antara Pacar dan Sahabat” revealed various patterns of code-mixing and code-switching, which were classified based on linguistic form and pragmatic function. Drawing from Muysken's (2000) classification, code-mixing in this podcast discourse appeared predominantly in the form of intrasentential mixing, especially through lexical insertions, such as “aku tuh literally gak ngerti lagi” or “itu tuh kayak, you know, toxic banget.” These examples show a combination of Indonesian with English expressions embedded within a single clause. Intrasentential code-mixing was the most frequent type, appearing in approximately 68% of bilingual utterances, while alternation (e.g., “I mean... ya udah sih”) and congruent lexicalization were less common. Intersentential switching, which involves complete shifts between sentences, occurred in fewer instances (around 32%), typically to mark topic shifts or emphasize a statement.

The bilingual expressions observed in the podcast serve a range of communicative functions. Drawing on Gumperz's (1982) interactional framework, these functions include referential (providing clarification), expressive (conveying emotions), emphatic (reinforcing meaning), and stylistic (aligning with a certain identity or audience). For instance, a speaker might say, "Dia tuh bukan sekadar best friend, dia tuh my person," where the insertion of "my person" strengthens the emotional nuance of the utterance. Such stylistic switches also reflect the speakers' desire to index modernity or cosmopolitan identity, as theorized by Pennycook (2007) and García & Wei (2014). These code choices are strategic and culturally loaded, revealing how teenagers use hybrid language to negotiate meaning and identity in informal media spaces.

The findings are summarized in the table below, which highlights representative utterances, types of code-mixing or switching, their pragmatic function, and relevant notes:

Table 1. Examples of Code-Mixing and Code-Switching in Youth Podcast Discourse: Forms, Functions, and Interpretations

Sample Utterance	Type of Switching	Function	Note
"Aku tuh literally gak ngerti lagi."	Intrasentential mixing	Expressive	Combines Indonesian with an English adverb for emphasis.
"I mean... ya udah sih."	Inter-sentential switching	Emphatic	Marks hesitation and frames opinion.
"Dia bukan sekadar best friend, dia tuh my person."	Insertion	Referential	English phrase adds cultural depth.
"Tapi kalo dia ghosting, that's a red flag."	Intrasentential mixing	Stylistic	Reflects online and dating culture jargon.

These findings underscore the fluid linguistic repertoire of Indonesian youth in digital contexts, where bilingualism is not merely a product of formal education but of translocal cultural exposure and strategic identity work. The high frequency of intrasentential mixing signals speakers' ease in switching codes within a single turn,

while alternation and congruent lexicalization reflect more complex discursive maneuvers. Importantly, the bilingual practices observed are not random but socially motivated, revealing how digital youth draw from multilingual resources to navigate emotion, humor, stance, and belonging.

From an educational perspective, these patterns highlight the pedagogical value of engaging learners with authentic, contemporary bilingual discourse. As García and Wei (2014) argue, translanguaging in real-world contexts fosters metalinguistic awareness and sociopragmatic competence. By analyzing podcast discourse, students can critically reflect on how language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a tool for identity construction, social positioning, and cultural participation in multilingual settings.

Discussion

This phenomenon reinforces the view that language is not merely a tool for communication, but also a medium through which social experiences are conveyed (Fairclough, 1995). In this case, code-mixing may function not only as the insertion of foreign elements associated with modernity, but also as a symbolic resource where social and cultural identities can be negotiated. The use of English expressions suggests an attempt whether conscious or not, to relate local experiences to global discourses, a phenomenon referred to in cultural studies as linguistic glocalization (Robertson, 1995). Rather than presenting a clash between Indonesian and English, the speakers demonstrate a fluid integration of both in everyday interaction, consistent with what Canagarajah (2013) describes as the negotiation of voice in multilingual communication. Within the limited scope of this study, code-mixing also appears to contribute to the shaping of gender identity, especially among young women. These linguistic choices potentially create a discursive space that fosters emotional connection, group affiliation, and a sense of belonging. As suggested by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), such practices may represent acts of positioning, where speakers locate themselves within social structures through language. In this sense, the code-mixing observed in the podcast might reflect and reinforce relational intimacy and shared values within a gendered peer group. The way the conversation unfolds also offers a space that frames female social interaction as emotionally supportive and authentic, while indirectly commenting on the prioritization of romantic relationships in youth culture. This aligns with previous studies on gendered discourse in digital communication (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013; Page, 2012).

Another possible function of code-mixing in this context is its use as a form of reflection or "social therapy." Teenagers narrate emotional experiences such as heartbreak, and emphasize friendship as a vital support system. The use of multiple language codes makes their expressions appear more emotionally resonant and

relatable. In this way, language becomes not only a vehicle for information but also a medium of affective communication. This resonates with Androutsopoulos (2006), who notes how online discourse serves affective and relational functions in youth interaction.

These observations suggest that code-mixing and code-switching in digital youth discourse, such as that found in TikTok podcasts, may offer insights for language learning in the digital age. Such practices illustrate how learners access and deploy multilingual resources to navigate social interaction, emotion, and identity. Teachers might consider using authentic digital media, including podcasts, to raise learners' awareness of real-life code-switching strategies and their pragmatic purposes. Engaging students in the analysis of such naturally occurring language events may encourage reflection on how language use is shaped by social context and speaker intent (Wei, 2011), while also fostering digital and intercultural literacies (Pegrum, 2014).

The use of code-mixing in social media settings also reflects the evolving, situated, and time-sensitive nature of language. By analyzing real examples such as podcast transcripts, learners can be encouraged to identify different types of code-mixing (e.g., insertion, alternation, congruent lexicalization; Muysken, 2000) and switching (Gumperz, 1982), while also examining the communicative intentions behind them, be it emphasis, clarification, emotional connection, or topic transition. This promotes an understanding of language as a resource for meaning-making and identity expression. As Tagg (2015) notes, digital discourse often reflects identity work that draws heavily on hybrid linguistic forms.

Moreover, instruction that incorporates code-mixing analysis has the potential to enhance students' media literacy. In today's digitally mediated environments, young people are exposed to a range of symbolic and sociolinguistic forms. Educators are therefore encouraged to guide students not only in understanding normative language conventions, but also in developing a critical awareness of how language operates in everyday digital spaces, including through translanguaging practices (García & Wei, 2014). This is consistent with the view of digital translanguaging as a space for youth linguistic agency (Li, 2018).

Some of the expressions found in the podcast, such as girl code, future husband, or references to Valentine's Day, dress up, and coffee hangouts, may carry cultural and gendered meanings. While seemingly ordinary, such phrases can signal identity alignment and social solidarity within young female circles. These examples illustrate how language performs gender (Butler, 1990) and may serve as meaningful material for sociocultural reflection in language education. Classroom discussions that draw on such expressions can support students in recognizing how identity is constructed through language, while promoting awareness and tolerance of diverse linguistic practices. In this respect, Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003) have shown how discourse in female

communities of practice often employs affective and supportive linguistic patterns, especially in informal contexts.

Furthermore, this phenomenon can support the development of integrated language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) through project-based approaches (Thomas, 2020; Rofik, 2023). Students might be asked to retell podcast stories in reflective writing, produce their own episodes incorporating code choices, or analyze the ethical and cultural messages within the discourse. These tasks foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking, key competencies in 21st-century education. These instructional directions are in line with the principles of multiliteracies pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Gultom, 2024), which emphasizes meaning-making across modes and contexts.

In this way, introducing code-mixing and code-switching as learning content (Siregar et al., 2014; Setyaningsih & Wulansari, 2020; Jannah & Anggraini, 2023; Kelutur et al., 2023; Sulistiyowati & Fathurohman, 2024) may help bridge classroom learning with students' lived linguistic realities. It can also enrich language instruction with reflective and socially responsive elements. Teachers play a central role in facilitating this shift by recognizing youth language practices and turning them into pedagogical opportunities. While the data analyzed in this study are limited to a single podcast episode, the findings provide preliminary insight into how bilingual practices may function in informal, digital youth discourse. The observed code-mixing appears to carry not only linguistic but also pragmatic and sociocultural dimensions. This supports a view of bilingualism not only as a matter of language proficiency, but also as social practice (Wei, 2011), where code selection is shaped by the need to communicate and express identity across linguistic boundaries.

Nevertheless, the study's scope remains limited. Relying on a single, popular podcast may not fully represent the broader spectrum of youth discourse across platforms and demographics. Future research could explore a wider range of digital formats and involve diverse social or regional groups. Additionally, combining discourse analysis with interviews or ethnographic approaches may yield a more comprehensive understanding of speakers' motivations for code-mixing.

Conclusion

This study confirms that the dominant forms of code-mixing and code-switching found in the analyzed youth TikTok podcast appear at the phrase and sentence levels, functioning not only to emphasize meaning and express emotion, but also to construct social and gender identities, interpret popular culture, shift registers, and showcase linguistic creativity. These bilingual practices reflect urban Indonesian youths' adaptive and reflective engagement with the social, cultural, and digital dimensions of their lives, rather than being mere byproducts of globalization. Sociolinguistically, these findings

enrich our understanding of how language, identity, and symbolic power interact in contemporary digital discourse. Pedagogically, the study contributes to language education by highlighting the value of authentic, naturally occurring bilingual data in developing integrated literacy skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing through meaningful tasks such as podcast production, ethical discourse analysis, and identity-focused reflective writing. This underscores the need for a more contextualized and socially responsive language learning approach. By incorporating translanguaging practices into curriculum design, educators can foster learners' pragmatic awareness and intercultural competence, enabling them to navigate communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries more effectively. However, this study is limited by the scope and size of its dataset, which focused on a specific podcast context and involved only two speakers. Consequently, while the findings provide valuable insights, they may not be fully generalizable to other digital genres or broader youth communities. Future research should expand the participant pool and explore additional platforms to deepen understanding of bilingual practices in diverse sociolinguistic settings.

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Authors' Note

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