Bilingual Identity Construction through Social Media: A Study of English Influenced Code Mixing

Abdul Rahman [1*], Gunawan [2], Dian Riani Said [3], Mardi [4]

[1, 4] Universitas Cahaya Prima, Indonesia,
[2, 3] Universitas Muhammadiyah Bone, Indonesia

* rahman.uncapibone87@gmail.com

Abstract

Code-mixing on social media is a complex phenomenon that is not merely caused by limited proficiency in Indonesian or English but is also influenced by various social and psychological factors. In today's digital and globalized era, understanding how code-mixing contributes to the construction of bilingual identity is crucial, especially given the increasing cross-language interactions on online platforms. Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of English-influenced code-mixing in shaping the bilingual identity of social media users. This research employs a qualitative approach with a single embedded case study design conducted at Universitas Cahaya Prima Bone. The participants consisted of 15 second-semester students selected through purposive sampling and 3 English lecturers or linguists knowledgeable about bilingualism and digital communication. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using data reduction, presentation, conclusion drawing, and triangulation to ensure validity. The findings reveal that code-mixing practices on social media reflect complex socio-cultural dynamics and function as an effective communication strategy as well as a means of constructing bilingual identity in the digital era. Code-mixing also enhances expressive abilities and supports informal English learning and vocabulary development. However, uncontrolled use of code-mixing in formal academic contexts may cause issues related to grammatical accuracy and language consistency. This study offers practical contributions to language education development and identity studies in the digital age by emphasizing the importance of approaches that integrate linguistic understanding and identity construction within online communication environments.

Keywords: *Code-Mixing; Bilingual Identity; Social Media; Sociolinguistic*

Introduction

Social media has become a primary communication tool for the younger generation in today's rapidly advancing digital era. The notable linguistic phenomenon that has emerged in online interactions is code-mixing, particularly the blending of Indonesian and English (Syafaat et al., 2019). Based to a recent survey conducted by We Are Social (2024), over 78% of internet users in Indonesia actively engage with social media, and approximately 65% of them frequently use mixed language forms in digital communication, especially on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and TikTok (Rojas, 2025). This widespread practice indicates that code-mixing is not merely a fleeting trend but has become an integral feature of the digital communication style of Indonesian youth (Tabe, 2023).

The phenomenon of code-mixing does not solely arise from a lack of fluency or mastery in either Indonesian or English. Instead, it is largely driven by a range of social and

psychological factors, including the desire to assert personal or group identity, the need for expressive freedom, and the urge to adapt to the fast-paced social changes that characterize digital life (Tarihoran et al., 2022). The choice to blend languages reflects a conscious decision to communicate more dynamically and to resonate more effectively with diverse online audiences.

On social media, individuals often employ code-mixing as a means of constructing and projecting specific self-images. These images may align with membership in a particular community, demonstrate cultural sophistication, or reflect modern and globalized lifestyles (Muniati et al., 2022). This practice is closely related to the concept of bilingual identity, which refers to the way individuals use two or more languages to express different facets of themselves. Unlike traditional notions of stable linguistic identity, bilingual identity in digital spaces is fluid and adaptive.

Based a sociolinguistic perspective, code-mixing is not merely a matter of language proficiency; it also serves as a reflection of individual identity within digital spaces. Many individuals use English in online communication as a means of signaling intelligence, modernity, or even a certain level of social prestige (Hall & Nilep, 2015). The strategic use of English words or phrases alongside Indonesian acts as a marker of cosmopolitanism or affiliation with global youth culture. However, this phenomenon is not without criticism. Concerns have been raised about the potential negative impact of code-mixing on the preservation of the Indonesian language (Poeste et al., 2019). Critics argue that the excessive use of foreign language elements may erode national linguistic identity and reflect a diminishing sense of nationalism (Syafaat et al., 2019). This ongoing controversy raises a critical question: does code-mixing pose a threat to the vitality of the Indonesian language, or does it instead enrich the bilingual competence and linguistic creativity of the younger generation?.

Studies on code-mixing have been conducted across various communication contexts, offering valuable insights into its structural and functional dimensions. TheTypology of Code-Mixing, code-mixing can be classified into three main types: insertional, alternational, and congruent lexicalization. These classifications focus primarily on the linguistic structures of code-mixing, often without exploring the deeper sociocultural or identity-related motivations behind language choices in social media settings.

Recent research, however, has begun to explore the broader implications of code-mixing in digital communication. The found that exposure to code-mixing on social media platforms may facilitate English language acquisition among Indonesian teenagers, making it a potentially valuable informal learning resource. On the other hand, the widespread and casual use of code-mixing has also led to concerns about the simplification of Indonesian grammar and syntax, particularly in informal or conversational settings. Meanwhile, the research observed that many social media users adopt the language styles of celebrities and influencers, leading to the normalization and popularization of code-mixing as a mainstream form of expression in digital interactions (Nuraeni et al, 2018).

These findings underscore the significant influence of cultural and social factors in shaping the practice of code-mixing on social media. Despite the growing body of research, there remains a notable gap in understanding how individuals construct their bilingual identities through code-mixing, particularly within the unique sociocultural and linguistic context of Indonesia (Wibowo & Hamidah, 2023). While much attention has been given to structural patterns and educational implications, fewer studies have examined the

psychological and identity-related dimensions of code-mixing among digital-native Indonesians.

The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating how social media users in Indonesia employ code-mixing as a strategy to construct and express their bilingual identities. It aims to explore the underlying social and psychological factors that influence this linguistic practice, including notions of identity negotiation, community affiliation, and self-representation in the digital realm. By focusing on these dimensions, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of code-mixing as not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a socio-psychological tool for navigating the complexities of identity in a globalized, digital age.

This research offers a new perspective by integrating sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic approaches to analyze code mixing not only as a linguistic phenomenon, but also as a dynamic identity construction strategy in digital spaces. Unlike previous research on linguistic or pedagogical influence, the studies in this paper explore how younger generations of the Indonesian nation subjectify code mixing either as a means of reinforcing hybrid identity(ies), entering some sort of special community, or even rejecting stereotypes of nationalistic reductionism. Findings of this study will enrich bilingual identity theory with a unique context of Indonesia where language reflects not only multilingual competence but also negotiation of tradition and modernity (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

The main contribution of this research is to provide insight into the academic world in the sociolinguistics aspect, digital communication, and bilingualism as well as to provide understanding for language practitioners and educators regarding the dynamics of language use in the digital era. In addition, it is hoped that the results of this research can help in designing language policies that are more adaptive to communication developments in the era of globalization. By understanding how code-mixing plays a role in bilingual identities on social media, this research can provide a new perspective on the relationship between language, identity, and communication in the increasingly digital era.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with single case embedded study design (Sugiyono, 2016). This approach was chosen to understand how code-mixing individuals shape their bilingual identities on social media and the social and psychological factors at play. The research took place at Universitas Cahaya Prima Bone. It involved 15 students in the second semester from two classes selected by purposive sampling, 3 English lecturers or linguists who understand the phenomenon of bilingualism and digital communication. Data collection in this study used semi-structured interviews to explore the reasons and perspectives of informants about the application of code-mixing in the formation of bilingual identity.

The researcher acts as the main instrument (human instrument). The researcher is directly responsible for designing interview instruments, establishing communication with informants, conducting participatory observations of language behavior on social media, interpreting data thoroughly and conducting data validation processes through triangulation, maintaining objectivity in data collection, and ensuring that any information collected has relevance to the research focus. The direct involvement of the researcher enables a more contextualized and reflective understanding of the social meanings contained in code-mixing practices.

This study employed a triangulated approach to data collection by utilizing three complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights into the informants' personal perspectives, motivations, and lived experiences regarding their use of code-switching on social media platforms. The interview guide comprised open-ended questions, allowing for flexibility in responses while maintaining consistency across sessions. All interviews were recorded, with prior consent from the participants and subsequently transcribed verbatim to facilitate comprehensive thematic analysis. In addition to interviews, the researcher engaged in participatory observation, which involved monitoring the informants' social media activities over a specified period, again with informed consent. This method allowed for direct observation of real-time language use, capturing how code-switching is employed in everyday digital interactions. The observation focused on elements such as lexical choices, situational context, tone, and the sociolinguistic functions of mixed-language expressions. Special attention was paid to how these linguistic features contribute to identity construction and community belonging in online spaces.

Document analysis was conducted to collect and examine various digital artifacts, including screenshots of posts, captions, comment threads, hashtags, and direct messages that featured code-switching. These textual materials were curated systematically to identify recurring patterns, frequency of language mixing, and contextual relevance. The collected documents provided rich empirical data that supported the analysis of both linguistic structures and the socio-psychological dimensions of code-switching behavior. By integrating these three methods, the study ensured methodological rigor and data triangulation, enabling a holistic understanding of how code-switching operates not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a complex social practice in the digital environment. This comprehensive approach allowed the researcher to cross-validate findings and draw meaningful connections between language behavior, identity performance, and digital interaction patterns among Indonesian social media users.

The data analysis in this study followed the Miles and Huberman (1994) model, which consists of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This analytical framework was chosen for its systematic yet flexible approach to handling qualitative data, particularly in studies involving complex sociolinguistic phenomena such as code-mixing. In the first stage, data reduction involved the careful selection, simplification, and organization of raw data obtained from semi-structured interviews, participatory observations, and document studies. The researchers filtered and coded the data to focus on relevant themes, including language choices, contexts of code-mixing, and expressions of identity in digital interactions. Redundant or unrelated information was set aside to ensure analytical clarity and depth. This process allowed the researchers to distill large volumes of data into manageable and meaningful categories aligned with the research questions.

The second stage, data display, involved presenting the reduced data in a coherent and descriptive narrative format. Themes and subthemes were structured to highlight patterns and recurring linguistic behaviors related to code-mixing, such as the frequency of language switching, the social functions of mixed-language expressions, and the psychological motivations behind them. Supporting quotes and examples from the interview transcripts, observational notes, and digital content were integrated to provide contextual richness and enhance interpretative validity. The final stage focused on drawing conclusions and verifying the findings. The researchers interpreted the data using the theoretical lenses of bilingualism

and social identity, aiming to understand how individuals construct and negotiate their bilingual identities through code-mixing on social media. The conclusions were not drawn in isolation; instead, they were continuously revisited and refined through a process of data triangulation, cross referencing insights from interviews, observations, and document analysis to ensure their credibility and consistency. This validation process enhanced the reliability of the study and strengthened the theoretical contributions made regarding the dynamic interplay between language use, identity, and digital communication practices.

Results

Based this research, there were two main components who became informants, namely fifteen students and three academics who taught English at private campuses in Bone Regency. The results of this interview were analyzed in depth and will be divided into 4 main indicators. Each indicator is equipped with direct quotes from interviews with respondents and explained with interpretations that indicate that there is meaning to their feedback.

The Use of Code-Mixing in Social Media

The results of interviews with several informants indicate that students use code-mixing between Indonesian and English in communicating on social media, especially in giving captions and comments when conveying expressions and other things that are humor, discussion, and motivation. This is what they do when communicating online through WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. Some students revealed that they more often use code-mixing when updating status, when creating live content and writing captions or stories, and when chatting with their peers. There are also some students who rarely and sometimes use code-mixing in communication on social media.

Tabel 1. *Interview results The Use of Code-Mixing in Social Media*

Subject	Interview results
S1	"I often use code-mixing in online communication to update my status and stories".
S3	"When I create video or live content, I often use code-mixing to convey messages or information"
S7	"I often use code-mixing when discussing assignments and status updates".
S10	"I rarely use code-mixing in online communication. I prefer to use Indonesian only".
S13	"I only use code-mixing in online communication when I post stories, but I don't use it for other things".

Based on Table 1 regarding *The Use of Code-Mixing in Social Media*, it can be concluded that there is variation in the frequency and context of code-mixing use among the informants. Most subjects, such as S1, S3, and S7, tend to actively use code-mixing in various social media activities, such as updating their status, creating video or live content, and discussing assignments. Meanwhile, other subjects like S10 and S13 show a lower frequency of use; S10 prefers to consistently use Indonesian, while S13 only uses code-mixing in specific contexts such as when posting stories. This variation indicates that the use of code-mixing is situational and influenced by individual preferences as well as the context of communication on social media.

Motivation and Social Factors in the Use of Code-Mixing

Many responses stated that when students communicate online using code-mixing, they can be comfortable and influence social factors, and it is more modern and expressive.

Tabel 2. *Interview results Motivation and Social Factors in the Use of Code-Mixing*

Subject	Interview results
S2	"Communicating online using code-mixing makes me feel comfortable and can follow trends in language."
S5	"Code-mixing makes it easier for me to learn English and influences habits because it directly impacts social environmental factors. Especially when receiving lecture material that uses many terms in English."
S9	"Communication using code-mixing can challenge me and increase my followers on social media. What's more, apart from my status as a student, I am also a content creator, so I think code-mixing is more fun and less rigid."
S12	"When communicating online using code-mixing, it can provoke reactions from friends to participate in developing creativity in language, especially Indonesian to English."

Based on Table 2, which presents interview results on motivation and social factors in the use of code-mixing, it can be observed that students perceive code-mixing as a comfortable and modern way to communicate online. Informants highlight several motivating factors, including the ability to keep up with language trends (S2), the facilitation of English learning and influence from their social environment (S5), as well as the role of code-mixing in enhancing social media engagement and creativity (S9). Additionally, code-mixing is seen as a way to encourage peer interaction and language creativity, especially between Indonesian and English (S12). Overall, these responses demonstrate that social and motivational factors play a significant role in the choice to use code-mixing in digital communication.

Bilingual Identity and Self Representation

Code-mixing has developed into a crucial instrument that can build bilingual identity and function as a medium for personal representation in the digital realm. Most respondents said that:

Tabel 3. *Interview results Bilingual Identity and Self Representation*

Subject	Interview results
S4	"I feel combining two languages in online communication is essential in forming personal and linguistic identity. I am able to adapt according to the global environment."
S8	"The application of code-mixing personally reflects my identity as a language user. In the digital space, I play the role of mediator and adapt language according to communication demands. This communication pattern helps build my self-confidence."
S15	"I think the current generation needs to keep up with global developments, especially code-mixing in communication. Linguistic skills are really needed to adapt to current developments. This communication pattern also becomes a social glue that has become accustomed to code-mixing. The advantage lies in the flexibility of language that allows for richer and more contextual self-expression."

Based on Table 3, which presents interview results on bilingual identity and self-representation, it is evident that code-mixing plays a significant role in shaping the personal and linguistic identities of the respondents in the digital environment. Informants expressed that combining two languages helps them adapt to the global context (S4) and reflects their role as language users who mediate and adjust language use based on communication needs, which in turn boosts their self-confidence (S8). Additionally, code-mixing is viewed as an essential skill for the current generation to keep pace with global developments, serving as a social connector and enabling richer, more contextual self-expression through linguistic flexibility (S15). Overall, these responses highlight code-mixing as a vital tool for bilingual identity formation and authentic self-representation online.

Psychological Factors in the Use of Code-Mixing

Based on the analysis of the interviews above, it is revealed that code-mixing is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also reflects complex psychological dynamics. From an emotional perspective, the respondents stated that code-mixing creates a sense of comfort and freedom in expression, even strengthening their identity as a multicultural generation.

Tabel 4. *Interview results Psychological Factors in the Use of Code-Mixing*

Subject	Interview results
S6	"I feel that psychologically using code-mixing in communicating on social media makes me enjoy it and feel expressive and more natural. Not only that but using code-mixing can also increase my vocabulary in English."
S11	"In my mind, code-mixing in communication is more efficient. Because I feel more comfortable code-mixing in communicating because foreign words are simpler to use."
S14	"I feel more comfortable and have a certain satisfaction when communicating using code-mixing, and it can help improve my vocabulary in English contextually."

Besides the emotional aspect, code-mixing can also affect the cognitive side because it can efficiently improve communication, especially in linguistic development and social dynamics. On the other hand, researchers have also interviewed several academics who teach English at several private campuses in Bone Regency, namely:

Tabel 5. *Interview results Psychological Factors in the Use of Code-Mixing*

Subject	Interview results
AK 1	"as a communication strategy that serves to shape bilingual identity, conform to online community norms, and represent affiliation to global popular culture. While increasing exposure to foreign languages, the practice also poses challenges in terms of grammatical accuracy and balanced language competence."
AK 2	"Bilingual identity in the context of today's digital society is dynamic, flexible, and often manifests differently in online communication on social media. It involves the ability to use and navigate multiple languages in a digital environment, construct multilingual online identities, interact with diverse communities, and express oneself through unique linguistic practices.
AK 3	"I consider that linguistic practices on social media through code-mixing are influenced by globalization, popular culture, and the desire to express oneself flexibly. Code-mixing is a way to show cultural relationships and build an online persona. Although this enriches linguistic development, its impact on language skills in understanding the first and second languages needs to be taken into account, especially in the scope of learning in Indonesia."

Based on Table 5, which presents interview results on psychological factors in the use of code-mixing, the respondents highlight several key aspects. They view code-mixing as a communication strategy that helps shape bilingual identity, align with online community norms, and express affiliation with global popular culture, while also recognizing challenges related to grammatical accuracy and balanced language proficiency (AK 1). The dynamic and flexible nature of bilingual identity in the digital era is emphasized, involving the ability to navigate multiple languages, construct multilingual online personas, and engage with diverse communities through unique linguistic practices (AK 2). Additionally, code-mixing is seen as influenced by globalization and popular culture, serving as a means of cultural expression and online identity building. However, concerns are raised about its potential impact on proficiency in both the first and second languages, particularly within the context of education in Indonesia (AK 3). Overall, these insights reveal the complex psychological dimensions underpinning code-mixing in social media communication.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the use of code-mixing by university students on social media is not just a linguistic phenomenon, but also reflects social dynamics, bilingual identity, and psychological motivations in the digital world. This phenomenon is now important in online interactions because of its role in identity expression and adaptation to globalization. Some respondents explicitly recognized that using code-mixing during online interactions helps them express themselves more clearly, strengthen social bonds, and convey messages in a more understandable and expressive way, especially in contexts such as entertainment content, inspirational captions, or in-depth conversations. This finding is in line with research that code-mixing combinations on Instagram are used to enhance interaction with audiences, emphasize messages, and express identity (Zebua et al., 2025).

The research found that Generation Z in Indonesia uses code-mixing as a communication strategy due to advances in information and communication technology and demands to adapt to global trends (Purba et al., 2018). Social environmental conditions and a person's psychological state also play a role in encouraging the use of mixed language codes or code-mixing (Auliasari et al., 2024). In terms of learning English informally, students feel more comfortable and expressive when using mixed languages (Rohmani & Setiawan, 2021). Incorporating code-mixing in interactions inside and outside the classroom can increase students' desire to learn EFL because the material becomes easier to understand and can increase their vocabulary (Adisaturrahimi et al., 2024).

Based a identity perspective, language mixing or code-mixing helps the formation of a flexible and responsive bilingual identity. Code-mixing reflects not only linguistic duality but also acts as a medium for self-representation and affiliation with global digital communities. The social context, level of bilingualism, and dynamics of user interaction were demonstrated by the use of code-mixing (Rahman & Muttaqin, 2024). A person's speech describes their identity with their social and cultural context (Nazri & Kassim, 2023). However, the code-mixing phenomenon also raises problems, especially in formal academic environments.

Some academics argue that although combining languages (Indonesian and English) can improve communication skills, the uncontrolled use of code-mixing can give rise to problems related to grammatical accuracy and language balance. Therefore, the suggests an integrated and adaptive language learning approach to respond to changes in language skills in the digital world (Canagarajah, 2018).

Code-mixing is an effective communication strategy for constructing an online persona and expressing affiliation with global culture. By code-mixing, people tend to portray themselves as contemporary, welcoming, and accepting of international perspectives in online forums. It contributes, albeit indirectly, to the overall perception of professionalism, creativity, and even flexibility regarding the cross-cultural interactions of the audience.

This phenomenon can help the students improve their English language skills and other languages because it alters and exposes people to new ways of communicating. Social media users, especially younger generations, become more familiar with English vocabulary and structures through daily context-driven interactions. While code-mixing has advantages, it also creates issues such as linguistic correctness and adherence to formal language usage standards. Frequent shifts between Indonesian and English may cause linguistic contamination, which degrades the quality of the language in use and creates ambiguity in

more closely defined contexts in terms of clarity concerning meanings, implementation, technical definitions, precision, and arrangements.

The connections between this study and the previous studies show significant development regarding understanding code-mixing and its impact on constructing a bilingual identity and as a means of communication in the modern world. The findings that students perceive themselves as more expressive and that it is easier to convey messages support the claim that code-switching aids informal English learning. Also, the results support the idea that despite the advantages of code-mixing, its application should be regulated by constructive pedagogical principles to avoid the erosion of standards, especially academic language.

This study confirms that code-mixing plays a role in bilingual identities on social media and provides a new perspective on the relationship among language, identity, and communication in the increasingly developing digital era. While code-mixing allows for individual self-expression and aids in informal language learning, its use in an academic context requires balancing it with a more systematic language approach to ensure the effectiveness and precision of language use.

Conclusion

The era of technological development and globalization, code-mixing is not merely a linguistic choice but a communication strategy that adapts to the dynamics of the rapidly changing digital space. This study confirms that code-mixing has functional value in conveying meaning more expressively and relevantly within the context of social media. Furthermore, this phenomenon holds potential for informal English learning, particularly in creating a more natural learning atmosphere and supporting students' vocabulary development. However, uncontrolled use of mixed language in formal academic contexts can lead to problems, especially concerning the accuracy and consistency of language structure. Therefore, these findings can serve as a basis for developing digital media-based learning approaches that align with students' language needs. Mixed-language digital content, such as social media posts, short videos, and online interaction-based content, can be effective learning strategies relevant to students' daily lives.

This research also broadens understanding of shifts in communication styles in the digital era and highlights the importance of recognizing linguistic diversity in education and public communication. Nevertheless, this study has limitations, including a relatively small sample and self-reported data, which may be subject to personal bias and may not fully capture the richness of code-mixing practices online. Further longitudinal studies with larger and more diverse samples are needed to deepen understanding of the role of code-mixing in shaping linguistic identities within varied social and cultural contexts. As a complex phenomenon reflecting modernity and diverse language identities, code-mixing must be managed critically especially in education to balance the flexibility of digital communication with the precision of academic language. This study emphasizes the need for a multidisciplinary approach to understanding the relationship between language, identity, and technology in the era of globalization.

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