

Code-Switching in Indonesian Youtube Vloggers: A Sociolinguistic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The development of digital platforms has significantly transformed linguistic practices, particularly through the phenomenon of code-switching among content creators. This study aims to analyze the patterns, reasons, and functions of language use in the vlogs of Boy William, Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, this research is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Poplack (1980), Grosjean (1982), and Holmes (2013). The findings reveal a total of 144 instances of code-switching, with the inter-sentential type emerging as the most dominant pattern. The analysis indicates that code-switching functions as a systematic communication strategy that facilitates lexical efficiency and enhances emotional expression. Furthermore, the practice operates as symbolic capital for vloggers, enabling them to construct a distinctive digital identity while simultaneously negotiating their social position and hybrid identity within a complex global digital space. Thus, code-switching is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a strategic tool in online interaction and self-presentation.

Keywords: code-switching; sociolinguistics; YouTube communication

INTRODUCTION

In this section, the author reviews the background of research related to the phenomenon of code-switching in a sociolinguistic context, covering the background of the study, reasons for choosing the topic, research questions, objectives, significance, limitations, and organization of the thesis. Language is a fundamental mechanism for expressing social identities, including gender and emotional states (Saddhono, 2012; Wiraman & Shauna, 2021). Although widely recognized as essential for human thought, there remains limited understanding of how language functions adapt within fast-paced and performative digital media contexts. Traditional studies often interpret code-switching as a grammatical necessity or vocabulary limitation and focus mainly on formal education or everyday interactions, leaving a gap in understanding its role as a deliberate strategy for identity construction and digital branding in YouTube vlogs. In the Indonesian context, this gap is evident in the limited exploration of code-switching as ‘symbolic capital’ for constructing modern bilingual identities, which this study addresses by focusing on the strategic negotiation of hybrid identities in digital spaces.

The rise of social media, particularly YouTube (Heda & Ouda, 2021), has transformed communication practices, enabling users to share diverse content such as vlogs, which are thematic, journalistic-style videos published online. Indonesian vloggers frequently employ code-switching between Indonesian and English to expand audience reach and project a modern, educated image, making language not only a communication tool but also a strategy for identity formation. This study focuses on Boy William, Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati due to their consistent use of code-switching, aiming to analyze its types, patterns, and sociolinguistic motivations, and to enhance understanding of bilingual communication and digital identity. The topic is chosen based on frequent observations of code-switching across platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, reflecting modern communication patterns influenced by globalization and digital media, as well as curiosity about its social meanings beyond habitual use (Nugroho & Seinsani, 2025).

This study addresses three questions: the types of code-switching used, the sociolinguistic factors influencing its use, and its role in shaping self-image and interaction. Accordingly, the objectives are to identify types, analyze influencing factors, and explain its role in identity construction. The study provides theoretical contributions to sociolinguistics by enriching understanding of code-switching in digital communication, and practical benefits by offering references and analytical frameworks for future research. However, it is limited to Indonesian-English code-switching in selected YouTube videos, focusing on linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects without interviews or statistical analysis, which restricts generalizability. Finally, the thesis is organized into five chapters covering introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusions with recommendations for future research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter explains the systematic research procedure, including the research approach and design, procedures, data resources, methods of data collection, validation, and data analysis. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to describe the phenomenon of code-switching on YouTube vlogs naturally without manipulating variables. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an investigative process that builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports informants' views in detail, and is conducted in a natural setting, while Moleong (2002) states that it produces descriptive data in written or oral form about observed human behavior. Thus, qualitative research aims to gain in-depth

and comprehensive insights into real-world phenomena through detailed observation without manipulation, ensuring results reflect reality in a contextual manner. The research procedure was conducted systematically through several steps: selecting three prominent Indonesian vloggers, Boy William, Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati using purposive sampling based on high engagement and consistent bilingual discourse; collecting data through non-participant observation by accessing and downloading selected YouTube videos; transcribing verbal interactions along with contextual elements; identifying and classifying instances of code-switching based on Poplack's (1980) framework (inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching); analyzing communicative functions using Holmes' (2013) theory; and interpreting underlying motivations using Grosjean's (1982) theory to understand how and why code-switching occurs.

The primary data consist of oral speech containing English-Indonesian code-switching found on YouTube videos from the selected vloggers, chosen because they consistently integrate bilingual communication and represent the Indonesian digital sociolinguistic landscape. Data were collected through non-participant observation by downloading videos and transcribing them into text, with repeated viewing to ensure accuracy and note-taking to capture linguistic features and contextual details. Data validation was conducted through methodological triangulation by re-checking transcripts against the original videos and theoretical triangulation using Poplack (1980), Grosjean (1982), and Holmes (2013) to ensure objective interpretation. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative descriptive techniques by reducing relevant data, classifying types of code-switching, and linking findings to functions and motivations to interpret communication patterns within the context of digital sociolinguistics on YouTube.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the research findings and provides a detailed discussion of the data analysis based on the research questions and relevant theories applied in this study. It also highlights the importance of the results in relation to previous research and existing theoretical frameworks.

Overview of the Data

This section provides an overview of the analyzed data collected from YouTube videos of three Indonesian vloggers, namely Boy William, Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati. The analysis focuses on instances of code-switching found in their speech throughout the videos. To illustrate the scope of the findings, the total number of code-switching occurrences identified in each video is presented in a table. This overview demonstrates the distribution and frequency of code-switching before proceeding to a more detailed analysis in the subsequent sections. These figures serve as a preliminary mapping of the data, enabling a deeper qualitative interpretation of the social meanings and communicative intentions underlying each code-switching instance.

Overview of the Data

Table.1 presents the frequency distribution of code-switching types found in the vlogs of Boy William, Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati, with a total of 144 instances identified.

| Vloggers | Inter-sentential | Intra-sentential | Tag Switching | Total |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|------------|
| Boy William | 15 | 14 | 27 | 56 |
| Sasha Marissa | 19 | 25 | 21 | 65 |
| Fathia Izzati | 12 | 5 | 6 | 25 |
| Total | 46 | 44 | 54 | 144 |

Based on Table.1, all types of code-switching according to Poplack (1980) were identified. Tag switching is the most dominant type (54 instances), indicating frequent use of short English fillers to maintain interaction with the audience. This is followed by inter-sentential switching (46 data), showing a tendency to switch languages between sentences for clarification or emphasis, and intra-sentential switching (44 instances), reflecting integration of English and Indonesian within a sentence for lexical efficiency. Sasha Marissa shows the highest frequency of code-switching, followed by Boy William and Fathia Izzati, indicating differences in communication styles. Code-switching appears in all videos, confirming bilingualism as a common practice among vloggers, although frequency varies due to factors such as content, audience, and communication style. Higher frequency reflects a more dynamic and informal style, while lower frequency indicates more selective use for specific communicative purposes.

Research Findings

Types of Code-Switching

This section presents findings on code-switching in the vlogs of Boy William, Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati using Poplack (1980), Grosjean, and Holmes frameworks. The results show three main types: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. Inter-sentential switching is the most dominant, where speakers alternate languages between sentences to emphasize meaning or shift topics. For example, Boy William states, “Itulah orang sukses harus turun ke lapangan. You can’t just let people do something for you,” where the English sentence emphasizes assertiveness and delivers a strong motivational message. This type is often used to highlight key ideas and build connection with a bilingual audience.

Tag-switching appears as short English expressions such as “ok guys,” “literally,” or “I mean,” commonly used by Fathia Izzati to maintain interaction and conversational tone, especially in personal narratives. Overall, these patterns demonstrate that code-switching functions not only as a linguistic feature but also as a strategic tool for communication, emphasis, and audience engagement in digital contexts.

Recapitulation of Code-Switching Types across Three Vloggers

The following table presents examples of code-switching types used by Boy William (with Cinta Laura), Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati:

Table.2 Recapitulation of Code-Switching Types across Three Vloggers

| Type of Code-Switching | Boy William (X Cinta Laura) | Sasha Marissa | Fathia Izzati |
|-------------------------|--|---|--|
| Inter-Sentential | “Kamu apa kabar? what’s going on with you?”; “Itulah orang sukses harus turun ke lapangan. you can’t just let people do things for you.” | “Gue akan membuat video... I’m sorry, okay?”; “Do some activity... you know what I mean?” | “Yeah, enak... Why are you laughing?”; “Everybody has their own timeline...” |
| Intra-Sentential | “Walaupun aku punya team i still like...” | “Body language lo... welcoming people...” | “which I kind of like...”; “in a way... it’s a freaking pandemi” |
| Tag Switching | “Yeah!”, “Btw!”, “Oh my god!” | “Right?”, “I mean”, “Anyway!” | “Guys!”, “You know?”, “Mind you!” |

Based on Table.2, the distribution of code-switching shows distinct patterns. Inter-sentential switching is often used by Boy William and Fathia Izzati to emphasize ideas or convey authority, such as in motivational or reflective statements. Intra-sentential switching appears dominantly across all vloggers, indicating deep integration of English into their cognitive and linguistic systems for lexical efficiency. Tag-switching functions as conversational markers, with Sasha Marissa using it frequently to create a casual and interactive persona, while Boy William and Fathia Izzati use it for navigation and emotional nuance. These differences reflect each vlogger's communication style: Boy William emphasizes professionalism and prestige, Fathia Izzati highlights emotional reflection, and Sasha Marissa focuses on educational and interactive communication. This supports Poplack (1980) that complex code-switching indicates high bilingual competence.

Sociolinguistic Factors Influencing Code-Switching

The analysis of Boy William, Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati shows that code-switching is influenced by several sociolinguistic factors based on Grosjean (1982). First, lexical gaps encourage the use of English for modern or technical terms such as “ratchet stuff,” “rose petals,” and “retouch,” demonstrating cognitive efficiency and reliance on English as a functional language. Second, code-switching is used for quoting others to maintain authenticity, as seen in phrases like “You’re not that girl” or audience comments quoted by Fathia Izzati, which strengthens narrative credibility. Third, it serves to provide clarification or qualification, ensuring messages are clearly understood, for example through expressions like “really?” or “which I kind of like.”

Additionally, code-switching helps determine the addressee, such as the use of “guys” to include a broader audience and create intimacy. It is also used when talking about past events to enhance narration and emotional engagement, for instance “Where’s my ring?” or “I thought markisa is a fruit.” Overall, these findings confirm that code-switching is driven by communicative needs such as lexical efficiency, authenticity, emphasis, and audience engagement.

Function of Code-Switching in Building Self-Image and Audience Interaction

Using Holmes (2013), code-switching functions as a strategic communication tool. The referential function ensures accurate information delivery, such as “tagged along” or “get out of the house,” enabling efficient communication. The expressive function conveys emotions and attitudes, with words like “sick,” “bullshit,” and “it’s so hard” reflecting admiration, skepticism, or frustration. The directive function influences audience behavior through polite suggestions like “Should we test...” or “Let me know,” maintaining a non-authoritative tone.

The phatic function maintains social relationships, for example through greetings or expressions like “adulting together,” which build solidarity with audiences. Meanwhile, the metalinguistic function clarifies meanings, such as explaining “compliment” or “bolu is like a cupcake,” positioning vloggers as cultural mediators. These functions show that code-switching not only delivers messages but also shapes interaction and strengthens audience connection.

Discussion of Code-Switching Patterns

The findings reveal distinct patterns among the three vloggers. Boy William predominantly uses tag-switching to maintain conversational flow and professionalism in interviews. Sasha Marissa frequently employs intra-sentential switching, reflecting her ability to integrate English into Indonesian structures for

instructional clarity. Fathia Izzati tends to use inter-sentential switching, especially in reflective contexts, to express complex ideas more effectively. These differences are influenced by content genre and communication style, confirming that code-switching functions as a strategic communication tool rather than a random linguistic act.

Code-Switching as a Digital Identity Strategy

Code-switching also operates as a strategy for constructing digital identity. On YouTube, vloggers use language as a “front stage” to negotiate identity, as seen when Boy William uses English to project professional authority, Fathia Izzati expresses maturity and personal reflection, and Sasha Marissa demonstrates pedagogical credibility. The practice reflects a hybrid identity combining local and global elements, where Indonesian and English are blended to achieve social prestige and relatability.

Furthermore, code-switching acts as symbolic capital, giving vloggers authority and credibility in digital spaces. Boy William presents himself as a global professional, Fathia Izzati as a thoughtful and reflective individual, and Sasha Marissa as an experienced cultural guide. Finally, this phenomenon contributes to digital language evolution, where terms like “clickbait,” “shook,” “friendly,” and “adulthood” become part of everyday communication. Thus, code-switching not only reflects bilingual ability but also shapes modern sociolinguistic practices and identities in digital society.

Table 3. Comparative Dimensions of Communication Context

| Dimensions | Previous Research (Chapter II) | Research Findings (3 Vloggers) |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Context of Communication | Generally static monologues (Zain, 2025; Inafiah, 2022) | Dynamic and responsive: includes collaboration (V1) and audience interaction (V3) |
| Strategic Functions | Focus on narrative smoothness (Nugroho, 2025) | Impression management: building authority, prestige, and emotional honesty (V1, V2, V3) |
| Media & Platforms | Informal media sharing (Situmorang, 2023) | Sociolinguistic strategies reflecting hybrid identity in globalization |

Synthesis of Identity Strategies and Theoretical Comparison

Data in Table.3 show that code-switching functions as a strategic instrument for constructing digital identity. In Boy William, it reflects Social Prestige & Networking, where English expressions such as “wonderful man” reinforce credibility and professional authority. In Fathia Izzati, code-switching emphasizes personalization and emotional disclosure, as seen in “it’s a very personal choice,” which conveys honesty and intimacy. Meanwhile, Sasha Marissa uses code-switching for Audience Adaptation & Authority, employing terms like “be friendly” and “compliment” to align with Western norms while asserting expertise. Overall, code-switching represents a conscious negotiation of hybrid identity shaped by social motives and content context.

Comparison with Previous Study

This section critically compares findings from Boy William, Fathia Izzati, and Sasha Marissa with studies in Chapter II. The results show that code-switching is not merely incidental, but functions as Symbolic Capital to build power in digital spaces. These findings validate and extend Zain (2025) and Inafiah (2022), showing that code-switching is not only a response to lexical gaps but a deliberate strategy to achieve prestige and sociolinguistic authority.

In the attention economy, English use in key segments acts as a symbolic “access card” to elite creative industries, building credibility and global identity. Boy William (V1) projects professional prestige through assertive statements like “you can’t just let people do things for you” (V1/00.56). Fathia Izzati (V2) emphasizes emotional depth through phrases like “very personal choice” and “timeline” (V2/05.00). Sasha Marissa (V3) constructs Information Authority using terms such as “compliment” (V3/01.40) and “shook” (V3/05.35). These examples show code-switching as an empirical marker of expertise and cross-cultural experience.

More broadly, code-switching reflects the formation of hybrid digital identity as a new sociolinguistic norm in Indonesian urban society. It is no longer seen as a failure to maintain language purity, but as strategic competence in navigating dual cultural contexts. Vloggers balance “get closer strategy” through informal Indonesian for emotional connection and “rise in status strategy” through English for global competence. This indicates that digital sociolinguistics in Indonesia has evolved into a form of fluid social intelligence, where individuals shift across identities without losing authenticity.

Ultimately, this pattern shows that modern digital identity in Indonesia is inherently hybrid. Language boundaries become fluid, enabling social legitimacy and influence in virtual spaces. This also reflects a shift in the linguistic ecosystem, where “foreign language” and “mother tongue” form a continuum rather than a dichotomy. Code-switching evolves into a collective discursive practice defining modernity, enriching sociolinguistic expression while challenging traditional notions of language purity.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the author presents conclusions from the data analysis and provides suggestions relevant to the findings. The analysis shows that Indonesian vloggers on YouTube, namely Boy William, Sasha Marissa, and Fathia Izzati, consistently use code-switching patterns aligned with Poplack’s framework. Inter-sentential and tag-switching are the most frequent types, while intra-sentential switching complements the variation, indicating a preference for switching at sentence boundaries to maintain clarity and grammatical structure. In terms of sociolinguistic factors, code-switching is mainly driven by communicative purposes such as emphasizing key points, addressing lexical gaps, and enabling spontaneous expression. These choices reflect awareness of audience expectations, allowing vloggers to deliver messages that are clear, engaging, and relatable to a multilingual audience. Furthermore, code-switching plays an important role in building self-image and interaction, functioning as a resource for shaping digital identity. Through language alternation, vloggers project professionalism, emotional nuance, and intellectual credibility while enhancing audience engagement and accessibility, thus strengthening their connection with viewers.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand code-switching studies across a wider range of digital platforms and discourse types. Beyond YouTube vlogs, research can explore more interactive and short-form media such as live streaming or short videos to understand how time constraints and real-time interaction influence code-switching practices. It is also recommended to apply diverse approaches, including quantitative and multimodal analyses, to examine the interaction between linguistic and visual elements in digital communication. Moreover, future studies should go beyond forms and functions by incorporating critical perspectives related to identity negotiation and power relations in digital spaces, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how language choice reflects social positioning, cultural affiliation, and symbolic capital in contemporary society.

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