

EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION AND CODE-SWITCHING: A DIGITAL SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF INDONESIAN SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

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ABSTRACT

Code-switching, or the use of more than one language within a single interaction, is a common feature of bilingual communication that is often discussed in terms of linguistic form, yet in digital spaces such as X or Twitter, it also shapes how meaning, tone, and self-presentation are constructed. This study examines how Indonesian social media users shift between Indonesian and English, focusing on how does language choice in code-switching function in shaping meaning, tone, and self-presentation on X (Twitter) among Indonesian users. Guided by this question, the analysis draws on selected tweets and applies Gumperz's We-Code and They-Code (1982) framework alongside Caldwell-Harris's concept of the Emotional Distancing Effect as a supporting perspective (2014). From a sociolinguistic point of view, the findings show that language choice operates as a resource for identity performance, where Indonesian tends to signal closeness, shared identity, and group belonging, while English is often used to create distance or present a more controlled tone. These shifts are shaped by context, audience, and platform norms, allowing users to influence how their messages are received so that an utterance may come across as more personal, more neutral, or more expressive depending on the language used. Code-switching also serves affective purposes, including expressing, negotiating, and managing emotions, especially in moments that are intense or negatively charged, where anger appears most frequently, and these shifts may occur either consciously or without full awareness. In relation to bilingual emotionality, switching languages allows users to express feelings while maintaining a certain level of control, which suggests that emotion is not only internal but also shaped through language choices that respond to social context and audience expectations. Overall, code-switching functions as a sociolinguistic practice through which users negotiate meaning, adjust social distance, and perform identity within digital interaction, while also opening possibilities for further research on different user groups and interaction patterns.

Keywords: language choice, code-switching, X (twitter), identity performance, bilingual emotionality

ABSTRAK

Code-switching, atau penggunaan lebih dari satu bahasa dalam satu interaksi, merupakan fitur umum dalam komunikasi bilingual yang sering dibahas dari sisi bentuk linguistik, namun dalam ruang digital seperti X atau Twitter, hal ini juga membentuk bagaimana makna, nada, dan self-presentation dikonstruksi. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana pengguna media sosial Indonesia berpindah antara bahasa Indonesia dan bahasa Inggris, dengan fokus pada bagaimana language choice berfungsi dalam membentuk makna, nada, dan self-presentation dalam interaksi daring. Berangkat dari pertanyaan tersebut, analisis ini menggunakan data berupa tweet terpilih dan menerapkan kerangka We-Code dan They-Code dari Gumperz (1982) serta konsep Emotional Distancing Effect dari Caldwell-Harris (2014) sebagai perspektif pendukung. Dari sudut pandang sosiolinguistik, temuan menunjukkan bahwa language choice berfungsi sebagai sumber daya untuk identity performance, di mana bahasa Indonesia cenderung menandakan kedekatan, identitas bersama, dan keanggotaan kelompok, sementara bahasa Inggris sering digunakan untuk menciptakan jarak atau menampilkan nada yang lebih terkontrol. Peralihan ini dipengaruhi oleh konteks, audiens, dan norma platform, sehingga memungkinkan pengguna memengaruhi bagaimana pesan mereka diterima, di mana suatu ujaran dapat terasa lebih personal, lebih netral, atau lebih ekspresif tergantung pada bahasa yang digunakan. Code-switching juga berfungsi untuk tujuan afektif, termasuk mengekspresikan, menegosiasikan, dan mengelola emosi, terutama dalam situasi yang intens atau bernuansa negatif, dengan kemarahan sebagai emosi yang paling sering muncul, dan peralihan ini dapat terjadi baik secara sadar maupun tanpa disadari sepenuhnya. Dalam kaitannya dengan bilingual emotionality, perpindahan bahasa memungkinkan pengguna mengekspresikan perasaan sambil tetap mempertahankan tingkat kontrol tertentu, yang menunjukkan bahwa emosi tidak hanya bersifat internal tetapi juga dibentuk melalui pilihan bahasa yang merespons konteks sosial dan ekspektasi audiens. Secara keseluruhan, code-switching berfungsi sebagai praktik sosiolinguistik yang memungkinkan pengguna menegosiasikan makna, mengatur jarak sosial, dan menampilkan identitas dalam interaksi digital, sekaligus membuka peluang untuk penelitian lanjutan mengenai variasi pengguna dan pola interaksi yang lebih beragam.

Kata kunci: pilihan bahasa, alih kode, X (twitter), performa identitas, emosionalitas bilingual

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the use of Indonesian and English in online interaction has become increasingly visible, especially across social media platforms where bilingual users move fluidly between languages. This shift is not only a matter of linguistic structure, but also closely related to how meaning is shaped, how tone is delivered, and how users present themselves in digital spaces. In the Indonesian context, switching between Indonesian and English often reflects more than communicative efficiency; it can signal closeness, distance, informality, or even alignment with certain social groups. This makes language choice an important part of how users manage interaction and construct their online presence.

This study begins from the assumption that language is not neutral in digital communication. Instead, it carries social and emotional weight, influencing how messages are interpreted by others. The alternation between Indonesian and English can affect how a statement feels—whether it sounds more personal, more controlled, or more expressive—depending on the context in which it appears. This is particularly relevant in social media environments, where short texts such as tweets require users to make quick but meaningful choices about how they phrase their thoughts.

Based on this background, the main question addressed in this paper is: how does language choice in code-switching function in shaping meaning, tone, and self-presentation on X (Twitter) among Indonesian users? To answer this, the study aims to explain how Indonesian–English language choice is used to construct meaning, adjust tone, and manage self-presentation among Indonesian users on X (Twitter). The analysis draws on Gumperz’s (1982) concept of We-Code vs. They-Code to understand how language can signal intimacy or distance within a social context, while Caldwell-Harris’s (2014) idea of the Emotional Distancing Effect is briefly considered to account for how a second language (L2) may create a sense of emotional control in certain expressions.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to provide a more grounded understanding of language choice as a social and emotional resource in digital communication. By focusing on Indonesian X (Twitter) users, this paper also contributes to ongoing discussions of code-switching and identity performance, particularly in contexts that have not been widely explored. Ultimately, this study is expected to show that language choice is not simply about switching codes, but about shaping how users communicate, position themselves, and are understood in online spaces.

This study approaches code-switching from a sociolinguistic perspective, focusing on how language choice works in shaping meaning, tone, and self-presentation on X (Twitter) among Indonesian users. The main framework is drawn from Gumperz’s (1982) concept of We-Code and They-Code, supported by Suwito’s (1985) explanation of the social factors behind code-switching. Caldwell-Harris’s (2014) idea of the emotional distancing effect is used as a supporting lens to help explain certain patterns, particularly in emotionally loaded expressions.

Gumperz (1982) argues that language choice is closely tied to social meaning. We-Code is typically associated with closeness, shared identity, and everyday interaction, while They-Code signals distance, shift in stance, or a change in how the speaker positions themselves. In the context of Indonesian users on X (Twitter), Indonesian often appears as We-Code, especially when expressing personal feelings or relatable experiences. English, on the other hand, tends to function as They-Code, not necessarily to create full distance, but to add emphasis, shift tone, or present the message in a slightly different light. This distinction is useful for understanding how users move between languages to manage how their tweets are read and felt by others.

To support this, Suwito (1985) highlights that code-switching is influenced by several sociolinguistic factors, such as the speaker’s intention, the topic being discussed, and the communicative situation. In informal contexts, including social media, switching languages can be used to adjust style, create humor, or follow the flow of the topic. This is especially relevant in digital interaction, where users are not only sharing information but also shaping how their message comes across. In other words, code-switching is not just about language ability, but about choosing the “right” expression for a particular moment, audience, or purpose.

While this study does not focus on psychological processes, Caldwell-Harris (2014) provides a useful supporting point in explaining why certain emotional expressions appear in a second language (L2). The idea of emotional distancing suggests that using another language can make an expression feel less intense or more controlled. In the context of tweets, this helps explain why English is sometimes used when expressing vulnerability, frustration, or hesitation, as it allows users to manage how directly those emotions are presented.

Taken together, these frameworks allow this study to view code-switching as a practical and meaningful strategy in online communication. Language choice is not random, but shaped by social context, communicative goals, and the need to manage meaning, tone, and self-presentation within the fast-paced and public nature of X (Twitter).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach, with a focus on discourse analysis within a sociolinguistic framework. The main goal is to understand how bilingual users use language choice and code-switching as part of their communication practices on social media. Instead of measuring frequency or counting how often switching happens, this study looks more closely at how language is actually used in context, especially how meaning is built through the interaction between Indonesian and English in a single post.

The data for this study were collected from X (Twitter), which is chosen because it provides a space where users often express thoughts in a relatively spontaneous and less formal way. At the same time, X (Twitter) is still a public or semi-public platform, which means that users are usually aware that their posts can be read by different audiences. This makes it a relevant site for observing how language choice is shaped not only by what users want to say, but also by how they want to say it.

A purposive sampling method was used to select the data. This means that the data were not taken randomly, but chosen based on specific criteria that match the focus of the study. The selected posts must contain clear instances of Indonesian-English code-switching and show some form of personal expression, such as reflection, opinion, or response to a situation.

In analyzing the data, this study focuses on how language choice in code-switching functions in shaping meaning, tone, and self-presentation on X (Twitter) among Indonesian users. First, it examines how Indonesian and English are used to construct meaning, particularly how certain expressions are emphasized or nuanced through code-switching in tweets. Second, it analyzes how shifts between languages contribute to tone, including how messages may appear more personal, distant, or controlled depending on the language used in digital interaction. Third, the study considers how language choice reflects self-presentation, looking at how users position themselves and manage how they are perceived by their audience on X (Twitter). Through this approach, code-switching is understood not only as a structural feature, but as a communicative strategy shaped by the norms of social media discourse.

To make the analysis clearer, each selected post is discussed, with attention to how the languages interact within the same text. Rather than treating code-switching as a random habit, this study approaches it as a meaningful strategy. The analysis tries to show that when users switch languages, they are often doing something specific, such as organizing their ideas, emphasizing certain parts, or making their message easier to understand for a broader audience.

Overall, this methodological approach allows the study to explore code-switching as a functional part of communication on X (Twitter). By focusing on how language is used in user-generated tweets, this study aims to show that Indonesian bilingual users actively make choices in how they express themselves. These choices are closely related to how meaning is constructed, how tone is managed, and how self-presentation is shaped in interaction with their audience on the platform.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the selected tweets from X (Twitter), code-switching between Indonesian and English appears as a patterned and meaningful practice rather than random alternation. In this study, language choice is understood as a functional strategy used by users to shape how their messages are constructed and perceived in digital interaction. In line with the research question—*how does language choice function in shaping meaning, tone, and self-presentation*—the findings are categorized into three main functions: (1) shaping meaning, (2) shaping tone, and (3) self-presentation. These categories are identified through the analysis of how users combine Indonesian and English within a single tweet and how each language contributes differently to the overall message. The interpretation draws on Gumperz's (1982) *We-Code* vs. *They-Code*, Suwito's (1985) sociolinguistic factors of code-switching, and is supported by Caldwell-Harris's (2014) concept of emotional distancing.

A. Code-Switching in Shaping Meaning

In this study, *shaping meaning* refers to how language choice is used to construct, refine, and deepen meaning within a tweet. Code-switching is not treated as a simple alternation between languages, but as a communicative strategy that allows speakers to express meanings that may not be fully captured in a

single language. Each language contributes differently, creating layers of meaning that reflect both shared understanding and personal expression.

Examples:

- (1) “capek banget, *i deserve a hug*” (Source: *X* (Twitter) account @porscheruby, accessed on 22 April 2026)

Data (1) shows a shift from Indonesian to English within a single utterance. The phrase “capek banget” expresses a strong sense of exhaustion, reinforced by the intensifier “banget,” which signals a high degree of tiredness. This phrase represents a general condition that is easily relatable in everyday interaction. The switch to English in “i deserve a hug” introduces a different layer of meaning. The verb “deserve” implies a sense of entitlement or justification, suggesting that the speaker believes they have a valid reason to receive comfort. Additionally, the word “hug” carries a more intimate and emotionally expressive nuance compared to its Indonesian equivalent “pelukan,” especially in digital contexts where English expressions are often associated with personal emotional disclosure. The code-switching in this tweet shifts the meaning from merely describing a condition to expressing a personal emotional need. Indonesian functions as *We-Code* (Gumperz, 1982), constructing a shared and relatable experience, while English functions as *They-Code*, marking a shift toward a more individual and self-focused expression. This supports Suwito’s (1985) argument that communicative purpose influences language choice, as the speaker selects English to articulate a more specific and emotionally nuanced meaning. In this case, code-switching enriches the message by adding a layer of emotional intensity and personal positioning.

- (2) “Allah kasih ketika kamu siap, *really heals me in so many ways*” (Source: *X* (Twitter) account @catsedih, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (2) combines Indonesian and English to construct a layered meaning. The Indonesian clause “Allah kasih ketika kamu siap” conveys a reflective and belief-based message. The use of the word “Allah” situates the statement within a shared religious and cultural framework, making it broadly relatable to a specific community. The message functions as a general reflection that can apply to many people. The shift to English in “really heals me in so many ways” adds a more personal dimension. The adverb “really” intensifies the statement, while the phrase “in so many ways” suggests that the emotional impact is complex and cannot be easily summarized. This part of the tweet focuses on the speaker’s internal experience rather than a general belief. The code-switching here functions to expand meaning from a collective understanding to an individual emotional response. Indonesian operates as *We-Code*, expressing shared values and cultural familiarity, while English serves as *They-Code*, allowing the speaker to express a more individualized emotional interpretation. This reflects Gumperz’s (1982) idea that code-switching signals a shift in social and communicative stance. Furthermore, it aligns with Suwito’s (1985) view that topic and communicative intention influence language choice, as emotionally reflective content encourages the use of a language that allows for deeper personal expression. Thus, code-switching enables the speaker to move between collective meaning and personal experience within a single utterance.

Another example:

- (3) “sumpah gapeduli gagal berapa kali, *i’ll win*” (Source: *X* (Twitter) account @farhan_journal, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (3) shows a combination of Indonesian and English in a motivational context. The phrase “sumpah gapeduli gagal berapa kali” expresses strong determination, with the word “sumpah” functioning as an intensifier that emphasizes sincerity and conviction. The phrase highlights repeated failure but frames it as something that does not weaken the speaker’s resolve. The switch to English in “i’ll win” introduces a short, direct, and assertive statement. The use of the modal “will” signals certainty about the future, transforming the message into a confident declaration. Compared to a possible Indonesian equivalent, this phrase appears more concise and impactful. The code-switching in this tweet shifts the meaning from a narrative of struggle to a statement of certainty and self-assertion. Indonesian constructs the experience of persistence (*We-Code*), while English delivers a strong and individual claim (*They-Code*). This reflects Gumperz’s (1982) notion that code-switching marks a shift in stance and communicative function. In addition, Suwito (1985) emphasizes that communicative goals play a key role in language choice. In this case, the speaker’s goal is to convey confidence and determination, and English is selected because it produces a more forceful and performative effect. Therefore, code-switching functions to reshape meaning into a more direct, assertive, and impactful form.

B. Code-Switching in Shaping Tone

In this study, *tone* refers to how a message is perceived by the audience in terms of emotional closeness, intensity, and speaker stance. Tone is not only shaped by what is said, but also by how language is selected and arranged within a tweet. In bilingual interaction, code-switching becomes a key resource for adjusting tone, allowing speakers to move between intimacy and distance, directness and control, or seriousness and playfulness. Rather than relying on external tone classification, tone in this study is interpreted through Gumperz's (1982) distinction between *We-Code* and *They-Code*, as well as Caldwell-Harris's (2014) concept of emotional distancing. In addition, Suwito's (1985) view on topic and communicative purpose helps explain why certain tones are associated with particular language choices.

a. Intimate / close tone (We-Code dominant)

Intimate or close tone refers to a type of expression that creates a sense of emotional closeness between the speaker and the audience. This tone is usually characterized by personal disclosure, relatability, and openness. In bilingual interaction, this tone is often constructed through the use of *We-Code* (Gumperz, 1982), where the speaker uses a familiar or shared language to build connection, while occasional code-switching may be used to soften or manage emotional intensity.

- (4) "Selalu ngerasa bisa handle semuanya sendiri, padahal aslinya butuh *someone shoulder to tell about my worst day*" (Source: *X* (Twitter) account @sibiwl, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (4) expresses a sense of vulnerability through a combination of Indonesian and English. The Indonesian clause "selalu ngerasa bisa handle semuanya sendiri" reflects a personal habit of appearing strong or independent, while "padahal aslinya butuh" signals a contrast that reveals the speaker's actual emotional need. The use of "padahal" marks a shift from outward appearance to inner reality, creating a confessional tone. The switch to English in "someone shoulder to tell about my worst day" introduces a softer and more indirect expression of vulnerability. The phrase does not explicitly state "I need help," but instead frames the need in a more subtle and emotionally nuanced way. The use of English here reduces the directness of the expression, making it feel less exposed. The tone in this tweet can be described as intimate but controlled. Indonesian functions as *We-Code* (Gumperz, 1982), establishing closeness and relatability, while English introduces a slight distance that softens the emotional intensity. This reflects Caldwell-Harris's (2014) idea that a second language can create emotional distance, allowing speakers to express sensitive feelings in a more manageable way. Thus, code-switching here shapes a tone that is both personal and restrained, enabling the speaker to share vulnerability without fully exposing it.

b. Distanced / controlled tone (They-Code / emotional distancing)

Distanced or controlled tone refers to a type of expression where the speaker limits emotional exposure, creating a sense of restraint or detachment. This tone often appears when discussing sensitive or emotionally intense topics. In this context, code-switching into a second language can function as a strategy to reduce emotional intensity, aligning with the concept of emotional distancing (Caldwell-Harris, 2014).

- (5) "doain semoga gw bisa bertahan... *without having a mental breakdown*" (Source: *X* (Twitter) account @bingungtrs_, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (5) presents an emotionally heavy statement, where the speaker expresses a struggle to endure a difficult situation. The Indonesian part "doain semoga gw bisa bertahan" conveys a request for support, with the word "doain" indicating reliance on others' prayers. This creates a sense of shared emotional space and openness. However, the switch to English in "without having a mental breakdown" introduces a noticeable shift in tone. The phrase refers to a serious emotional condition, yet it is expressed in English rather than Indonesian. Compared to a direct Indonesian equivalent, this choice makes the expression feel less immediate and less emotionally intense. The tone produced here is more controlled and distanced. While the Indonesian part invites empathy (*We-Code*), the English phrase functions as *They-Code*, creating emotional distance from the intensity of the experience. This supports the argument that "language switching is considered as a mechanism of emotional distancing" (Alcaide & Ruiz, 2024), where speakers use a second language to manage emotional exposure. In this case, code-switching allows the speaker to communicate distress without expressing it too directly, resulting in a tone that feels both serious and guarded.

c. Reflective / semi-philosophical tone

Reflective or semi-philosophical tone refers to expressions that present ideas in a more general, thoughtful, or universal way. This tone often moves beyond personal experience and frames the message as something that can be applied broadly. In bilingual contexts, English is sometimes used to create this effect, giving the impression of a more generalized or widely shared perspective.

- (6) “lo bakal sadar *how powerful your mind is...*” (Source: X (Twitter) account @arsenatasyas, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (6) shows a motivational and reflective type of expression. The Indonesian part “lo bakal sadar” positions the statement as advice or realization directed toward others, while “kalo punya mindset ‘semua hal bisa dipelajari’” reinforces a general principle about learning and growth. The switch to English in “how powerful your mind is” elevates the tone into something more universal and reflective. The structure of the phrase resembles a commonly shared motivational expression, giving it a broader and less personal feel. Compared to a fully Indonesian version, the English phrase sounds more generalized, as if it applies to a wider audience beyond the immediate context. The tone here can be described as reflective and semi-philosophical. Indonesian serves as *We-Code*, grounding the message in a familiar conversational style, while English functions as *They-Code*, shifting the tone toward a more generalized and conceptual statement. This suggests that code-switching is used to move from personal advice to a more universal perspective. In line with Suwito (1985), the topic of discussion—self-development and mindset—encourages a shift in language to match the intended tone. As a result, code-switching shapes a tone that feels both relatable and broadly applicable.

d. Casual / humorous tone

Casual or humorous tone refers to expressions that are light, informal, and often playful. This tone is commonly found in digital interaction, where users use language creatively to entertain or relate to others. Code-switching in this context is often influenced by topic and communicative intention, as explained by Suwito (1985), where informal topics encourage relaxed and humorous language use.

- (7) “adulting adalah pindah-pindah saldo...” (Source: X (Twitter) account @xdozul, accessed on 28 April 2026)
(8) “kadang adulting itu musuhnya numbu gigi bungsu” (Source: X (Twitter) account @skipberat, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (7) and (8) show the use of the English word “adulting” within Indonesian sentences. The term “adulting” is commonly used in informal digital contexts to refer to the challenges of being an adult, often with a humorous or ironic tone. Its use signals a relaxed and playful style of communication. In both examples, Indonesian provides the structure of the sentence, while the insertion of “adulting” adds a specific cultural and humorous nuance. The humor comes from the contrast between everyday struggles (managing money, dealing with physical discomfort) and the exaggerated framing of these experiences as part of “adulting.” The tone created here is casual and humorous. Indonesian functions as *We-Code*, maintaining familiarity and accessibility, while the English term adds stylistic variation and humor. This aligns with Suwito’s (1985) explanation that code-switching can be influenced by topic and used to create humor in informal situations. The use of English in this context is not about distance, but about style and shared cultural reference, particularly among younger social media users.

C. Code-Switching in Self-Presentation

In this study, *self-presentation* refers to how users construct and display their identity through language use in digital interaction. On platforms like X (Twitter), users are not only sharing thoughts or feelings, but also positioning themselves in relation to their audience. Code-switching plays an important role in this process, as different languages can signal different aspects of identity, such as personality, attitude, social belonging, and emotional stance. Rather than reflecting a fixed identity, code-switching allows users to present a layered and dynamic self, where Indonesian and English are used together to shape how they want to be perceived.

Examples:

- (9) “i love single era, tapi kalo malem bingung mau cerita ke siapa” (Source: X (Twitter) account @iniyunajaaa, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (9) combines English and Indonesian to construct a contrastive identity. The English phrase “i love single era” presents an image of independence and self-enjoyment. The use of English here gives a slightly stylized and confident impression, often associated with modern or expressive digital discourse. However, the Indonesian clause “tapi kalo malem bingung mau cerita ke siapa” reveals a different side of the speaker, expressing uncertainty and emotional vulnerability. The word “bingung” indicates confusion, while the phrase “mau cerita ke siapa” suggests a need for emotional connection. The code-switching in this tweet constructs a balanced self-presentation, where the speaker appears both independent and emotionally open. English functions as *They-Code* (Gumperz, 1982), projecting a more stylized and performative identity, while Indonesian operates as *We-Code*, grounding the message in a more authentic and relatable emotional experience. This aligns with Suwito’s (1985) view that communicative intention influences language choice, as the speaker uses different languages to highlight different aspects of identity. As a result, code-switching allows the speaker to present a more complex and humanized self.

- (10) “fuck grammar, all my homies use cocok-cocokan” (Source: *X* (Twitter) account @griffinarks, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (10) reflects a casual and anti-formal style of self-presentation. The English phrase “fuck grammar” expresses rejection of linguistic norms, while “all my homies use cocok-cocokan” combines English slang (“homies”) with Indonesian (“cocok-cocokan”), creating a hybrid and playful expression. The use of informal and slang expressions signals group belonging and a relaxed attitude toward language rules. The mixture of languages reinforces this identity, showing that the speaker is comfortable navigating between linguistic systems without concern for correctness. The code-switching here functions to construct an identity that is casual, expressive, and socially aligned with a specific peer group. English contributes a sense of global or internet culture, while Indonesian maintains local relevance and relatability. This reflects Suwito’s (1985) idea that code-switching can be influenced by style and even prestige, where speakers use certain language forms to position themselves socially. In this case, the “prestige” is not formal, but rather tied to being informal, humorous, and socially aware. Thus, code-switching becomes a marker of identity performance in a digital community.

- (11) “in this economy duit 100k cukup berapa hari guys?” (Source: *X* (Twitter) account @brzchaa, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (11) shows how code-switching is used to position the speaker within a broader discourse. The English phrase “in this economy” is commonly used in global digital contexts to comment on economic conditions in a slightly ironic or exaggerated tone. The Indonesian part “duit 100k cukup berapa hari guys?” localizes the issue, referring to a specific amount of money and inviting interaction through the word “guys.” The combination of English and Indonesian creates a bridge between global discourse and local experience. The code-switching in this tweet functions to construct an identity that is both locally grounded and globally aware. English operates as *They-Code*, connecting the speaker to a wider, possibly international discourse, while Indonesian functions as *We-Code*, maintaining closeness with a local audience. This suggests that self-presentation in digital spaces is not limited to one identity, but involves positioning oneself across multiple contexts. In line with Suwito (1985), the topic of discussion influences language choice, as economic discourse in online spaces often adopts English expressions for stylistic and contextual relevance.

- (12) “aku pengen dipanggil ‘ibu’ someday... *but not gonna lie, marriage kinda scares me*” (Source: *X* (Twitter) account @marrooenn, accessed on 28 April 2026)

Data (12) presents a form of controlled vulnerability. The Indonesian clause “aku pengen dipanggil ‘ibu’ someday” expresses a personal aspiration related to future identity, particularly within a cultural context where such a role carries emotional and social significance. The shift to English in “*but not gonna lie, marriage kinda scares me*” introduces hesitation and emotional uncertainty. The phrase “not gonna lie” softens the statement, while “kinda scares me” reduces the intensity of fear, making it sound less direct and more conversational. The code-switching here functions to balance openness and emotional control. Indonesian operates as *We-Code*, expressing a sincere and culturally grounded desire, while English functions as *They-Code*, allowing the speaker to express fear in a more moderated way. This reflects Caldwell-Harris’s (2014) concept of emotional distancing, where a second language can reduce the emotional weight of an expression. As a result, the speaker is able to present vulnerability without fully exposing it, creating a self-presentation that feels honest but still controlled.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to answer the research question: *how does language choice function in shaping meaning, tone, and self-presentation in a digital environment, particularly on X (Twitter) among Indonesian users?* The findings clearly show that code-switching between Indonesian and English operates as a functional and strategic resource rather than a random or habitual practice. In terms of shaping meaning, language choice allows users to refine and intensify what they want to express. Indonesian is typically used to introduce personal experiences, emotions, or situational context, while English is often inserted to highlight specific feelings, add emphasis, or reframe the message in a more expressive or stylized way. This means that the meaning is not simply transferred between languages, but actively constructed through switching. As a result, code-switching enables users to communicate nuances that might not be fully captured in a single language, supporting the idea that emotional expression is closely tied to linguistic choice (Mikkonen, 2025). In relation to shaping tone, the findings demonstrate that code-switching plays a key role in managing how a message is perceived by the audience. Through the lens of Gumperz's (1982) *We-Code vs. They-Code*, Indonesian tends to create a sense of closeness, familiarity, and shared experience, while English introduces distance, control, or stylistic variation. This is further supported by Caldwell-Harris's (2014) concept of emotional distancing, where the use of a second language helps reduce emotional intensity or make certain expressions feel less direct. As seen in the data, users switch into English when expressing vulnerable, intense, or potentially uncomfortable emotions, which allows them to maintain a level of control over how their message is received. Therefore, tone is not fixed, but dynamically shaped through language choice depending on context and intention. In terms of self-presentation, code-switching enables users to construct and negotiate their identity in digital space. The combination of Indonesian and English allows users to present multiple aspects of themselves simultaneously—such as being emotionally open yet controlled, casual yet expressive, or locally grounded yet globally aware. Indonesian often functions as a marker of authenticity and emotional sincerity, while English is used to signal style, modernity, or alignment with broader digital culture. This supports the argument that language choice is influenced by emotional resonance, cultural identity, and interpersonal goals (Oh, 2025). In this sense, identity in digital interaction is not fixed, but layered and performed through strategic language use.

Overall, the findings reinforce previous studies that view code-switching as a purposeful and meaningful practice. Rather than reducing emotional depth, switching languages can enhance expression and allow speakers to manage how their feelings are communicated. As noted by Zhang and Hatzidaki (2025), code-switching may be deliberately used when discussing emotional topics, while bilingual speakers often experience shifts in emotional intensity across languages (Urbaite, 2025). This confirms that code-switching is not only about language, but also about how meaning, emotion, and identity are negotiated in interaction.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations that open up opportunities for further research. First, the data are limited to a relatively small number of tweets from a single platform, which may not fully represent the diversity of code-switching practices across different digital environments. Future research could expand the dataset by including a larger number of posts and exploring multiple platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or online forums. This would allow for a more comprehensive comparison of how language choice functions across different types of digital interaction. Second, this study does not deeply explore variation across user backgrounds, such as age, gender, or linguistic proficiency. As suggested by Liu (2023), there is a need for more context-specific and diverse data to better understand patterns of code-switching. Future studies could examine how different groups of users employ code-switching differently, particularly in relation to identity construction and emotional expression. Third, future research could focus more specifically on the role of code-switching in managing discomfort, tension, or potential conflict in online communication. As noted by Fagpa (2025), code-switching can function as a strategy to avoid confrontation or soften difficult messages. Investigating this aspect would deepen our understanding of how tone is shaped, especially in sensitive or emotionally charged interactions. Finally, it would also be valuable to explore how audience awareness influences language choice. Users on digital platforms are often aware of who might read their posts, and this awareness may shape how they switch between languages. Examining this factor could provide further insight into how code-switching functions not only as a linguistic practice, but also as a strategic tool for managing meaning, tone, and self-presentation.

In conclusion, future studies are encouraged to move beyond viewing code-switching as a simple linguistic phenomenon and instead approach it as a dynamic sociolinguistic resource. By doing so,

research can better capture how bilingual users actively use language to navigate emotion, identity, and interaction in increasingly complex digital spaces.

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