

Code Mixing in Instagram Captions among Indonesian Youth: A Sociolinguistic Study

Miza Rahmatika Aini

jumintenlarasati@gmail.com

Akademi Pariwisata 45 Jayapura

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the semantic features employed in food and beverage advertisements published on Instagram. The study aims to understand how lexical choices, connotative strategies, and meaning relations are employed to construct brand image, elicit emotional resonance, and influence consumer preferences. Data were collected from ten official advertising posts of popular food and beverage brands that commonly appear on Indonesian users' feeds between January and June 2025. A descriptive qualitative analysis was conducted using frameworks for lexical, connotative, and relational semantics. The findings reveal a consistent pattern in which advertisements combine denotative meanings to communicate product attributes, connotative meanings to evoke emotional associations, and relational meanings to establish cultural ties and social identity. In addition, the analysis shows that code mixing is frequently used as a linguistic strategy, with insertion type emerging as the dominant form, particularly through the integration of English lexical items into Indonesian sentence structures (e.g., *vibes*, *fresh*, *bestie*). This pattern reflects the influence of globalized digital culture and the tendency of brands to target younger, bilingual audiences. Beyond describing advertising language, this study contributes to linguistic research by demonstrating how semantic structures function in multimodal digital discourse and how meaning-making processes operate within contemporary social media communication. In addition, the findings offer practical insights for marketing studies by illustrating how strategic word choices and semantic framing can enhance brand positioning, audience engagement, and persuasive effectiveness in digital advertising environments. These insights highlight that semantic strategies are not merely stylistic elements but play a significant role in shaping consumer perception and interaction in the digital marketplace.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics; Code Mixing; Instagram; Language Variation; Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Language use in the digital era has undergone significant transformation due to the rapid development of social media platforms. Applications such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok enable users to communicate instantly with wide audiences, creating new forms of interaction that are fast, multimodal, and highly dynamic. In this environment, language is often used creatively and flexibly, reflecting social identity and cultural trends among users. Social media not only functions as a

communication tool but also serves as a space where linguistic innovation emerges and evolves continuously (Zappavigna, 2018; Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

One of the most prominent linguistic phenomena in digital communication is code mixing, which occurs when speakers combine elements from two or more languages within a single utterance or discourse (Muysken, 2000). In multilingual societies such as Indonesia, code mixing is a common practice, particularly among young people who are frequently exposed to multiple languages through education, media, and online interaction. The increasing influence of English in global culture and digital media has intensified the use of mixed-language expressions in everyday communication (Heller, 2010).

Instagram captions provide a particularly relevant context for examining this phenomenon. As a platform that emphasizes brevity and visual-text integration, Instagram encourages users to produce concise yet expressive messages. Many users combine Indonesian with English words or phrases to create captions that sound more modern, engaging, and relatable. Examples such as “*lagi healing weekend ini*”, “*mood today: happy vibes only*”, and “*quality time bareng bestie*” illustrate how English lexical items are embedded within Indonesian sentence structures. This pattern reflects not only linguistic creativity but also broader socio-cultural influences such as globalization, digital culture, and identity construction (Androutsopoulos, 2015).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, code mixing is not a random phenomenon but a meaningful communicative strategy. It can serve various functions, including expressing identity, signaling group membership, emphasizing meaning, and adapting to specific social contexts (Holmes, 2013). In digital environments, code mixing also functions as a stylistic resource that enhances expressiveness and aligns speakers with contemporary communication norms. However, despite the growing number of studies on code mixing, much of the existing research has focused on spoken interaction or general social media use, with limited attention to how code mixing operates specifically in Instagram captions as a form of written, public, and performative discourse.

Moreover, previous studies often emphasize the types or frequency of code mixing without sufficiently examining how these linguistic choices relate to communicative functions and identity construction in digital contexts. This creates a gap in sociolinguistic research, particularly in understanding how bilingual language practices are strategically used in short-form digital texts to construct meaning, social identity, and audience engagement. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by analyzing both the types of code mixing and their communicative functions in Instagram captions produced by Indonesian users. By focusing on Instagram as a specific digital discourse environment, this research seeks to contribute to sociolinguistic studies by providing a more contextualized understanding of how code mixing functions in contemporary online communication. Based on this background, this study aims to identify the types of code mixing used in Instagram captions, analyze the communicative functions of

code mixing in digital interactions, and examine how code mixing reflects identity construction and social meaning among Indonesian youth. Through this analysis, the study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how bilingual language practices shape contemporary communication patterns in the digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Code Mixing in Digital Communication

Rahman (2020) examined code mixing in Twitter posts and found that English lexical items are frequently inserted into Indonesian sentences to express modern identity and emphasize meaning. This finding highlights the role of code mixing as a stylistic and identity-marking strategy in short-form digital communication. Similarly, Pratiwi (2021), who analyzed Instagram captions among university students, reported that code mixing is commonly used to create informal, expressive, and socially engaging language. Both studies indicate that English serves as a linguistic resource associated with modernity and youth culture.

Linguistic Form and Social Function

Although Rahman (2020) and Pratiwi (2021) both discuss code mixing in digital platforms, their studies differ in analytical focus. Rahman (2020) focuses primarily on linguistic form, particularly the presence of English insertions in Indonesian sentences. Meanwhile, Pratiwi (2021) extends the discussion to social factors, such as peer influence and communication style. This suggests that code mixing is not only a structural phenomenon but also a socially motivated practice shaped by interactional contexts.

Code Mixing and Identity Construction

In contrast, Hidayat (2019) approaches code mixing from a broader sociolinguistic perspective by emphasizing its function in expressing social identity and group belonging. Unlike the previous studies, which focus on specific platforms or user groups, Hidayat highlights the role of bilingual practices in digital communication as part of a larger process of identity construction. This perspective provides a more interpretative understanding of code mixing, although it offers less detailed analysis of its linguistic forms.

Research Gap

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that code mixing is a common feature of digital communication and is closely related to identity, social interaction, and linguistic creativity. However, a critical comparison reveals several limitations. First, most studies tend to focus either on types of code mixing through structural analysis or on social functions through interpretative analysis, without integrating both aspects in a single framework. Second, although Instagram is frequently

mentioned as a popular platform, relatively few studies provide a focused analysis of Instagram captions as a distinct form of digital discourse characterized by brevity, public visibility, and multimodal interaction. Therefore, there remains a gap in understanding how specific types of code mixing, such as insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization, are systematically used in Instagram captions and how these forms relate to communicative functions and identity construction. This study seeks to address this gap by combining structural and functional approaches to analyze code mixing in Instagram-based communication.

METHOD

Design and Samples

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research approach to analyze the phenomenon of code mixing in Instagram captions. The research focuses on identifying linguistic patterns used by Indonesian youth in social media communication. The data source consists of Instagram captions written by Indonesian users. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, focusing on captions that contain Indonesian–English code mixing. A total of twenty captions posted by users aged between 18 and 25 years were selected as the research data.

The selection of twenty captions is considered sufficient for this study because qualitative research prioritizes depth of analysis rather than quantity of data. The selected captions were carefully chosen to represent recurring patterns of code mixing commonly found in Instagram communication. In addition, the data reached a point of thematic saturation, where no new types or patterns of code mixing were identified in additional captions. Therefore, the sample is considered adequate to capture the linguistic characteristics and communicative functions of code mixing within the scope of this study.

Instruments and Procedures

The main research instrument in this study was the researcher, who was responsible for collecting, selecting, and analyzing the data. In addition, a documentation sheet was used as a supporting instrument to record the linguistic data systematically. The documentation sheet included several components, such as Instagram captions, code-mixed words or phrases, types of code mixing, the context of the captions, and the communicative functions of the expressions. The data collection procedure was conducted through several steps. First, the researcher observed Instagram posts written by Indonesian users within the selected age group. Second, captions containing Indonesian-English code mixing were identified and selected based on the sampling criteria. Third, the selected captions were documented through screenshots and transcribed into a data table for systematic analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted through several systematic stages to ensure a clear process from identification to interpretation. First, the researcher identified linguistic units in the captions that indicated code mixing, focusing on English words or phrases embedded within Indonesian sentences. Second, the identified data were classified into types of code mixing based on Muysken's (2000) framework, including insertion and alternation. Each code-mixed element was analyzed based on its grammatical position and its integration within the sentence. After the classification process, the researcher conducted a contextual analysis by examining the surrounding words, sentence structure, and overall meaning of each caption. This step was intended to understand how each code-mixed expression functioned within the broader message of the caption. The researcher then determined the communicative function of each code-mixed expression by referring to sociolinguistic theory proposed by Holmes (2013). The functions were identified based on several indicators, including expressing emotion, emphasizing meaning or intention, signaling identity or modern lifestyle, and creating an informal or friendly tone. For example, the use of the word "vibes" in the caption "Weekend vibes bareng bestie" was interpreted as an expression of emotional atmosphere and modern identity. It also strengthened the informal and trendy tone of the message. Finally, the results of classification and interpretation were organized into an analysis table to present the types of code mixing, their grammatical forms, contexts, and communicative functions systematically.

Table 1. Types of Code Mixing in Instagram Captions

No	Caption	Code Mixed Word	Type of Code Mixing
1	<i>Lagi healing di pantai, feeling so happy</i>	Feeling	Insertion
2	<i>Weekend vibes bareng bestie</i>	Vibes	Insertion

Finally, the researcher interpreted the overall patterns by connecting the types of code mixing with their communicative functions. This step allowed the study to explain not only how code mixing appears structurally but also why it is used in digital communication contexts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that Indonesian youth frequently use code mixing in Instagram captions, with insertion emerging as the most dominant type. Insertion occurs when English lexical items are embedded into Indonesian sentence structures without altering the grammatical framework of the base language. This pattern is consistently observed across the dataset, indicating that Indonesian remains the matrix language, while English functions as an embedded linguistic resource. This phenomenon can be illustrated through several examples of captions collected in this study:

- “*Lagi healing di pantai, feeling so happy.*”
- “*Weekend vibes bareng bestie.*”
- “*Quality time sama keluarga, simple but meaningful.*”
- “*Ngopi santai biar mood jadi better.*”
- “*Hari ini full of positive vibes.*”

In these examples, English words such as *feeling*, *vibes*, *bestie*, *quality time*, *mood*, and *positive* are inserted into Indonesian sentence structures. These lexical items are not randomly selected; rather, they are commonly used expressions in global digital culture and are widely understood by Indonesian youth. The consistency of this pattern across multiple captions reinforces the finding that insertion is the dominant type of code mixing in Instagram-based communication.

The frequent use of such vocabulary indicates that English has become an important linguistic resource in digital communication. Words like *vibes* and *mood* are particularly noteworthy because they encapsulate complex emotional states in a concise form. Instead of using longer Indonesian expressions, users prefer shorter English terms that are perceived as more expressive and stylistically appealing. This suggests that code mixing is not only a linguistic phenomenon but also a pragmatic strategy to achieve communicative efficiency. Beyond structural patterns, the findings also reveal that code mixing serves as a strategy for expressing social identity. For instance, captions such as:

- “*Ngopi dulu biar tetap productive.*”
- “*Self reward after a long day.*”
- “*Stay positive dan keep smiling!*”

Demonstrate how English expressions are associated with modern, productive, and optimistic lifestyles. The use of such expressions allows users to construct an identity that aligns with global youth culture. In this sense, code mixing functions as a symbolic marker of belonging to a digitally connected and culturally hybrid community. In addition, code mixing operates as a stylistic device that enhances the attractiveness of Instagram captions. Since social media communication is characterized by brevity and immediacy, users tend to select words that are concise yet impactful. English lexical items often fulfill this function more effectively than their Indonesian equivalents. For example:

- “*Good vibes only.*”
- “*Less drama, more happiness.*”
- “*Chill dulu, jangan overthinking.*”

These expressions demonstrate how English is used to create catchy, memorable, and aesthetically appealing captions. The rhythmic and formulaic nature of such phrases also contributes to their popularity in digital communication. Furthermore, the data indicate that code mixing plays an important role in emphasizing emotions and personal experiences. Consider the following examples:

- “*Happy banget hari ini, feeling blessed.*”
- “*Capek tapi still grateful.*”

- “*Healing time setelah minggu yang hectic.*”

In these captions, English expressions such as *feeling blessed*, *still grateful*, and *healing time* intensify emotional meaning and add nuance to the message. Compared to using only Indonesian, the mixed expressions provide a richer and more layered emotional tone. This supports the idea that code mixing enhances expressive capacity in digital communication.

The findings also reflect the strong influence of globalization and digital culture on language use. Continuous exposure to English through social media content, music, films, and online trends encourages users to adopt similar linguistic patterns. As a result, code mixing becomes normalized and even expected in certain online communities. This phenomenon is evident in captions such as:

- “*Late night thoughts, can’t sleep.*”
- “*Weekend getaway with my favorite people.*”

which closely resemble global social media expressions. These findings are consistent with Pratiwi (2021), who found that code mixing reflects social trends and digital culture, and Rahman (2020), who highlighted the increasing use of bilingual expressions in online communication. However, this study extends previous research by providing more detailed linguistic evidence and demonstrating how specific lexical items are repeatedly used across different contexts to perform similar communicative functions.

From a broader perspective, the phenomenon of code mixing illustrates the dynamic and evolving nature of language in the digital era. Language is no longer confined to rigid structures but becomes fluid, adaptive, and hybrid. Instagram users actively construct new linguistic forms by combining elements from different languages to create meaningful and expressive communication. More importantly, the findings suggest that code mixing influences not only how users communicate but also how they perceive themselves and others in digital spaces. The use of English expressions may signal modernity, creativity, and global awareness, while Indonesian elements maintain cultural identity and local relevance. This interplay between global and local elements reflects the complex identity negotiation experienced by young people in contemporary society. Therefore, code mixing in Instagram captions is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a social and cultural practice. It represents how Indonesian youth navigate between local identity and global influence, using language as a tool for self-expression, social interaction, and participation in digital culture.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the use of code mixing in Instagram captions among Indonesian youth. The findings show that English lexical items are frequently inserted into Indonesian sentence structures, with insertion emerging as the dominant type of code mixing in digital communication. This pattern reflects how bilingual resources are systematically used in social media contexts rather than

occurring randomly. More importantly, this study contributes to sociolinguistic research by demonstrating that code mixing in digital communication functions not only as a linguistic variation but also as a strategic resource for identity construction, emotional expression, and social positioning. The findings highlight how Instagram captions, as a form of short and public digital discourse, shape new patterns of language use that differ from traditional spoken or written communication. In this context, code mixing becomes a marker of modern identity, global orientation, and participation in contemporary digital culture.

Furthermore, this study extends previous sociolinguistic research by integrating both structural analysis (types of code mixing) and functional analysis (communicative purposes) within a specific digital platform. This integrated approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how language variation operates in online environments, particularly among young users who actively negotiate between local and global linguistic influences. The study also emphasizes the role of social media as a dynamic space where language evolves rapidly through interaction, creativity, and exposure to global content. Code mixing in Instagram captions illustrates how digital communication encourages hybrid language practices that reflect broader social and cultural transformations. This research contributes to the development of digital sociolinguistics by showing that language use on social media is not merely a reflection of existing linguistic norms but an active process of meaning-making, identity construction, and cultural adaptation. Future research may explore other forms of language variation in digital communication, such as slang expressions, emoji usage, or multilingual communication patterns, to further expand the understanding of language in the digital era.

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