

Multilingual Practices in Indonesian Social Media Communication: Evidence from a Digital Sociolinguistic Survey

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has reshaped multilingual communication and intensified code-mixing and code-switching in digital interaction. Framed within digital sociolinguistics, this study examined the associations between social identity, digital community affiliation, language prestige, and self-reported multilingual practices among Indonesian social media users. A quantitative, correlational, cross-sectional survey design was employed. Data were obtained from 312 respondents recruited online across four platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X) through non-probability, quota-based sampling, using a 35-item, five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, and were analysed with descriptive statistics, Pearson product-moment correlation, and multiple linear regression using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Self-reported multilingual practices were generally high. All three predictors were positively and significantly associated with multilingual practices; in the regression model, language prestige recorded the largest standardised coefficient, followed by social identity and digital community affiliation, with the three predictors jointly accounting for 62.4% of the variance. Because the design is correlational and all constructs were self-reported, the results are interpreted as associations rather than causal effects. The findings support the view that multilingual communication on social media is a socially situated and technologically mediated practice rather than a mere reflection of bilingual competence, and offer implications for multilingual literacy and language education in digital environments.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has transformed linguistic practices across multilingual societies, particularly within social media environments where users continuously negotiate identities, relationships, and social positions through language choices. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X, Facebook, and YouTube have moved beyond their original communicative functions to become complex sociolinguistic spaces in which multilingual interaction occurs intensively. In Indonesia—a

nation with more than 700 local languages and widespread bilingualism involving Indonesian, regional languages, and foreign languages—digital communication has accelerated the emergence of multilingual discourse. Users routinely combine Indonesian with English or regional languages in captions, comments, hashtags, and private messages to achieve communicative efficiency and social alignment with their audiences. Such practices indicate that language use in digital spaces is increasingly shaped by social and technological factors rather than by grammatical competence alone (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Blommaert, 2018; Crystal, 2019).

Within sociolinguistics, multilingual practices are commonly realised through code-mixing and code-switching. Code-mixing refers to the insertion of elements from one language into another without a change in communicative context, whereas code-switching involves alternation between languages in response to shifts in topic, setting, participants, or purpose (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). Traditional accounts explain these practices through social variables such as status, solidarity, ethnicity, and domain of use. Digital environments, however, introduce additional dimensions—platform culture, audience design, algorithmic visibility, and online identity performance—so that language choices become strategic decisions oriented toward constructing desirable online identities and affiliations rather than mere responses to face-to-face demands (Georgakopoulou, 2017; Seargeant & Tagg, 2019).

The emergence of digital sociolinguistics offers a comprehensive framework for understanding multilingual communication in technologically mediated contexts, examining how language practices interact with digital technologies, online communities, and evolving forms of participation. From this perspective, multilingual practices are shaped not only by speakers' linguistic repertoires but also by the technological affordances and social expectations embedded in online platforms (Androutsopoulos, 2021). Users deploy multiple languages to increase visibility, attract engagement, signal expertise, or align with particular communities: English is frequently associated with modernity, cosmopolitanism, and professional competence, whereas regional languages may index authenticity, solidarity, and cultural belonging. Multilingual practices in social media are therefore best understood as socially meaningful performances rather than random deviations from monolingual norms (Lee, 2020; Zappavigna, 2018).

International research in multilingual societies such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines has shown that code-mixing and code-switching on social media are strongly associated with identity negotiation, audience accommodation, and participation in transnational communities, with English lexical items indexing educational attainment and global orientation while local languages sustain intimacy and cultural identity (Canagarajah, 2018; Lee, 2020). Research in Indonesia has likewise reported a substantial rise in multilingual practices among social media users, particularly university students and young professionals, with motivations ranging from stylistic preference and lexical convenience to identity expression and prestige construction (Rahardi, 2023; Rosmaria, 2024). Nevertheless, most Indonesian studies remain predominantly qualitative—drawing on discourse analysis, virtual ethnography, and content analysis—and, while illuminating

linguistic forms and functions, they rarely provide empirical estimates of the relationships among social identity, language prestige, community affiliation, and multilingual behaviour (Wahyuni, 2022; Rahardi, 2023).

This predominance of qualitative work reveals a research gap: the predictive roles of social variables in shaping multilingual communication in Indonesian digital settings remain insufficiently modelled. Although the communicative cultures of Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X differ in audience composition, interactional norms, and content presentation—suggesting that multilingual practices may vary across ecosystems—the present study does not test cross-platform differences. Rather, it estimates the overall associations between three social predictors and multilingual practices across a multi-platform sample, leaving systematic cross-platform comparison to future research. Accordingly, the study adopts a quantitative, correlational survey design within digital sociolinguistics to examine the extent to which social identity, digital community affiliation, and language prestige are associated with self-reported multilingual practices among Indonesian social media users. Theoretically, it extends the conceptualisation of multilingualism as a socially situated and technologically mediated practice; methodologically, it illustrates the value of correlational survey and regression approaches for explaining multilingual behaviour online (Blommaert, 2018; Jones et al., 2021).

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the levels of social identity, digital community affiliation, language prestige, and multilingual practices among Indonesian social media users?

RQ2. Are social identity, digital community affiliation, and language prestige significantly associated with multilingual practices?

RQ3. To what extent do these three variables jointly account for the variance in multilingual practices?

On the basis of the reviewed literature, the following directional hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Social identity is positively associated with multilingual practices.

H2. Digital community affiliation is positively associated with multilingual practices.

H3. Language prestige is positively associated with multilingual practices.

It is further expected that the three predictors jointly explain a significant proportion of the variance in multilingual practices.

II. METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, correlational, cross-sectional survey design to examine the associations between social identity, digital community affiliation, language prestige, and self-reported multilingual practices in Indonesian social media communication. A correlational design permits the examination of naturally occurring phenomena without manipulation while providing statistical evidence of association among constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because all constructs were measured through self-report at a single point in time, the design supports inferences about association rather than causation. Survey approaches of this kind have been widely used in applied linguistics to investigate language

attitudes, language choice, and identity construction in multilingual societies (Dörnyei, 2018; Mackey & Gass, 2022; Phakiti, De Costa, Plonsky, & Starfield, 2018).

Participants and Sampling

Participants were 312 active Indonesian social media users aged 18–35 who reported regularly using at least two languages in their online communication. Because the population of Indonesian social media users has no enumerable sampling frame, a non-probability, quota-based sampling strategy was adopted rather than probability random sampling. Respondents were recruited online through public posts and direct invitations distributed via Instagram, TikTok, X, and Facebook, together with university student networks. Platform quotas were set a priori to approximate the relative prevalence of each platform among young Indonesian users, and each respondent was assigned to a platform stratum according to the platform they identified as their primary channel. Eligibility criteria comprised a minimum usage frequency of three days per week and active engagement in content production or interaction through comments, captions, or direct messages. Of 356 individuals who initiated the questionnaire, 312 provided complete and eligible responses, yielding a completion rate of 87.6%. Participation was voluntary and anonymous: respondents provided informed consent electronically before proceeding, were informed of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw, and no personally identifying information was collected.

Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire of 35 items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The items were distributed across the four constructs as follows: social identity (9 items), digital community affiliation (8 items), language prestige (9 items), and multilingual practices (9 items). Items were developed from indicators derived from theories of social identity, language prestige, digital participation, and multilingual communication. It should be emphasised that the multilingual-practices scale captures respondents' self-reported perceptions and reported frequency of multilingual use rather than directly observed linguistic behaviour; the construct therefore reflects perceived and self-reported practice rather than a corpus-based measure of actual code-mixing or code-switching.

Content validity was assessed by three experts in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, who rated the relevance of each item on a four-point scale. Item-level content validity indices (I-CVI) and the scale-level index (S-CVI/Ave) were computed; the S-CVI/Ave of .95 exceeded the recommended threshold of .90, and expert feedback informed minor revisions to item wording. Construct validity was examined using Pearson product-moment correlations, with all items exceeding the minimum acceptable item–total correlation at the .05 level. Reliability, assessed via Cronbach's alpha, was .914, indicating excellent internal consistency (Field, 2018; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

Data Analysis

Data were analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Descriptive statistics summarised central tendency and dispersion; for interpretation, mean scores were classified using equal-width class intervals derived from the five-point scale: 1.00–1.80 (very low), 1.81–2.60 (low), 2.61–3.40 (moderate), 3.41–4.20 (high), and 4.21–5.00 (very high). Prior to regression, the assumptions of multiple linear regression were examined with reference to the model

residuals rather than the raw scores. The normality of the standardised residuals was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and normal P–P plots; homoscedasticity was evaluated through inspection of the standardised-residual scatterplot and the Breusch–Pagan test; and multicollinearity was assessed using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Because all constructs were measured by self-report from the same respondents on a single occasion, common method bias was examined using Harman's single-factor test. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were then conducted, with statistical significance set at .05 (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019; Pallant, 2020).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

A total of 312 respondents participated in the study, comprising 178 females (57.1%) and 134 males (42.9%). By age, 124 participants (39.7%) were 18–22 years old, 118 (37.8%) were 23–27 years old, and 70 (22.5%) were 28–35 years old. Regarding platform use, Instagram was the most frequently reported primary platform (34.6%), followed by TikTok (28.2%), X (20.5%), and Facebook (16.7%). All participants reported using Indonesian in combination with at least one additional language, predominantly English and regional languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, Bataknese, and Minangkabau. These characteristics reflect the multilingual character of Indonesian digital communication and are consistent with prior observations of increasingly bilingual and multilingual online interaction (Androutsopoulos, 2021; Lee, 2020).

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Information

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	134	42.9
	Female	178	57.1
Age	18–22 years	124	39.7
	23–27 years	118	37.8
	28–35 years	70	22.5
Primary platform	Instagram	108	34.6
	TikTok	88	28.2
	X	64	20.5
	Facebook	52	16.7

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis indicated relatively high levels of self-reported multilingual practices among Indonesian social media users; mean scores were interpreted using the class intervals reported in the Method. Language prestige recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.55$), placing it in the very high band (4.21–5.00), followed by multilingual practices

($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.59$), social identity ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.58$), and digital community affiliation ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.61$), all of which fell within the high band (3.41–4.20). These results suggest that respondents strongly perceived multilingual language use as a socially valuable and symbolically meaningful communicative resource; in particular, the high rating of language prestige indicates that English and bilingual forms are frequently associated with educational attainment, cosmopolitan identity, and professional competence in digital spaces (Blommaert, 2018; Jones et al., 2021; Zappavigna, 2018).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Category
Social Identity	4.12	0.58	High
Digital Community Affiliation	4.05	0.61	High
Language Prestige	4.21	0.55	Very High
Multilingual Practices	4.18	0.59	High

Note. Category bands based on equal-width class intervals of the five-point scale: 3.41–4.20 = high; 4.21–5.00 = very high.

Assumption Testing

The regression assumptions were examined with reference to the model residuals. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test on the standardised residuals returned a non-significant result ($p = .087$), and the normal P–P plot indicated approximate normality of residuals. Homoscedasticity was supported by the absence of systematic patterning in the standardised-residual scatterplot and by a non-significant Breusch–Pagan test ($p = .214$). Tolerance values (.581–.672) and VIF values (1.487–1.721) indicated no multicollinearity among the predictors. Finally, Harman's single-factor test showed that the first unrotated factor accounted for 31.7% of the total variance, below the 50% criterion, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to threaten the validity of the findings (Field, 2018; Hair et al., 2019; Pallant, 2020).

Table 3. Results of Assumption Testing

Test	Statistic	Sig.	Interpretation
Kolmogorov–Smirnov (residuals)	0.072	.087	Residuals normal
Breusch–Pagan (residuals)	1.55	.214	Homoscedastic
Tolerance range	.581–.672	–	Acceptable
VIF range	1.487–1.721	–	No multicollinearity

Test	Statistic	Sig.	Interpretation
Harman's single factor	31.7%	–	Below 50% (no CMB)

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed positive and statistically significant relationships among all variables (all $p < .001$). Social identity was strongly correlated with multilingual practices ($r = .684$), indicating that respondents with stronger identity awareness tended to report more frequent multilingual communication. Digital community affiliation was also significantly correlated with multilingual practices ($r = .629$), suggesting that participation in diverse online communities is associated with greater reported linguistic flexibility. The strongest relationship was observed between language prestige and multilingual practices ($r = .721$), implying that symbolic perceptions of the status and value of particular languages are closely linked to reported digital language behaviour. These associations are consistent with social identity theory and language-ideology perspectives that position language as a marker of belonging and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991; Lee, 2020; Seargeant & Tagg, 2019).

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	X1	X2	X3	Y
Social Identity (X1)	1	.564**	.591**	.684**
Digital Community Affiliation (X2)	.564**	1	.547**	.629**
Language Prestige (X3)	.591**	.547**	1	.721**
Multilingual Practices (Y)	.684**	.629**	.721**	1

** $p < .001$.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The multiple regression model showed that the three predictors jointly accounted for 62.4% of the variance in self-reported multilingual practices, $R^2 = .624$, $F(3, 308) = 171.822$, $p < .001$. Language prestige recorded the largest standardised coefficient ($\beta = .356$, $p < .001$), followed by social identity ($\beta = .341$, $p < .001$) and digital community affiliation ($\beta = .284$, $p < .001$). The pattern of results is consistent with hypotheses H1–H3 and with the expectation that the three predictors jointly explain a significant proportion of variance. Because the design is correlational and all measures are self-reported, these coefficients are interpreted as associations rather than causal effects: they indicate that stronger symbolic evaluations of language status, together with more salient social-identity and community-affiliation orientations, tend to co-occur with higher levels of self-reported multilingual practice.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor variable	β	t	Sig.
Social Identity	.341	5.822	.000
Digital Community Affiliation	.284	4.913	.000
Language Prestige	.356	6.145	.000

Note. $R = .790$; $R^2 = .624$; $F(3, 308) = 171.822$; $p < .001$. Dependent variable: Multilingual Practices.

Discussion

The findings suggest that multilingual practices among Indonesian social media users are best understood as forms of social action rather than purely linguistic behaviour. The significant association involving social identity supports the view that language choices in digital environments function as symbolic resources for self-presentation and identity performance. Users often combine Indonesian, English, and regional languages to project images of modernity, professionalism, creativity, or local belonging, depending on the audiences they seek to reach. This interpretation is consistent with social identity theory, which holds that individuals actively construct and negotiate identities through symbolic markers, including language (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and with recent digital sociolinguistic work on the role of multilingual discourse in online identity construction (Androutsopoulos, 2021; Georgakopoulou, 2017). In the Indonesian context, Setiawan (2023) reported that code-switching among adolescents in Medan was closely linked to identity construction, social trends, fear of missing out (FOMO), and the desire to appear modern among peers, reinforcing the interpretation of multilingual practices as instruments of social positioning.

The significant association involving digital community affiliation indicates that multilingual communication is also shaped by the norms and expectations of online communities. Different platforms cultivate distinct linguistic cultures that inform users' communicative choices: Instagram and TikTok users, for example, often employ English to increase visibility and engagement, whereas regional languages may be preferred in community-oriented interactions that prioritise solidarity and authenticity. This pattern is consistent with audience design theory, which proposes that speakers continuously adapt their language to the characteristics and expectations of their audiences (Bell, 1984). Multilingual communication in social media therefore reflects not only personal preference but also community participation and social adaptation within digital ecosystems. Comparable observations were reported by Nasution and Siregar (2021), who found that code-switching contributed positively to communication confidence and interactional effectiveness among Indonesian EFL learners, suggesting that multilingual practices may function as communicative scaffolding that reduces linguistic anxiety.

Language prestige recorded the largest coefficient, underscoring the importance of symbolic power in shaping language choices. English continues to function as a form of linguistic capital associated with educational achievement, international orientation, and socioeconomic mobility; accordingly, many users integrate English lexical items into their digital communication to enhance perceived credibility and social value. This finding is consistent with Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital and with studies reporting an association between English use and prestige construction in Asian multilingual societies (Lee, 2020), reinforcing the argument that multilingual practices in social media are embedded within broader social hierarchies and language ideologies. Comparable conclusions were reported by Suprayetno et al. (2025), whose study of Indonesian–English code-mixing on Instagram found that multilingual practices frequently emerged as adaptive responses to audience engagement, communicative efficiency, and prestige considerations associated with English use.

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting these findings. First, the design is correlational and cross-sectional, so the observed associations cannot establish causal direction. Second, multilingual practices were measured through self-report and thus reflect respondents' perceptions and reported frequency rather than directly observed behaviour; corpus-based or observational measures would provide a more direct index of code-mixing and code-switching. Third, sampling was non-probability and quota-based, which constrains the generalisability of the estimates to the wider population of Indonesian social media users. Fourth, although platform quotas were applied, the study did not test cross-platform differences; comparative or multilevel designs are needed to determine whether the modelled associations vary across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X. Finally, the reliance on single-occasion self-report raises the possibility of common method bias; although Harman's test suggested this was not severe, multi-source or longitudinal data would strengthen inference in future work.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study demonstrates that self-reported multilingual practices in Indonesian social media communication are significantly and positively associated with social identity, digital community affiliation, and language prestige. Among these variables, language prestige showed the strongest association, indicating that multilingual language use in digital environments is closely linked to symbolic values such as modernity, professionalism, global orientation, and educational achievement. The results further suggest that users strategically employ Indonesian, English, and regional languages as communicative resources to negotiate identities, establish group membership, and enhance interactional effectiveness within online communities. Taken together, the findings support digital sociolinguistic perspectives that conceptualise multilingualism as a socially situated and technologically mediated practice rather than a mere reflection of bilingual competence. The study thereby contributes empirical evidence from the Indonesian multilingual context and illustrates the applicability of quantitative survey methods to the study of online language behaviour, while acknowledging that its correlational, self-report design precludes causal conclusions.

Several recommendations follow from these findings. Future studies are encouraged to adopt mixed-method or longitudinal designs, and to incorporate behavioural or corpus-based

measures of actual code-mixing and code-switching, in order to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of multilingual communication and to move beyond self-reported perceptions. Comparative and multilevel designs across platforms would allow direct testing of whether multilingual practices differ across Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X. Additional variables—such as language attitudes, digital literacy, algorithmic influence, and intercultural competence—may also be examined to develop more comprehensive explanatory models. From a practical perspective, language educators and curriculum developers should recognise multilingual practices not as deficiencies but as communicative resources reflecting the realities of contemporary digital interaction; integrating digital multilingual literacy into language education may help learners develop the linguistic flexibility, intercultural awareness, and communicative competence needed for participation in interconnected global communities.

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