

CODE-MIXING IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AMONG EFL STUDENTS IN EASTERN INDONESIA

¹*Ibrahim Ibrahim, ¹Fitri Fatika Astini, ¹Dian Saputra, ²Lukman Hakim

¹Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong, Barat Daya, Jl. Pendidikan No.27, Southwest Papua, Indonesia

²Communication Science Department, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Jl. Ringroad Selatan, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author Email: ibrahim.unamin@um-sorong.ac.id

Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: July 2025 Revised: August 2025 Accepted: September 2025 Published: October 2025	<i>In today's digitally connected world, code-mixing is a key feature of multilingual communication, particularly among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in informal online interactions. While digital multilingualism has gained scholarly attention, little is known about how students in peripheral regions such as Eastern Indonesia engage in code-mixing in their daily digital practices. This study investigates how EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong use code-mixing on WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through social media observation, screenshot analysis, and semi-structured interviews with purposively selected students from the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters. Findings reveal frequent integration of Indonesian, English, and local languages in captions, comments, text messages, and status updates. Code-mixing serves functional and stylistic purposes, such as expressing emotions, narrating experiences, and shaping modern identities, with English use linked to prestige and global trends. Rather than random, it is context-dependent, influenced by audience, topic, and platform. The study highlights code-mixing as a strategic communicative resource and offers implications for pedagogy, digital literacy policy, and future research.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

In today's era of global interconnectedness, digital platforms have reshaped how people communicate, express themselves, and negotiate identities across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Huang, 2024). The expansion of social media and instant messaging has created spaces where multilingualism is increasingly common. For university students, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, navigating these digital spaces involves drawing from diverse linguistic resources not only for interaction but also for identity performance and relationship maintenance (Mohamad, Zaini, & Idany, 2023).

Among these multilingual practices, code-mixing, the embedding of elements from one language into another within a single utterance, stands out as a key strategy (Kumari, 2024). Far from being random, code-mixing reflects purposeful communicative choices. It allows speakers to adapt to audience expectations, align with social trends, or index modernity and prestige. Research shows that in EFL settings, learners use code-mixing not only to overcome lexical limitations but also to express emotions, clarify meaning, and construct social belonging (Sutrisno, 2023; Auer, 2021). Thus, digital multilingualism is not merely linguistic but also social and cultural, shaped by platform norms, communicative goals, and audience dynamics.

Despite growing interest in code-mixing, most existing studies concentrate on urban or globally connected populations, often overlooking the experiences of students in peripheral regions. This creates a significant gap in understanding how multilingual practices unfold in different sociolinguistic contexts. Eastern Indonesia, for instance, presents a distinctive environment where English operates within a trilingual system that includes Bahasa Indonesia as the national lingua franca and diverse local languages as community tongues (Rukmi & Khasanah, 2020). Such complexity offers unique opportunities to examine digital multilingualism, yet this context remains underrepresented in academic literature.

This study addresses that gap by investigating EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong. Students in this setting typically use local languages in domestic life, Indonesian in education and public discourse, and English in academic contexts (Fitriati, 2015). These overlapping repertoires enable flexible language use, particularly in informal digital spaces such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, where communication is expressive and interactive. In these spaces, students frequently integrate Indonesian, English, and local languages in captions, comments, text messages, and status updates. Code-mixing, in this context, becomes both a linguistic resource and a marker of hybrid identity, allowing students to balance local belonging with participation in global youth culture (Fachriyah, 2021).

Preliminary observations highlight that these practices serve multiple functions. English is often used to project modernity, competence, and alignment with global trends, while local languages express intimacy, solidarity, and cultural rootedness. Indonesian, meanwhile, bridges both spheres as the lingua franca. Code-mixing is therefore strategic and context-dependent, shaped by audience, topic, and platform affordances. Such practices illustrate not only the adaptability of multilingual youth but also their agency in constructing identities that are simultaneously local and global.

By foregrounding this context, the study contributes both theoretical and practical insights. Theoretically, it engages with ongoing debates on code-mixing and translanguaging while bringing attention to peripheral multilingual realities often neglected in discourse studies. Practically, it provides implications for pedagogy and policy, particularly in understanding how digital multilingual practices influence EFL learning, identity development, and digital literacy in higher education. Recognizing these dynamics is essential for creating learning environments that value students' linguistic repertoires as assets rather than deficits.

Against this background, the present research aims to investigate how EFL students in Eastern Indonesia employ code-mixing in their digital communication. It seeks to identify the forms and patterns of code-mixing across platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, and to explore the communicative functions these practices serve in students' online interactions—for example, in expressing emotions, sharing personal experiences, or constructing social identities. Furthermore, the study examines the contextual factors that shape these practices, including audience, topic, and platform, and considers how such dynamics reflect students' multilingual competence and sense of belonging in digital spaces. By addressing these issues, the study seeks to enrich the literature on digital multilingualism by offering perspectives from a linguistically diverse but academically underrepresented region. It argues that code-mixing is not simply evidence of language contact but also a dynamic practice of creativity, identity expression, and social participation in digital communication.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology to explore the phenomenon of code-mixing among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in digital communication

contexts. A qualitative descriptive design is considered particularly appropriate for producing rich, contextually grounded accounts of linguistic practices, especially when the primary objective is to describe the nature and patterns of language use without necessarily embedding the analysis within complex theoretical frameworks (Jusuf & Jusuf, 2024; Kim, Sefcik, & Bradway, 2017). Within this framework, the study seeks to capture how students integrate multiple languages, specifically through code-mixing, in authentic online interactions such as social media conversations, posts, and comments.

To strengthen the qualitative findings, basic descriptive statistics were incorporated to present an overview of participant characteristics, including semester level, preferred digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook), and the frequency of code-mixing instances. The application of these statistical tools serves to organize demographic information more systematically, thereby providing a clearer representation of emerging patterns and enhancing both the interpretability and trustworthiness of the results (Schreiber, 2021; Salkind, 2020). By combining qualitative descriptive analysis with descriptive statistical profiling, this study offers a more comprehensive account of how code-mixing operates in the digital communication practices of EFL students in Eastern Indonesia. The findings not only illustrate the forms and patterns of code-mixing, but also shed light on the contexts in which it occurs, the reasons students employ it, and the broader social implications it may entail.

Participants

The subjects of this study are undergraduate students enrolled in the English Language Education program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong. Using a purposive selection strategy, eight students from the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters were identified through preliminary observation as actively engaging in code-mixing during digital communication. These individuals were chosen based on their frequent use of more than one language, typically Indonesian, English, and a local language within single utterances or conversations on social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook. The purposive selection ensured that the chosen subjects exhibited linguistic behaviors directly relevant to the objectives of the research. By focusing on students who consistently employ code-mixing in their online interactions, the study aimed to document authentic instances of multilingual expression and hybrid language practices in digital spaces.

Data Analysis

In this study, data were collected using two main instruments: social media screenshots and semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with EFL students from the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters, as identified in the participant selection. Therefore, this study employed a descriptive qualitative analysis approach to systematically explore the presence and patterns of code-mixing among EFL students in digital communication, following the framework suggested by Nassaji (2015) for organizing qualitative data in a clear and coherent manner. The analysis adhered to the four-phase model developed by Miles and Huberman (2014), comprising data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Data were initially collected through screenshots of participants' social media activities specifically WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, to capture authentic instances of code-mixing in natural communication. These were complemented by semi-structured interviews with students from the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong, conducted between January 6 and 13, 2025. The scheduling was organized based on academic levels to ensure representativeness across stages of study. In the data reduction phase, the researcher filtered and condensed relevant content from transcripts and social media posts, paying particular attention to the strategic blending of English, Indonesian, and local language

elements. This step aimed to isolate key segments that demonstrated how students mixed languages across different platforms.

During the data display stage, the selected information was organized thematically to uncover platform-based tendencies, frequency of code-mixing, and lexical categories involved. This arrangement facilitated a more nuanced understanding of how code-mixing functioned in context-specific digital interactions. Finally, in the conclusion drawing phase, recurring themes were interpreted in relation to broader discussions on multilingual practices in digital environments. Following Creswell's (2017) model, this involved organizing raw data, coding for emergent categories, crafting descriptive narratives, and deriving meaning from students' linguistic choices. By focusing specifically on code-mixing, the analysis offers insight into how students navigate their multilingual repertoires to construct identity, signal social belonging, and engage more effectively within digital spaces (Arslan, 2023). This methodical approach ensures that the findings are grounded in participants' real-life communicative experiences and are analyzed in a rigorous, transparent manner.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The findings reveal that code-mixing constitutes a prevalent aspect of multilingual practices within digital communication contexts. Students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong frequently integrate elements of Indonesian, English, and regional languages in their linguistic expressions. Such code-mixing practices are particularly evident in routine interactions on social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook.

Code-mixing in Whatsapp

The findings indicate that code-mixing is commonly used by EFL students in informal WhatsApp communication, particularly in status updates and text messages. Students frequently blend Indonesian, English, and local languages, driven by comfort and familiarity in social interaction. WhatsApp serves not only as a messaging platform but also as a space for authentic language practice. This flexible use of language aligns with translanguaging theory (García & Wei, 2014), where speakers draw on their full linguistic repertoire to communicate meaningfully. It also reflects domain theory (Konoshenko, 2024), suggesting that language choice is shaped by context, audience, and purpose.

Table 1
Code-Mixing in WhatsApp

No	Semester	Name	Time	Code-Mixing
1.	7	TW	1/12/2024	"Orang gila mana yang gabisa tidur malah <i>rewatch midsommar</i> maaf ya kepala, cari hal tengah malam ini"
2.	7	YW	29/12/2024	"Dimana pun miss yuniks berada belajar <i>is always</i> "
3.	7	IM	15/12/2024	"Saya kasih pinjam novelku, <i>but she lost it</i> . Mo nangis saja"
4.	7	PY	15/01/2024	"tapi ini de ngebawa fisik hahah <i>of course</i> karena mau bawa <i>behavior</i> kan gabisa "
5.	7	IN	20/12/24	"Tugas yang baik adalah tugas yang selesai <i>well done</i> kata saya "
6.	5	LS	4/11/2024	mama terimakasih sudah selalu " <i>mensupport boru mu</i> " untuk mengikuti segala program
7.	3	DW	12/12/2024	"Kembali lagi, <i>with another journey</i> "
8.	3	AL	25/12/2024	"Luar negeri <i>with you</i> kapan-kapan "

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the code-mixing practices employed by EFL students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong in WhatsApp communication, based

on data from Table 4.1. The discussion focuses on answering the core research question: How is code-mixing practiced by EFL students in digital communication, particularly on WhatsApp? The findings indicate a consistent pattern in which code-mixing predominantly occurs at the lexical level, with English words or short phrases embedded within Indonesian sentences. Examples such as “Orang gila mana yang gabisa tidur malah *rewatch* Midsommar,” “Saya kasih pinjam novelku, *but she lost it*,” and “Tugas yang baik adalah tugas yang selesai *well done*” demonstrate that these English insertions are used to convey actions, attitudes, or emotions that may not be easily articulated in Indonesian or are perceived as more expressive in English.

The language choices made by students are purposeful and sensitive to context, serving specific communicative functions such as expressing irony, emphasizing academic achievement, or aligning with global digital trends. For instance, phrases like “*of course karena mau bawa behavior*” and “*another journey*” illustrate how English is integrated to signal cultural fluency or a cosmopolitan self-image. Notably, students from all academic levels—3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters—engaged in code-mixing, though those in the 7th semester demonstrated more frequent and sophisticated usage. This pattern suggests a correlation between increased academic exposure, language proficiency, and the strategic use of code-mixing, consistent with previous claims by Núñez-Román et al. (2025) and Haryati & Prayuna (2020) regarding the relationship between linguistic maturity and multilingual expression.

Beyond individual behavior, the data also reveal broader sociolinguistic implications. Code-mixing among these students is not a random or careless insertion of foreign elements but reflects translanguaging practices, where speakers fluidly draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaning and express identity in digitally mediated environments (Haryati & Prayuna, 2020). WhatsApp, with its informal and dialogic format, emerges as a conducive platform for such multilingual performances. Particularly noteworthy is a case involving the use of Batak alongside English—“*mensupport boru mu*”—which reflects not only bilingualism but also layered multilingualism that includes local vernaculars. This hybrid expression emphasizes how digital spaces enable users to assert ethnic and linguistic identity simultaneously.

The analysis of WhatsApp-based communication among EFL students in Eastern Indonesia affirms that code-mixing functions as a strategic, meaningful practice deeply embedded in students’ multilingual realities. It serves pragmatic, stylistic, and identity-related purposes, supporting the view that language use in digital spaces is dynamic, creative, and highly context-dependent (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Sykes, J., & González-Lloret, M., 2020). The data underscore how students consciously navigate between languages to construct self-representation, engage with peers, and participate in global linguistic discourse all within the localized context of WhatsApp interaction.

Code-mixing in Instagram

Instagram, as a visually driven social media platform, provides a flexible space that encourages the use of code-mixing in various forms of expression. EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong utilize this platform to compose stories, captions, and comments that incorporate both Indonesian and English linguistic elements. The findings suggest that English code-mixing is frequently employed in informal contexts, often aligning with digital trends or when sharing personal experiences and engaging with peers’ content. This practice allows students to not only participate in contemporary modes of communication but also to display their linguistic competence in English. In doing so, students construct and project a modern, socially attuned identity to a broader audience, reinforcing the role of digital media as a site for both language practice and identity performance.

Table 2
Code-Mixing in Instagram

No	Semester	Participant	Time	Code-mixing
1.	7	TW	2/10/2024	<i>"A very unexpected event,</i> instruksi diberikan h-2 di lanjutkan persiapan h-1 dengan segala keriwahan yang ada <i>and here we are!!</i> "
2.	7	YW	7/12/2024	<i>"yes I did 10 k,</i> pelari sejati itu bukan soal juara, namun dirimu bisa lari sampai garis finish mengalahkan orang-orang.
3.	7	IM	13/05/2024	Merasakan kesendirian <i>"butterfly era"</i> yang telah lama hilang.
4.	7	PY	16/11/2024	<i>"that's the point that makes this</i> video sangatlah <i>incredible</i> "
5.	7	IN	24/11/2024	<i>"Missing this Microteaching group, Feedbacknya</i> keren semua <i>the best</i> aktor "
6.	5	LS	14/12/2024	<i>"Thank you, sister,</i> selalu setia dalam panggilan tuhan "
7.	3	DW	15/12/2024	"Selamat berproses menjadi mahasiswa <i>Best pray</i> untukmu ya "
8.	3	AA	17/08/2024	<i>"Thank you</i> cepat beres kuliahnya lalu buka toko <i>cake brownies</i> ya"

Across all the observed data, code-mixing predominantly occurs at the lexical and clausal levels. Students insert English words, phrases, or clauses into Indonesian-language sentences, as seen in expressions such as "A very unexpected event... and here we are!!" (TW), "Yes I did 10k" (YW), and "That's the point that makes this video... incredible" (PY). These practices reflect increasing syntactic competence and the students' confidence in composing informal written discourse. The insertions are not random; rather, they are deliberate and serve to express emotion, stylistic emphasis, or a globalized identity. In this context, language choice demonstrates students' awareness of audience, communicative intent, and the nature of social media as a space for global digital cultural expression.

Moreover, code-mixing is used not only to reinforce meaning but also to mark personal moments or achievements—as in "Yes I did 10k" (YW)—or to express familiarity and gratitude, as seen in "Thank you, sister" (LS). This practice aligns with the translanguaging framework, in which multilingual speakers flexibly draw on their full linguistic repertoire to construct context-appropriate meaning. Instagram thus serves as a significant space for students to negotiate identity and linguistic competence through creative and contextual language practices.

The code-mixing practices of EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong on Instagram represent a meaningful linguistic strategy with emotional and identity-related functions, reflecting their lived multilingual realities. English is used not only as a tool of communication but also as a means of expressing affiliation with global culture and shaping an academic self-image. These findings strengthen the literature on digital multilingualism, showing that students in peripheral regions such as Eastern Indonesia are also active and strategic in using social media as a space for translanguaging and multilingual expression.

Code-Mixing in Facebook

Facebook, as a social media platform, is frequently utilized by EFL students not only for personal communication but also for disseminating information and engaging with current news content. The researcher observed instances of code-mixing occurring in various communicative formats, including status updates, comment sections, and group discussions.

Table 3
Code-Mixing in Facebook

No	Semester	Participant	Time	Code-mixing
1.	7	TW	16/12/2019	“piknik di hari senin yang indah dan <i>shining shimmering splendid</i> keren juga”
2.	7	YW	23/04/2024	“Ini <i>the real</i> , aku mendakimu jauh sampai patah kaki “
3.	7	IM	15/08/2018	“karena hidup <i>always</i> menawarkan kesempatan untuk berubah”
4.	7	PY	28/06/2021	“Selamat hari <i>caps lock</i> sedunia”
5.	7	IN	29/04/2024	“ <i>Counting days</i> ” sebelum penarikan “ <i>I said to them</i> ” ini terakhi kalinya miss ngajar di kelas kalian, soalnya miss sudah mau penarikan.
6.	5	LS	16/04/2024	“ <i>Thank you untuk my self</i> , sudah bertahan sejauh ini “
7.	3	DW	26/12/2024	“ <i>Thank you</i> ya sudah, selalu <i>support</i> saya di semua kegiatan”
8.	3	AA	12/04/2024	“Diam jadi seorang <i>introvert</i> , bergerak jadi tamu podcast”

Across the observed data, code-mixing appears predominantly at the lexical and phrasal levels, where English adjectives, adverbs, noun phrases, and clauses are inserted into Indonesian sentences. For instance, participant TW wrote, “piknik di hari senin yang indah dan *shining shimmering splendid* keren juga,” combining poetic English expressions with colloquial Indonesian. Other examples include: “*Ini the real*, aku mendakimu jauh sampai patah kaki” (YW), and “*Thank you untuk my self*, sudah bertahan sejauh ini” (LS). These insertions demonstrate students’ growing syntactic control and confidence in composing expressive, hybrid digital narratives.

Beyond linguistic construction, the code-mixing practices here highlight broader sociolinguistic implications. The use of English on Facebook demonstrates how students construct digital identities, connect with global cultural references, and participate in informal discourse communities. For example, expressions such as “*Counting days*” and “*I said to them*” (IN) not only convey emotion but also reflect intertextual links to music lyrics or pop culture, indicating a desire to resonate with a wider audience. This supports Haryati & Prayuna (2020) theory of translanguaging, where multilingual individuals flexibly utilize their entire linguistic resources to negotiate meaning in context. Similarly, Androutsopoulos (2015) emphasizes that language use in digital media is fluid and identity-driven, while Sengupta et al. (2024) high light the role of multilingualism in youth self-expression online.

The code-mixing practices of EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong on Facebook illustrate a deliberate and meaningful use of multiple languages that reflects their multilingual realities, identity construction, and stylistic creativity. These students actively use Facebook not only for social interaction but also as a site for digital performance and translanguaging, showing that even learners from peripheral areas like Eastern Indonesia are capable of engaging in globally informed linguistic expression.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings in light of the research questions and the gaps identified in the literature review, with particular emphasis on the role of code-mixing as a multilingual practice in digital communication among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The results, drawn from interviews and social media observations, demonstrate that students frequently blend English, Indonesian, and occasionally local languages in informal online interactions. This practice is not incidental; rather, it reflects deliberate linguistic choices informed by context, audience, and communicative purpose. More specifically, the findings reveal six interrelated factors shaping code-mixing practices, thereby highlighting its functions in identity construction, stylistic variation, pragmatic clarity, and social connectedness across multiple digital platforms. These insights extend previous scholarship by offering evidence from a peripheral Indonesian context, an area that remains underrepresented in studies of digital multilingualism.

Code-mixing in Whatsapp

The findings demonstrate that code-mixing practices among EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong on WhatsApp are consistent, primarily occurring at the lexical level, and influenced by social context and academic standing. Students insert English words or short phrases into Indonesian sentences, as illustrated in examples like: “Orang gila mana yang gabisa tidur malah *rewatch Midsommar*,” “Saya kasih pinjam novelku, *but she lost it*,” and “Tugas yang baik adalah tugas yang selesai *well done*.” These insertions show that English is used to express emotions, ideas, or actions that are either more stylistically appealing or difficult to articulate in Indonesian.

These language choices are intentional and context-driven, taking into account the audience, communicative intent, and social relevance. Expressions such as “*of course karena mau bawa behavior*” and “*another journey*” reflect students’ efforts to construct a cosmopolitan identity and align with global digital trends. This supports the theory of translanguaging (Haryati & Prayuna, 2020) where multilingual speakers draw from their entire linguistic repertoire strategically to construct meaning and negotiate identity.

Seventh-semester students displayed more frequent and sophisticated use of English compared to those in the third and fifth semesters, suggesting a relationship between academic progression, language proficiency, and strategic language use. This finding aligns with Núñez-Román et al. (2025), who argues that multilingual competence develops with educational advancement and increased exposure to the target language. In this context, WhatsApp serves as an informal yet effective medium for both language practice and social performance.

Beyond individual behavior, the data reflect broader sociolinguistic dynamics. One participant, for instance, blended Batak (a local language) and English in the phrase “*mensupport boru mu*,” illustrating layered multilingualism at the intersection of local and global linguistic identities. This supports Androutsopoulos (2015), who observed that language use in digital spaces is fluid, creative, and highly contextual. Similarly Moradi & Chen (2022) emphasize that young people actively use multilingual digital practices to construct social identity and demonstrate language proficiency.

However, some scholars offer critical perspectives. Sutrisno (2023) warns that over-reliance on translanguaging in informal communication may hinder the academic mastery of English. He stresses the importance of maintaining balance between informal multilingual expression and formal pedagogical strategies. Likewise, Nasution et al. (2021) argue that while code-switching and code-mixing serve communicative functions, they should not replace systematic language instruction necessary for comprehensive language development.

Code-mixing practices in WhatsApp communication represent a deliberate, meaningful strategy embedded within their multilingual realities. These practices serve emotional, stylistic, and identity-related functions and align with contemporary theories of digital multilingualism. Nevertheless, attention must also be given to potential pedagogical challenges, ensuring that informal linguistic creativity is supported by structured academic development especially in peripheral regions such as Eastern Indonesia.

Code-Mixing in Instagram

This section discusses the code-mixing practices of EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong in their digital communication through Instagram. Based on eight entries in Table 2 from students in the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters, it was found that code-mixing predominantly occurs at the lexical and clausal levels. Students inserted English words, phrases, or clauses into Indonesian sentence structures, as seen in expressions like “A very unexpected event... and here we are!!” (TW), “Yes I did 10k” (YW), and “That’s the point that makes this video... incredible” (PY). These insertions not only reflect students’ increased syntactic competence but also their confidence and linguistic flexibility in informal

digital contexts. Such usage is contextual and strategic, aiming to express emotion, highlight identity, or follow global digital cultural trends.

These findings support the theory of *translanguaging* proposed by Haryati & Praywana (2020), which states that multilingual speakers consciously and flexibly utilize their full linguistic repertoire to create meaning and construct identity in digital communication. Furthermore, this practice aligns with Núñez-Román et al. (2025) concept of *translingual practice*, which views language shifting as part of the performance of both global and local identities. For example, the phrase “butterfly era” (IM) is a reference to global popular culture, indicating that code-mixing serves as a symbolic marker of membership in specific global communities, such as fandoms or digital subcultures.

On the other hand, the high frequency of code-mixing by 7th-semester students compared to those in the 3rd and 5th semesters suggests a relationship between academic maturity and linguistic fluidity. Advanced-level students tend to have more intensive exposure to English, greater confidence, and a broader academic vocabulary. This supports Núñez-Román et al. (2025) assertion that multilingual competence develops through greater exposure, experience, and academic engagement. In contrast, 3rd-semester students tend to use simpler code-mixing structures, such as “Best pray untukmu ya” and “cake brownies ya,” reflecting their early-stage ability and comfort in mixing languages.

However, some researchers have expressed critical perspectives. Sutrisno (2023) warns that excessive use of translanguaging and code-mixing in informal contexts may blur the lines between language use for social versus academic purposes. He emphasizes the need to maintain functional separation to preserve students’ academic English proficiency. Similarly, Nasution et al. (2021) stress that although code-switching and code-mixing support informal communication and social identity, they should not replace systematic and structured language learning approaches in formal educational settings.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, these findings affirm that Instagram is not just a space for information sharing but also an arena for linguistic and social identity expression. EFL students use English not only as a communication tool but also as a symbol of modernity, competence, and global connectedness. This reflects the concept of *digitally-mediated identity* as described by Androutsopoulos (2015), who argued that language use in digital spaces is fluid, creative, and highly contextual. Moradi & Chen (2022) also observed that young people use multilingual digital practices to showcase their language skills and build broader social relationships.

Thus, the code-mixing practices of EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong through Instagram are meaningful linguistic strategies that reflect their multilingual realities. These findings add to our understanding that students from peripheral regions such as Eastern Indonesia are also actively and strategically using social media as a space for translanguaging, and demonstrate that language can be a powerful tool for constructing academic and social identity in the digital era.

Code-mixing in Facebook

This section discusses the code-mixing practices employed by EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong in their digital communication via the Facebook platform. The data analyzed are drawn from eight entries, involving students from the 3rd, 5th, and 7th semesters. The primary focus of this discussion is to answer the research question: *How is code-mixing practiced by EFL students in digital communication, particularly through Facebook?*

Across all the observed data, code-mixing appears predominantly at the lexical and phrasal levels. Students consistently insert English words or phrases into Indonesian-language sentences. For instance, participant TW wrote: “piknik di hari senin yang indah dan *shining shimmering splendid* keren juga,” while IN posted: “*Counting days* sebelum penarikan I said

to them ini terakhir kalinya miss ngajar...”). These insertions are not random but intentional, used to express emotion, add stylistic emphasis, or reflect a connection to global culture. This aligns with the theory of translanguaging proposed by Haryati & Prayuna (2020), which explains that multilingual speakers flexibly draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaning appropriate to their social context.

The language choices made by students also show an awareness of audience and communicative intent. English phrases are used to express gratitude (“*Thank you untuk my self*” – LS), offer appreciation (“*Thank you ya, selalu support saya...*” – DW), or mark meaningful personal moments (“*Ini the real, aku mendakimu jauh...*” – YW). In this context, Facebook functions not only as an information-sharing platform but also as a space for identity and emotional expression. As Androutsopoulos (2015) points out, digital spaces enable language use that is fluid, creative, and highly contextual—serving as arenas where youth perform social creativity through language.

In terms of academic level, 7th-semester students dominate the data with 62.5% of all entries. This suggests that the higher a student’s academic level, the more flexible and complex their English usage becomes in digital communication. These findings support Núñez-Román et al. (2025) argument that multilingual competence develops alongside academic progression, increased confidence, and wider exposure to the target language in both educational and global contexts.

However, not all scholars fully endorse informal translanguaging practices. Sutrisno (2023) warns that overreliance on translanguaging in casual digital communication may diminish students’ attention to mastering formal English structures. He emphasizes the importance of balancing informal multilingual expression with structured pedagogical approaches. Similarly, Nasution et al. (2021) argue that while code-switching and code-mixing serve communicative purposes, they should not replace systematic language instruction essential for comprehensive language development.

The code-mixing practices observed on Facebook reflect more than linguistic phenomena; they are also social and cultural strategies that represent the students’ multilingual identities. English is used not only as a tool for communication but also as a symbol of global cultural affiliation and social recognition. These findings reinforce existing literature on digital multilingualism and highlight that students in peripheral regions like Eastern Indonesia are also active and strategic in using social media as a space for translanguaging and multilingual expression. Nevertheless, maintaining a balance between expressive freedom and academic linguistic development remains essential to support holistic language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the prevalent and purposeful use of code-mixing in the digital communication practices of EFL students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sorong. Through platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, students frequently blend Indonesian, English, and local languages, demonstrating a dynamic use of their multilingual repertoires. The findings suggest that code-mixing is not a random act but rather a strategic tool employed for various communicative functions, including identity expression, emotional articulation, and alignment with global trends. The frequent use of English, in particular, is linked to perceptions of modernity and global competency, while local languages serve as markers of intimacy and cultural identity. Furthermore, code-mixing was found to be context-dependent, varying across platforms and influenced by factors such as audience, topic, and the nature of the interaction. These findings contribute to our understanding of digital multilingualism, particularly in peripheral regions like Eastern Indonesia, where language practices are shaped by a blend of global and local influences.

The study also offers important implications for both pedagogy and policy in the context of digital literacy and language education. Recognizing the strategic use of code-mixing in students' online interactions is essential for educators to embrace the linguistic resources that students bring to the learning environment. Rather than viewing code-mixing as a hindrance to language development, educators can leverage these practices to foster a more inclusive and dynamic approach to language teaching. Additionally, the study underscores the need for further research on multilingual practices in digital spaces, especially in regions that are often underrepresented in the literature. By expanding the scope of digital multilingualism studies to include diverse sociolinguistic contexts, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how language is used to negotiate identity, build social connections, and participate in global digital culture.

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