



Discursive Construction of Identity: *Nggahi Mbojo*-English Code-Switching in Bimanese Youth's Social Media Writing

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Abstract. This study examines how Bimanese youth discursively construct their hybrid identities through code-switching practices between the Bimanese language (*Nggahi Mbojo*) and English in their social media writing. This investigation is pivotal as it challenges the assumption that global digital platforms inevitably erode local linguistic heritage, offering crucial insights into the resilience of minority languages in the digital age. Employing a qualitative approach with a digital ethnographic (netnographic) design, this research analyzes textual artifacts from three distinct social contexts—campus politics, sports, and culture—collected from Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook. The findings reveal a strategic 'linguistic division of labor,' where the Bimanese language, exemplified by exclusive phrases like "Mai ra dou Mbojo" (Come on, Bimanese people) and the emotive intensifier "poda", consistently functions as an in-group identity marker, serving as a cultural anchor that affirms emotional authenticity and ethnic solidarity. Conversely, English expressions such as "game changer" and "the struggle was real" are employed as a medium to project a cosmopolitan self-image and accumulate symbolic capital within the global linguistic economy. Beyond a mere division of roles, the primary finding indicates that Bimanese youth creatively blend these two languages through translanguaging practices to perform a fluid and dynamic 'glocal identity.' This practice is not a manifestation of identity confusion but rather a sophisticated form of linguistic agency used to present a self-image as a modern and globally-connected '*Dou Mbojo*.' The implications of these findings are significant, as they shed light on the complex relationship between language use and identity construction among Bimanese youth.

Keywords: Code-Switching, Digital Ethnography, Identity Construction, Social Media, Sociolinguistics.

1 Introduction

The intrinsic relationship between language and identity has long been a fundamental postulate in the field of sociolinguistics. However, the digital era has transformed this relationship by providing a global stage—social media—where identity is no longer

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merely possessed, but is actively negotiated, performed, and constructed [1]. In this digital ecosystem, linguistic choices such as code-switching become more than a mere phenomenon of language contact; they are a deliberate act to express a bilingual identity and signify cultural affiliation [2]. This practice enables individuals to display their linguistic agency, creating fluid and performative hybrid identities [1]. The acceleration of globalization and interconnectivity through social media [3] has rendered code-switching a key communicative strategy, wherein individuals, consciously or unconsciously, position themselves within a complex semiotic constellation of local versus global, and traditional versus modern [4].

In Indonesia, a nation characterized by its rich multilingual landscape and one of the world's largest social media populations, the role of the younger generation becomes particularly significant. Indonesian youth, far from being passive consumers, are active agents who skillfully 'create meaning' from their online experiences [5]. They perceive social media not as a mere entity, but as a tool that offers social and emotional benefits while also posing risks [6]. This phenomenon sparks a public discourse filled with tension. On one hand, there are concerns about the potential erosion of national character due to exposure to global content [7]. On the other hand, a reality emerges wherein youth utilize this digital space as an arena to creatively and strategically assert and negotiate their multi-layered identities.

Empirical studies in Indonesia have validated that code-switching, particularly between regional languages and English, is a prevalent practice on social media. This pattern is observable across various groups, from public figures [8] to adolescents in general [9], with a predominance of intra-sentential code-switching, which indicates a high degree of language integration [8]. The functions of this practice are diverse, extending beyond mere communicative needs. Code-switching is used strategically to display prestige, follow trends [10], and, most crucially, to 'express group identity' [9]. This diversity in the functions of code-switching sheds light on the complexity of language use on social media.

In the specific context of Bima, the Bimanese language (*Nggahi Mbojo*) serves as a primary identity marker and a repository for the philosophical values of the *Dou Mbojo* community [11]. The language is the medium for local wisdom, such as the concept of cooperation (*tutan dampa riman dadi*), which reinforces social solidarity [12]. However, the vitality of *Nggahi Mbojo* faces a sharp paradox in the digital era. On the one hand, the Bimanese script (*Aksara Bima*) faces a threat to its preservation due to the declining interest of the younger generation [13]. On the other hand, *Nggahi Mbojo* demonstrates extraordinary resilience in the digital space. Its speakers exhibit significant linguistic creativity through morphological and syntactic innovations on platforms like Facebook [14], utilizing it for various social functions. This dynamic context—where the threat of extinction and a surge of digital creativity co-occur—renders Bima a compelling and relevant case study.

Although the phenomenon of code-switching in Indonesia and the vitality of the Bimanese language have been studied from various perspectives, a significant research gap remains in studies that holistically analyze the practice of Bimanese-English code-switching through an in-depth theoretical framework of identity construction. Most studies focus on describing forms and functions, yet few have delved into how identity

is actively negotiated through this specific linguistic pairing. To fill this gap, this research adopts the framework of the discursive construction of identity. Inspired by studies that view language as an arena for the contestation of meaning in post-colonial contexts [15] and as a tool for identity negotiation in intergroup relations [16], this framework views code-switching not as a random habit, but rather as a strategic act and a form of linguistic agency [1]. Specifically, this study hypothesizes that Bimanese youth employ this practice to resolve the tension between local tradition and global modernity, utilizing *Nggahi Mbojo* to anchor their ethnic authenticity while deploying English to project a sophisticated, cosmopolitan self-image.

Drawing upon the identified background and research gap, this study aims to answer the primary research question: How do Bimanese youth utilize code-switching between *Nggahi Mbojo* and English in their social media writing to construct their hybrid and multi-layered identities discursively? Specifically, this study aims to (1) identify the social and pragmatic functions of Bimanese-English code-switching practices among Bimanese youth; and (2) analyze the discursive strategies they employ to project their identity as '*Dou Mbojo*' rooted in local culture, while simultaneously being globally-connected 'citizens of the world.'

2 Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach was selected for its capacity to provide an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon from the participants' perspective within their natural context—specifically, how Bimanese youth utilize code-switching to interpret and perform their identities [17].

The research design is digital ethnography (netnography), an adaptation of traditional ethnographic methods for studying the interactions, practices, and cultural artifacts that occur organically within online communities [18]. This design enables the researcher to observe the linguistic practices of Bimanese youth in their digital habitats without intervention, thereby ensuring the high authenticity of the collected data. The primary analytical framework employed is discourse analysis, which focuses on how language is used to perform social 'actions,' including the negotiation and formation of identity [19].

The data for this study consist of textual artifacts drawn from three distinct interactional contexts on social media: (1) Campus Politics ("Rebut Kursi BEM"), (2) Sports/Hobbies ("Tim Futsal Dadakan"), and (3) Culture & Adventure ("Ekspedisi *Doro Wawo*"). Textual data were collected from Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook.

The research participants are Bimanese youth selected through the purposive sampling technique, which involves selecting participants who are most relevant and information-rich for the study's objectives [17]. The primary selection criteria were active involvement in the contexts under investigation and a significant frequency of *Nggahi Mbojo*-English code-switching.

Data analysis in this study adheres to the interactive model proposed by [20], which consists of three concurrent streams of activity: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This process is detailed in the following stages:

1. **Observation and Documentation.** The researcher conducted non-participatory observation on relevant platforms and groups to collect authentic textual data.
2. **Data Condensation.** The collected raw data were then selected, focused, and simplified through a coding process. Each code-switching unit was assigned the code [B#] for *Nggahi Mbojo* and [E#] for English.
3. **Functional Analysis.** The coded data were analyzed to identify the social and pragmatic functions of each linguistic choice. This analysis views the practice of code-switching as a meaningful interactional act oriented towards identity, rather than merely a random mixing of languages [4].
4. **Discourse Analysis and Conclusion Drawing.** The identified functional patterns were subsequently analyzed in greater depth using the framework of discourse analysis [19] to identify the discursive strategies employed by the participants. From this analysis, conclusions were drawn regarding how their hybrid identities were constructed.

Despite the robust design, this study acknowledges certain methodological limitations. First, as a netnographic inquiry relying on digital textual artifacts, the findings may not fully capture the participants' offline linguistic realities or their spoken code-switching practices in face-to-face interactions. Second, the purposive sampling technique, while effective for selecting information-rich cases, focuses on specific youth communities (activists, athletes, and adventurers), which may not be statistically representative of the entire Bimanese youth population. Consequently, the results should be interpreted as an in-depth exploration of specific digital subcultures rather than a generalization of all Bimanese speakers.

3 Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussion of the discursive construction of identity among Bimanese youth. To provide a clear analysis, this section is divided into two main parts. First, the Results subsection details the linguistic data inventory and the observed patterns of code-switching functions. Second, the Discussion subsection interprets these findings through the theoretical lens of identity construction, analyzing how these linguistic choices operate as strategic tools for performing a 'glocal' self.

3.1 Results: Inventory and Patterns of Code-Switching

The digital ethnographic observation yielded a diverse corpus of code-switching instances across three social contexts: campus politics, sports, and cultural activities. The collected textual artifacts reveal a consistent division of labor between *Nggahi Mbojo* and English. The summary of representative data and their communicative functions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inventory of Bimanese-English Code-Switching Practices

No	Code	Original Utterance	Language Combination	Context	Communication Function
1.	B1	"Mai ra dou Mbojo!"	Bimanese	Campus Politics	Mobilizing ethnic solidarity
2.	B2	"...referring institution as 'uma'..."	Bimanese	Campus Politics	Creating sense of belonging
3.	B3	"KEREN PODA!"	Bimanes	Sports/General	Intensifying emotional
4.	E1	"OOTD check"	English	Lifestyle/Culture	Following global trends
5.	E3	"Gass!"	English (Slang)	Sports	Peer solidarity
6.	E7	"The struggle was real"	English	Adventure	Framing experience as 'story'
7.	E11	"public speaking"	English	Academic	Showing competence
8.	E16	"game changer"	English	Academic	Professional branding
9.	Mix	"Caru pemandangan... but this view is priceless"	Bim-Eng	Adventure	Hybrid identity performance

Note: Codes [B] indicate Bimanese dominant data, [E] indicate English dominant data.

As illustrated in Table 1, the data indicates a pragmatic separation. *Nggahi Mbojo* (e.g., Codes B1, B2) is predominantly used to signal in-group solidarity and emotional intensity, whereas English (e.g., Codes E7, E16) is deployed to construct a modern, professional, or global persona.

3.2 Discussion: Discursive Construction of Identity

Linguistic Division of Labor and Strategic Agency

Data analysis reveals a systematic and strategic 'linguistic division of labor' within the communicative repertoire of Bimanese youth. On the one hand, *Nggahi Mbojo* is consistently activated as an in-group identity marker. Its use extends beyond mere meaning transmission; it functions as an affective act to build ethnic solidarity, create a sense of intimacy, and signify emotional authenticity. Through this language, they construct an exclusive communal space for fellow '*Dou Mbojo*' within what [21] terms 'networked publics.' On the other hand, English is positioned as a medium for participating in global discourse and accumulating symbolic capital within the contemporary linguistic economy [22]. The choice to use English lexicons or phrases is a discursive strategy to project a modern, competent, and cosmopolitan self-image, thereby granting prestige and added value in social interactions. Consequently, the two languages are not in a mutually exclusive position; instead, they serve as complementary resources in a dynamic

practice of identity performance [23], wherein *Nggahi Mbojo* acts as a cultural anchor affirming their 'roots,' while English serves as a window displaying their global 'aspirations.'

This observed division of labor should be understood not as a mere habit, but as a manifestation of strategic decisions rooted in internalized sociolinguistic norms. Each act of code-switching constitutes a sophisticated sociolinguistic maneuver, wherein speakers intuitively assess the context, audience, and communicative goals before activating the most appropriate linguistic resources from their multilingual repertoire. These unwritten yet collectively understood norms dictate that *Nggahi Mbojo* is the 'appropriate' choice for signifying solidarity, while English is the 'effective' choice for projecting global competence. This internalization process indicates a high level of met-sociolinguistic awareness among the participants. They not only know how to use both languages, but they also, consciously or unconsciously, understand the social value and pragmatic effects of each linguistic choice in the specific context of social media [21]. Thus, language choice is not incidental but a skillful act of agency—an 'identity performance' practiced so consistently that it has become a naturalized part of their communicative competence in conducting 'identity work' in the digital era [23].

The Discourse of Local Authenticity ('Dou Mbojo)

The strategic use of *Nggahi Mbojo* in digital spaces transcends mere linguistic choice; it is a calculated cultural identity performance. In the dynamic realm of social media, the act of code-switching into the regional language emerges as a powerful strategy for managing interaction, staking a claim in discursive space, and dynamically asserting group affiliation. This practice, in line with contemporary sociolinguistics, showcases how multilingual communities deftly wield their linguistic repertoires to construct and negotiate social meaning in networked spaces [21]. The three primary performance strategies identified—ethnic mobilization, emotional intensification, and the creation of a safe space—underscore the sophistication with which Bimanese youth employ language as a social tool.

One of the most influential functions of using *Nggahi Mbojo* is as a tool for political mobilization and the assertion of communal boundaries. The call "*Mai ra dou Mbojo!*" [B1] is a perfect example of how individuals strategically select from their 'identity repertoires' to display a specific aspect of their identity at an opportune moment [24]. In the context of the BEM election, the ethnic Bimanese aspect of identity is deliberately activated through this linguistic choice. This act is consciously exclusive, addressed only to those who self-identify as 'Bimanese people'. It is an act of 'boundary work,' which effectively constructs a solid 'in-group' and distinguishes it from 'the other.' In the campus political arena, this call functions as a strategy to consolidate support and build a voting bloc based on primordial sentiment. This declarative act politically constructs a coalition.

Moreover, *Nggahi Mbojo* serves as a conduit for expressing affective authenticity through the practice of stancetaking—that is, how speakers use linguistic resources to express their attitudes, feelings, and alliances towards a particular subject [25]. The use of the intensifier particle *poda* in the phrase "*KEREN PODA!*" [B4] is a linguistic resource that packs a powerful emotional punch. *Poda* transcends its literal meaning of 'very'; it carries cultural nuances and an emotional intensity that signifies an alliance

with the Bimanese speech community. When used, the speaker not only expresses admiration but also performs their position as an authentic member of the community, capable of expressing praise in a Bimanese way. This adds a layer of warmth and sincerity, signaling that the response is a genuine emotional endorsement.

Finally, *Nggahi Mbojo* is strategically utilized to re-frame narratives through the use of cultural metaphors, a practice analyzed in-depth within the study of critical metaphor analysis [26]. In the context of the BEM campaign, referring to the institution as *uma* [B2] is a brilliant discursive maneuver. It functions as a cognitive framing device that actively challenges the common perception of the BEM as a rigid, bureaucratic entity. In contrast, the *uma* metaphor evokes connotations of warmth, a sense of belonging, and security. This constitutes a counter-discourse that redefines the relationship between students and their representative body, linking the formal institutional world with warm communal values, and effectively "domesticating" politics within a local cultural framework.

The Discourse of Digital Cosmopolitanism

The use of English by Bimanese youth in their online communication is a strategic act to project a cosmopolitan self-image. This linguistic choice can be analyzed as an effort to accumulate what modern sociolinguists refer to as symbolic capital within the global linguistic economy [22]. In the current social landscape, proficiency in English, even in the form of brief phrases, automatically confers added value. It functions as a marker of access to global information, participation in transnational culture, and an understanding of modern discourses. Thus, every code-switch to English is an act of image projection—a subtle declaration that "I am an individual connected to the world."

One of the most prominent registers is the professional and academic register, which is used to construct an image of competence and seriousness. Terms such as public speaking [E11] and game changer [E16] are adoptions from specific global discourses. By using these terms, the youth discursively present themselves as members (or aspiring members) of a "discourse community" [27]—in this case, the global community of innovative and strategic young leaders. This is their way of demonstrating 'competence' and 'readiness' in managing an organization by standards that are more broadly recognized, thereby building credibility and projecting a competent persona.

On the other hand, the register of pop culture and global slang is used to build affiliation and a sense of camaraderie with the transnational youth community. Instead of projecting vertical competence, this register aims to display relevance and horizontal solidarity. Practices like the OOTD check [E1] or the use of slang like Gass! [E3] are examples of how language is used to participate in "global popular culture" [28]. By participating in these linguistic practices, they symbolically declare, "We follow the same trends; we are part of 'you' (global youth)." This is a strategy to construct an identity that is not only determined by local ethnicity but also by their active participation in the currents of global popular culture, mediated by the English language.

The most sophisticated register is that of internet language and meme culture, which demonstrates a profound level of digital literacy. The phrase "The struggle was real" [E7] is more than just slang; it is a narrative template borrowed from global meme culture. Its use is a highly efficient intertextual act. Instead of recounting the difficulty of the hike at length, this phrase instantly evokes a narrative framework universally

understood by internet users. As explained by [29], these short narrative practices on visual platforms like TikTok and Instagram are how users construct and display their 'small stories' that shape and perform their identities online. By framing their local experience within a global 'small story' format, they brilliantly demonstrate the ability to be both local and global simultaneously.

The Arena of Hybridity: Synthesizing the Glocal Self

This is where the local and global discourses converge, creating an "arena of hybridity" where identity is no longer binary, but rather fluid, negotiated, and synthesized. In this discursive arena, code-switching is not merely the mixing of two separate languages, but a translanguaging practice—the utilization of an individual's entire linguistic repertoire as one integrated system to create new meaning [30]. Bimanese youth do not "leave" *Nggahi Mbojo* to "enter" English, or vice versa. Instead, they creatively "weave" the two languages together, producing a new identity texture that is more unique and complex than its individual components.

The narrative of the *Doro Wawo* Expedition TikTok video is the most vivid illustration of how this synthesis process occurs within a dense narrative performance. This performance can be dissected as a three-step discursive journey:

- **Global Opening (Alignment).** By initiating the narrative with the phrases "The struggle was real... but this view is priceless," the speaker instantly situates their experience within the familiar 'small story' framework of global internet culture [29]. This is an act of alignment, connecting with a global audience through a universal experience framed by digital humor and aesthetics.
- **Local Pivot (Re-grounding).** The narrative then pivots sharply with the phrase "*Caru pemandangan*." This is a crucial pivot point. The use of the word *caru*—a culturally specific aesthetic lexicon—functions to "re-ground" the experience from the generic-global to the specific-local. It signifies that although the experience is universally understandable, its appreciation is interpreted through the lens of Bimanese culture.
- **Identity Closure (Declaration).** The narrative concludes with an explicit and emphatic identity declaration: "dou Mbojo!". This is the apex of the identity performance, where all preceding elements—the global experience and the local appreciation—are crystallized into a statement about "who I am."

The outcome of this strategic juxtaposition is not a fragmented identity, but a seamlessly synthesized glocal identity. The concept of "glocalization" refers to how global phenomena are adapted and given new meaning in local contexts [31]. In this case, the Bimanese youth do not merely consume global culture; they actively "localize" it by integrating it into their Bimanese identity framework. The identity performed is that of a modern *Dou Mbojo*, capable of navigating seamlessly between different worlds—the global digital world and the local cultural world—without perceiving a contradiction. This practice is the perfect embodiment of how individuals, consciously or unconsciously, position themselves within the complex semiotic constellation of traditional versus modern, and local versus global [4].

4 Conclusion

This study concludes that Bimanese youth actively and strategically employ code-switching between *Nggahi Mbojo* and English not as a sign of identity confusion, but as a sophisticated practice of identity performance. The textual data confirms a clear linguistic division of labor: *Nggahi Mbojo*, exemplified by emotive phrases like "poda" and exclusive calls such as "Mai ra dou Mbojo", functions as a cultural anchor to assert ethnic solidarity and emotional authenticity. Conversely, English expressions like "game changer" and "the struggle was real" are deliberately utilized to project a modern, cosmopolitan self-image and accumulate symbolic capital in the global digital economy.

Theoretically, this research extends the understanding of 'glocalization' by demonstrating that minority youth are not passive consumers of global culture. Instead, they exercise linguistic agency to weave local and global elements into a seamless 'glocal' identity, effectively becoming modern 'Dou Mbojo' who are rooted in tradition yet connected to the world. This finding challenges the narrative of language endangerment in the digital age, showing instead how regional languages can adapt and thrive in new domains.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the scope beyond textual artifacts by incorporating interviews and offline observations to compare the consistency of these identity performances in face-to-face interactions. Additionally, quantitative studies involving a larger population of Bimanese youth could further validate whether these patterns of 'linguistic division of labor' are statistically prevalent across different demographic subgroups.

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