

# Translanguaging among YouTubers: A Study of Language Use and Identity Construction

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## Abstract

This study explores the application of translanguaging by the YouTubers, focusing on language use, types of translanguaging, and how translanguaging is used to construct identity. The study used a netnographic method. The data were collected from the YouTube channels of Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin. The researcher first transcribed the utterances into written texts. Analysis of the transcripts was then done to determine what languages were used in the videos that demonstrated instances of multilingual application. In the research, it is observed that two languages are used, which are Bahasa Indonesia and English. Among these, Bahasa Indonesia is the dominant language. Once the languages have been identified the utterances were categorized into the types of translanguaging. The study reveals there are three types of translanguaging that include approximately 70 percent language mixing, 20 percent language choice and 10 percent language borrowing. Lastly, the researcher explained how these translanguaging practices contributed to identity construction. Each type of translanguaging constructs a specific identity: language mixing constructs a bilingual/ multilingual identity, language choice constructs a knowledgeable and educated identity, and language borrowing constructs a modern identity. While this study provides insights into digital translanguaging, its scope is limited to two YouTubers and therefore cannot fully represent the diversity of practices across the platform. Nevertheless, the study concludes that translanguaging functions not only as a means of communication but also as a performative tool for shaping and projecting identity in digital spaces.

## Keywords

translanguaging, YouTubers, language use, identity construction

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of communication that human beings use to communicate thoughts, ideas, emotions, and intentions. Good communication needs language since it enables individuals to convey the intended message in the right way and in an effective manner. Language plays an important role in interacting with others. As social creatures, we need tools and ways of communicating to maintain our survival in the community. It is undeniable that language is the most effective tool used to communicate with other people. As a communication tool, language is an ability that individuals use with specified signs and units (Arafiq et al., 2023). Language usage differs from one country to another. Every country has its own national language. Similar to many other countries, Indonesia has its own national language, known as Bahasa Indonesia. In Indonesia, people primarily speak their regional language as their mother tongues, while Bahasa Indonesia serves as a second language.

In many communities around the world, many people are able to communicate using more than one language. The ability to use more than one language is called bilingualism or multilingualism. Savielle-Troike (2006) explained that bilingualism refers to the ability to use two languages, while multilingualism refers to the ability to use more than two languages. The practice of bilingualism and multilingualism is common and is determined by a number of factors including ethnic diversity, education, and international relationships. In some cases, people can mix two or more languages in their speech; this communicative practice is known as translanguaging. The concept of translanguaging occurs when individuals use all the language they possess in a free and natural manner, rather than isolating them. According to

Otheguy et al. (2015), translanguaging refers to the use of the entire linguistic repertoire of a speaker with no consideration of observant compliance with the socially and politically demarcated frameworks of known (and often nationally and state) languages. According to García and Wei (2014), translanguaging is not just about using two or more languages; it is about how people combine all their language skills to communicate more effectively and meaningfully. This usually occurs naturally in everyday life to bilingual or multilingual individuals, particularly the young generations. Translanguaging can help multilingual speakers gain a discursive space in order to portray emotion, show agency, and form social and personal identities (Wahyudi, 2023).

García and Otheguy (2021) state that translanguaging is a powerful act of self-expression, allowing individuals to reject imposed linguistic boundaries and embrace their hybrid linguistic and cultural realities. The concept of translanguaging is gradually being considered not only as a communicative strategy but also as a sort of manifestation of identity and culture (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). The process of identity construction is the procedural aspect of how people construct, negotiate, and perform their personal and social identities in the process of communication. In the virtual world, it involves the application of words, style, and cultural allusions to define how an individual is viewed by a viewer (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). On online platforms such as YouTube, the construction of identities becomes both performative and interactive, which is determined by both the language of the creator and the audience response (Boyd, 2014). García and Wei (2021) argue that digital space identity is fluid and constantly defined by the use of language. The usage of language on YouTube shows the influence and diversity of language globally, and this creates a

great chance to study the habits of multilingualism nowadays. Recent research demonstrates that YouTubers actively use multiple languages with the specific purpose of attracting various audiences, increasing their followings, and forming authentic personalities online.

In the modern world, technology is closely connected with language, which makes our communication patterns more effective in our daily lives. Technology is a medium that facilitates language to go further and travel more swiftly than it has before. Besides improving communication and accessibility of information, technology is also important in presenting the way language is applied in practical settings and specifically through translanguaging. The practice of the language is evident through platforms such as YouTube, in which people who create content can talk in any way they desire. The researchers state that the online environment promotes multimodal translanguaging, which involves using language together with visual and auditory messages to facilitate meaning-making (O'Halloran et al., 2020). Ilmassafa et al. (2023) argue that YouTube is a multilingual platform of complexity and change, where creators can employ a variety of languages to improve communication, identity, and reach different audiences. Translanguaging enables YouTubers to create stratified, multi-layered identities that are not dictated by monolingual rules. These identities are not universal, but they change between various videos, themes, or even audience interactions. Translanguaging, as Wei (2018) debates, is not merely a practice of language but a sort of a philosophy of language: the language that acknowledges the flux in meaning-making and the plural-self. YouTube, in this perspective, is a translingual place—a dynamic site where language practices and identity negotiations are produced in interrelationship, influenced both by personal will and by sociotechnical affordances.

These days, the trend among people is translanguaging. The language used by many YouTubers in their videos is a mixture. To illustrate, a YouTuber who lives in Indonesia might speak Bahasa Indonesia the majority of the time and still use bits of English or even other local language words and phrases such as Sundanese or Javanese. They do so to connect better with their listeners or speakers, to sound more expressive or comic, or to feature their actual way of speaking in daily life. Examples of YouTubers who practice translanguaging are Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin. Being someone with a background in international education, Maudy frequently incorporates English into her Indonesian speech to convey her personal thoughts, scholarly opinions, as well as the discussion of her lifestyle. Raymond Chin is a young businessman and inspirational content producer who uses English business jargon to express authority and professionalism. Online media, especially YouTube, has emerged as one of the main areas of translanguaging, with content creators such as Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin using a mix of Indonesian, English, and local languages to speak with their audiences and ensure meaning is transmitted. Yet, the majority of the studies on translanguaging have been conducted in educational or written forms, and a gap in the research on its application in digital media and the ways online creators plan their use of multiple languages to construct identities has been observed. This study fills this gap by investigating how Indonesian YouTubers use translanguaging and how it allows them to construct their identity.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed netnographic method, which was an adaptation of ethnographic methods applied in the context of online communities. Netnography was a qualitative research method first developed by Kozinets (1998) as an approach to understanding the behaviour, interactions, and culture of internet users through observation of publicly available digital content. Regarding this study, netnography was utilized to explore the practice of translanguaging and construction of identity by YouTubers through videos and interactions on the YouTube platform. Netnography as a research design was selected because it was the most appropriate research design to follow communication phenomena and self-expression on a digital scale, particularly on a multimodal and participatory platform such as YouTube. Netnography enabled the researcher to witness communication practices of internet users naturally without the need to physically engage them; hence, defining a more truthful meaning of the social actions that occurred online (Kozinets, 2015). Also, the method was consistent with the principle of translanguaging according to which the notion of language as a dynamic and flexible system was adopted and people actively applied the multitude of language resources to construct identity and express meaning.

This research used the documentation method to collect data. Document involved examining texts, videos, and online content to identify themes and patterns (Bowen, 2009). In this study, “documents” included video transcripts (spoken language) and on-screen texts or subtitles. The source and the focus of the study was the YouTube video by Maudy Ayunda “How I Manage Stress” and Raymond Chin “3 Strategi Bisnis Sukses Dari BUKU PERANG (The Art of War)”. The data were collected through reviewing the content and documentary technique, which was collecting the data by watching Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin’s YouTube videos. The data was analyzed by identifying the languages used, the types of translanguaging used, and how YouTubers used translanguaging as a strategy to construct identity. First, the researcher transcribed the utterances into written text. Then, identified the transcripts to determine the languages used and classified each utterance into the three types of translanguaging. The data was then reduced into a table. The components were divided according to the utterances (sentences). Then, the researchers interpreted how translanguaging was used to construct identity in Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin’s YouTube videos.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Finding

The first result is the research found both YouTubers employed two languages, Indonesian and English. The analysis revealed a total of 2,977 words. Of this total, Maudy produced 827 Indonesian words and 565 English words, while Raymond produced 1,285 Indonesian words and 300 English words. To clarify the distribution of languages used, here is a table showing the frequency and percentage of language use by Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin:

Table 1: Language use

Languages	YouTubers	Frequency (words)	Percentage	Total
Indonesia	Maudy Ayunda	827	59%	70%
	Raymond Chin	1.285	81%	
English	Maudy Ayunda	565	41%	30%
	Raymond Chin	300	19%	

The data in the table shows that both Maudy and Raymond prioritize Indonesian as the dominant language in their content. Although both YouTubers primarily use Indonesian as their primary language, they also frequently interject English. Bahasa Indonesia accounts for approximately 70% of the total utterances, while English represents around 30%.

The second result is the researcher found that there were three types of translanguaging used by Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin, those are language mixing, language choice, and language borrowing. For clarity, the frequency and percentage of translanguaging employed by Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Types of translanguaging

No	Types	Frequency	Percentage
1	Language mixing	81	70%
2	Language choice	22	20%
3	Language borrowing	17	10%
Total		120	100%

The most frequently appears is language mixing, which is 81 times or 70%, then secondly language choice appears 22 times or 20%, and the least frequently appears is language borrowing appears 17 times or 10%. The third result is the research found that translanguaging practices contributed to the formation of three distinct identities: language mixing construct bilingual and multilingual identity, language choice constructs knowledgeable and educated identity, and language borrowing construct modern identity.

## Discussion

Translanguaging is a concept that has developed in modern sociolinguistics and multilingualism studies. Garcia and Wei (2014) define translanguaging as a practice in which bilingual or multilingual speakers flexibly use their entire language repertoire in a single communication situation. This study analyzed translanguaging practices in two YouTube videos "How I Manage Stress by Maudy Ayunda and "3 Strategi Bisnis Sukses Dari Buku Perang (The Art of War)" by Raymond Chin, using detailed transcription and a colour coding technique to map Indonesian and English usage. Every word in both videos was transcribed step-by-step, followed by analysis via a colour coding method (Indonesian with coloured green and an English word with coloured blue). The reason why this method was selected is that it will be easier to trace language usage patterns as the researchers trace them through the starting point of the video to the final point. Once the

languages spoken were established, the following step was to categorize every utterance into three types of translanguaging language mixing, language choice, and language borrowing. Upon classification, the researcher then evaluated the role of each category in forming the identities of the two YouTubers.

The results of the study indicate that both Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin use two languages, which are the Indonesian and English. Out of the total number of words, which was 2.977 words, the Indonesian language represented about 70 percent of the total number whereas the English language represented about 30 percent of the total number of words. Maudy mainly spoke Indonesian and inserted English words to explain academic or psychological terms. Raymond spoke Indonesian most of the time and used English instead in explaining business in the world. Indonesian is more local and closer, whereas English expands its coverage and increases modernity and professionalism. This use of language is what Garcia and Wei (2014) refer to as translanguaging, where bilingual speakers ensure that they employ their entire linguistic repertoire to create meaning without necessarily dividing languages. Here, the situational prevalence of Indonesian also enforces a sense of nationality, whereas the inclusion of English is a symbol of cosmopolitanism and worldwide interaction.

Having determined the languages Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin were speaking with the help of transcription and colour coding, the next step of this research was to determine what types of translanguaging appeared in the speech of two YouTubers. According to the data received in both videos, the researcher discovered that Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin employed three types of translanguaging, these are language mixing, language choice and language borrowing. The mixing of two or more languages in a sentence or utterance is called language mixing. Muysken (2000) describes it as intra-sentential mixing in which words, phrases or grammatical structures of other languages are mixed. Here, it is common to find an amalgamation of English and Indonesian words or phrases used by the two (Maudy and Raymond) within a single sentence. Language choice is the choice of language that is intentionally made by the speaker based on the situation, the audience or the subject matter (Fasold, 1984). This shows the speaker's awareness of communicative appropriateness and strategic use of linguistic resources. In this study, Maudy often uses English for academic or complex psychological terms and Indonesian for general ideas or emotional emphasis. On the same note, Raymond mostly speaks in Indonesian when giving explanations but when quoting business terms or international strategies, he changes to English. Language borrowing refers to the use of words used in another language and consequently using it in speech without necessarily taking it a step further to translate. Borrowing is the process by which a language takes words, phrases, or structures from another language and then adapts them to fit the phonological and morphological system of the receiving language or have a specific meaning that is difficult to replace (Haugen, 1950). In the videos analysed, English words are adopted into Indonesian both formally and informally, such as technical business terms, technology, or everyday expressions that do not have precise equivalents in Indonesian.

Language mixing was most common, and this is used as a demonstration of the organic linguistic flow of the bilinguals. Such mixing, according to Baker (2011), reflects

linguistic competence and membership in more than a single language community. The approach assists the YouTubers construct a bilingual or multilingual identity enabling them to move comfortably across the cultural and linguistic borders. Meanwhile, language choice, where English is intentionally used for academic or technical terms, constructs an image of a knowledgeable and educated identity, reflects what Holmes (2013) calls social positioning through language choice. On the other hand, language borrowing, seen in the insertion of English words into Indonesian such as pressure -nya and blue ocean constructs a modern identity, resonating with Heller (2007) notion that linguistic borrowing symbolizes affiliation with modernity and globalization.

These conclusions highlight that translanguaging is not just a communicative but also a purposeful approach in the construction of identity. The use of the flexible language allows Maudy and Raymond to create alternative though complementary representations of themselves, Maudy positions herself as a thoughtful and educated person, whereas Raymond introduces himself as a modern and entrepreneurial one. This is consistent with the beliefs of Wei (2018), who considered that translanguaging is not only a linguistic practice but also a philosophy of language that allows speakers to act as more than one person at the same time. Their linguistic adaptability allows them to attract a wide range of viewers, including the locals and foreigners, without compromising the authenticity and relatability in the manner of communication.

Compared to the other research that mainly emphasized the idea of translanguaging in the formal educational settings, this study presents translanguaging in the digital environments as an act of performance that is directly linked to the process of identity formation. YouTube offers a dynamic setting in which language is no longer just communicated with but also a way of self-expression and identity creation. Thus, translanguaging among Indonesian YouTube creators is not just a linguistic practice, but a performative identity construction that signifies the way bilingual people succeed in their time of globalization by negotiating their space within the digital world.

## CONCLUSION

In accordance with the data analysis the following conclusions can be made. Maudy Ayunda and Raymond Chin create their YouTube content with 2 major languages Indonesian and English. The major medium of communication is Indonesian to deliver the main discourse and develop rapport with the local population, and English is employed tactfully in conveying academic, psychological and business vocabularies. This study successfully identified three types of translanguaging that occurred in the speech of the two YouTubers, namely, language mixing, language choice, and language borrowing. Language mixing constructs a bilingual and multilingual identity; language choice constructs a knowledgeable and educated identity and language borrowing constructs a modern identity. Thus, translanguaging in YouTube content is not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a strategy for constructing identity. Future studies could investigate how audience perception and engagement are influenced by different types of translanguaging strategies used by YouTubers, particularly in relation to identity construction and cultural representation.

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