

A Sociolinguistic Study of English-Indonesian Code-Switching in the “Road Trip” Vlogs

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Abstract

In a globalized era, digital communication platforms like YouTube have become vital spaces for diaspora communities to negotiate cultural identity through fluid language practices. This study investigates the types of code-switching used by a bilingual diaspora speaker, William Rainier, in the “Road Trip” episodes of the Rainier Family YouTube channel. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were gathered through observation, manual transcription, and purposive sampling of four travel vlogs uploaded in 2025: Road Trip Solo, Yogyakarta, Jakarta, and Semarang. The linguistic data were analyzed using Poplack’s (1980) types of code-switching. The findings reveal that all three types of code-switching (intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag switching) are used naturally and spontaneously in the vlogs, with intra-sentential switching being the most dominant type. The speaker switches codes mainly to maintain cultural authenticity when describing traditional Indonesian elements and to bridge connections with both local companions and an international audience. This study highlights how code-switching functions as a dynamic communicative tool for identity preservation among digital natives in a diaspora context.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Code-Switching, Diaspora, YouTube Vlogs, Rainiers Family

INTRODUCTION

In today's modern and global society, many people use more than one language in communication, a phenomenon known as multilingualism. Multilingualism is a natural result of human interaction, defined as an individual's ability to use more than one language for daily communication (Alisoy, 2025). To prove this global reality, recent demographic data show that more than half of the world's population is bilingual (Kaipa & Kaipa, 2022).

In sociolinguistics, this interaction frequently leads to code-switching, where speakers move between two or more languages depending on their needs, such as to provide clarity or emphasize their messages (Nurvadhilah et al., 2022). For the diaspora community, people who move to other countries, switching between their native and host languages is a fundamental way to navigate their dual cultural identities and show their social belonging (Jehan et al., 2025).

This phenomenon shows that code-switching is not just a random mixing of words, but a structured linguistic tool that bilingual speakers use to improve their communication. According to Anggia et al. (2023), bilingual people often switch languages to deliver their messages more effectively and keep their daily conversations natural. Whether they learn the languages before or after moving to a new place, code-switching helps them to communicate more clearly and understand each other better.

In this digital globalization era, code-switching has been widely analyzed within the context of digital communication. Several previous studies have analyzed code-switching practices across various social media platforms. For instance, Januartini & Santika (2023) and Daulay et al. (2024) analyzed code-switching in Instagram and TikTok content, showing that mixing languages makes the interaction more engaging and modern. Additionally, Rostina et al. (2025) explored code-switching within a WhatsApp group to maintain fluent text discussion, while Nisicha & Marpaung (2023) focused on audiovisual media in a podcast to show how speakers express their thoughts more clearly. However, even though there are many studies about code-switching on those platforms, studies that focus specifically on diaspora family vlogs on YouTube that switch from English to Indonesian are still very limited.

To fill this research gap, this study focuses on the Rainiers Family YouTube channel as the object of research. The Rainiers Family provides an ideal context due to their unique multilingual background. Having lived in the United States for more than 20 years, they are highly fluent in English. Interestingly, when they go on vacation to Indonesia in their

“Road Trip” episodes, the speaker, William Rainier, frequently switches from English to Indonesian when visiting different cities like Semarang, Solo, Jakarta, and Yogyakarta. He uses English as the base language structure but switches to Indonesian when interacting with friends or family, and also describes traditional Indonesian elements, such as local culture and traditional food, because his viewers consist of both local and international audiences. This language-switching behavior reflects how digital media content and vlogs serve as a practical tool for individuals to show their complex cultural roots in the digital world (Alsamhan & Almutrafi, 2022).

To analyze this phenomenon, this study focuses on the linguistic structure of the utterances. In multilingual contexts, code-switching is divided into three distinct types: intra-sentential switching (switching between sentences), inter-sentential switching (switching within the same sentences), and tag switching (inserting short phrases like interjections or greetings) (Poplack, 1980).

According to Hoffmann (1991), switching languages allows speakers to express specific topics or show solidarity more effectively. Therefore, this study applies Poplack’s (1980) typology as the sole theoretical framework to identify and classify whether William’s language practices fall into intra-sentential, inter-sentential, or tag-switching during his travel vlogs in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study used the “Road Trip” video episode on the Rainiers Family YouTube channel as the primary data source. The researcher applied a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the linguistic structural phenomena of code-switching as it naturally occurs in digital media interactions. The purposive sampling method was used to select four specific travel vlogs uploaded in 2025: Road Trip Solo, Yogyakarta, Jakarta, and Semarang. The data collected are the specific conversational utterances produced by the speaker, William Rainier, that contain language switching from English to Indonesian. In collecting the data, an observation method was used through four systematic steps: 1) downloading the selected vlog episodes from the YouTube channel, 2) watching the videos thoroughly multiple times to understand the context, 3) transcribing with the manual to change the spoken dialogues into written text, and 4) selecting and listing the target utterances containing code-switching. The collected data were then analyzed, classified, and

described strictly according to the code-switching typology by (Poplack, 1980). Finally, the researcher calculated the occurrence and percentage of the total data using a table form to determine the most dominant type of code-switching used by the speaker.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data is presented in the table to show the total code-switching found in the Rainiers Family YouTube channel below.

*Table 1:
Frequency and Percentage of William's Code-Switching Types*

No	Types of Code Switching (Poplack's Theory)	Total Found (Frequency)	Percentage (%)
1	Intra-Sentential	23	62,16 %
2	Inter-Sentential	12	32,43 %
3	Tag Switching	2	5.42 %
Total		37	100 %

As shown in Table 1, all three types of code-switching proposed by Poplack (1980) appear in the vlogs. Intra-sentential switching is the most dominant type used by the speaker, accounting for 23. This is followed by inter-sentential switching with 12, and tag switching as the least frequent type with only 2.

To provide a deeper analysis, several representative examples of code-switching found in the vlogs are presented and discussed in detail below.

1. *Intra-Sentential Switching*

The first type of code-switching found in the videos is intra-sentential switching. Based on Poplack's theory, this type occurs when the speaker switches languages within a single sentence or phrase. The researcher found that this type is very common in the vlogs.

Data 1

William : "Very interesting. We have the papayas, we have the mangos, the jelly and *itu kelapa ya?....coconut.*"
(Road Trip: Semarang, 11:01)

Based on the data, this utterance is categorized as intra-sentential switching. In data 1, William Rainier mixes English and Indonesian within a single sentence structure. He starts the utterance with the English

phrases “very interesting. We have the papayas, we have the mangos, the jelly and...”, then switches to the Indonesian phrase “*itu kelapa ya?*”, and immediately closes the sentence with the English word “coconut”.

Data 2

William : “Ok, here we go! This is the siomay. There is 2 types of siomay, *basah* and *kering*.”

(Road Trip Semarang, 06:23)

In data 2, this utterance is identified as intra-sentential switching. Here, William switches from English to Indonesian at the end of his utterance. He uses the main sentence structure in English, “Ok, here we go! This is the siomay. There are 2 types of siomay....”, but then inserts the Indonesian adjective words “**basah**” (wet) and “**kering**” (dry) to describe the food. It happens because the language insertion occurs within a single clause boundary.

Data 3

William : “This is called *becak*”.

(Road Trip: Yogyakarta, 03:31)

This utterance is categorized as intra-sentential switching. In this situation, William uses English as the base language of his sentence to introduce a traditional transportation to his viewers: “This is called....” However, within the same sentence, he switches to Indonesian by inserting the specific cultural noun “**becak**”. He chooses to retain the original Indonesian word instead of using the English term “pedicap” to maintain the local context of the vlog and make it more natural for the viewers.

Data 4

William : “Let’s try the *nasi kuning* here”

(Road Trip: Solo, 13:27)

Based on the data, this is identified as intra-sentential switching. Here, William uses English to start his sentence to invite his viewer to try the food by saying “Let’s try the... here”. On the other hand, he suddenly switches to Indonesian by inserting the specific local phrase “**nasi kuning**” instead of saying “yellow rice” directly. He chooses to keep the original Indonesian name of the food, so this represents an intra-sentential switch.

2. *Inter-Sentential Switching*

The second type is inter-sentential switching. Based on Poplack's theory, this type occurs when the speaker switches languages at a sentence boundary. This means one sentence is in one language, and the next is in another language.

Data 5

William : *"Gapapa, gapapa. It's ok, it's ok"*
(Road Trip: Jakarta, 04:55)

In data 5, this is classified as inter-sentential switching. In this part, William uses two different languages consecutively to express the same meaning. He starts with the complete Indonesian phrase "**Gapapa, gapapa**" and immediately repeats it with the English phrase "it's ok, it's ok". It happens because both the Indonesian and English phrases are complete clauses that can stand alone independently as separate sentences.

Data 6

William : *"Try to get the noodles. Ada tempe, ada tahu. There you go!"*
(Road Trip: Solo, 14:38)

In **Data 6**, William switches from English to Indonesian and then goes back to English. He starts with an English clause, "Try to get the noodles", switches to Indonesian to say "**Ada tempe, ada tahu**", and finally finishes his utterance in English with "There you go!" This is categorized as inter-sentential switching because the switch occurs between complete and separate clauses. This strategy helped William highlight the local ingredients of the food. Even though he could say "there is tempe, there is tofu" in English, using the Indonesian word "**Ada**" makes the description feel more natural and direct when talking about traditional Indonesian food.

Data 7

William : *"Wow, nasi campur. This is so good"*
(Road Trip: Jakarta, 01:04)

In **data 7**, William is showing and reviewing the food in the vlog. He starts by mentioning the name of the food in Indonesian, "**nasi campur**". Immediately after that sentence, he switches to English by saying, "This is so good", to express how delicious the food is. The switch

happens at the sentence boundary, making it a clear example of inter-sentential switching.

Data 8

William : "**Duluan-duluan, kamu?**"
James : "No. I don't have"
William : "You don't have **tape?**"
James : "Yeah"

(Road Trip: Solo, 06:47)

Based on the data above, the interaction happens when William is offered the traditional ice called *es puter*. It is identified as inter-sentential switching. The language changes clearly occur across different speakers in the dialogue. William first asks a question in Indonesian to his nephew, James, with the sentence "**duluan-duluan, kamu?**". His nephew then replies with a complete English sentence, "No, I don't have". Following his nephew's language choice, William responds by switching his sentence structure into English. Additionally, within his English question, he inserts the Indonesian traditional food term "**tape**" (fermented sticky rice) by asking, "You don't have **tape?**".

3. Tag switching

The third type is tag switching. Based on Poplack's theory, tag switching is the insertion of a short tag or an exclamation from one language into another language. This tag can be placed at the beginning or the end of a sentence.

Data 9:

William : "Twenty-five, **ya?**"

(Road trip: Jakarta, 07:32)

Based on this utterance, William uses English for the number "twenty-five" and switches to the Indonesian tag "**ya?**" at the end of his utterance. This is categorized as tag-switching because "**ya**" functions as a short particle for confirmation. The context shows that William uses a rising intonation on the tag "**ya?**" to ask his friend for confirmation regarding a price (twenty-five thousand rupiahs). Using this local tag is a natural communication habit in Indonesia to clarify information.

Data 10

William : "Must try **ya** guys. Here we go!"

(Road Trip: Jakarta, 08:54)

This utterance is categorized as tag switching. This type of code-switching involves inserting a short tag, exclamation, or particle from one language into an utterance that is otherwise entirely in another language. In this context, William is talking to his viewers while trying *kwechap* (traditional dish of flat rice soup from Pontianak). The main language is English “Must try... Here we go!” However, William inserts the Indonesian particle “*ya*” as a conversational tag to emphasize his recommendation. Since this short particle is simply attached to the English sentence without changing its overall grammatical structure, it serves as a clear example of tag-switching.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the types of code-switching used by William Rainier in the “Road Trip” episodes on the Rainier family YouTube channel. Based on the linguistic analysis using Poplack (1980), the researcher found a total of 37 occurrences of code-switching across the four selected travel vlogs. The findings reveal that all three types of code-switching appear in the data: intra-sentential switching (62.16% with 23 occurrences), inter-sentential switching (32.43% with 12 occurrences), and tag switching (5.41% with 2 occurrences). Intra-sentential switching is the most dominant type because the speaker frequently inserts Indonesian words or phrases, such as local food terms and adjectives, directly into his English sentence structure to maintain authentic communication with his surroundings.

In conclusion, the use of code-switching in these travel vlogs serves as an effective communication tool to bridge languages and connect with the local audience or context. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct further studies on code-switching in digital media by combining the structure with other sociolinguistic aspects or by analyzing different speakers to provide a broader perspective on language phenomena in modern digital interactions.

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