CULTURAL INTERCONNECTION IN VIRTUAL SPACE: TRANSFORMATION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN THE CODE-SWITCHING PHENOMENON IN COMMUNICATION SCIENCE STUDENTS

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the practice of code-switching as a form of cultural interconnection and collective identity transformation among Communication Science students of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) in virtual space. The phenomenon of code-switching not only reflects students' bilingual abilities but also becomes a communicative strategy in navigating social, cultural, and media algorithmic contexts. With a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of digital interactions. The analysis was carried out using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana models, and was strengthened by data triangulation to ensure the validity of the findings. The results of the study show that students actively use code-switching as a form of dynamic and contextual identity expression. This practice is evident in the use of digital loanwords, the combination of languages in one utterance (intra-sentential switching), and expressions of popular cultural affiliation such as Japanese. In addition, code-switching is used to build social solidarity and adapt to the norms of online community communication. These findings also underline the linguistic awareness of students in distinguishing language use between formal and informal spaces. Theoretically, this study strengthens the sociolinguistic view that code-switching is not random, but strategic and meaningful in the process of forming social identity. This study is expected to be a reference in developing language education policies that are more adaptive to the dynamics of digital communication in the university environment.

Keywords: Code-switching, Communication, Students, UINSU, Phenomenon

1.   INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has drastically changed the way humans communicate, especially among Generation Z who grew up with the internet and social media. A 2024 survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) showed that the majority of Gen Z in Indonesia prefer visual platforms such as Instagram (51.9%) and TikTok (46.84%) compared to text-based social media such as X (1.98%) or LinkedIn (0.08%). This preference indicates a significant shift in media consumption patterns that prioritize fast, interesting, and easy-to-digest content. In the midst of the rapid flow of digitalization, communication is no longer limited by space and time, but has become a broad field full of social, cultural, and linguistic dynamics (Ahdiat, 2024)
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The phenomenon of code-switching has been widely studied by language and communication experts as a form of linguistic dynamics in certain social contexts. According to Gumperz (1982), code-switching is a communication strategy used by individuals to adapt to certain social and cultural contexts, as well as to show group identity or interpersonal relations. In this view, code-switching is not just a change in language, but reflects the process of negotiating meaning, power, and social solidarity. This is also agreed by Myers-Scotton (1993) who stated that code-switching is often influenced by social identity factors, including status, group membership, and cultural affiliation that the speaker wants to display.

In the digital context, especially virtual spaces inhabited by young people such as students, code-switching becomes increasingly complex. Androutsopoulos (2006) explains that the practice of code-switching in social media is a form of identity expression that is flexible and dynamic. In online spaces, individuals can use various languages to show their connection to the global community, follow trends, or simply create a communication style that is considered "cool" or "modern." Code-switching in cyberspace also serves as a means to show familiarity, uniqueness, or sophistication, depending on the intended audience. Thus, the practice of code-switching in virtual spaces not only reflects bilingual abilities but also becomes an important instrument in the formation and transformation of students' collective identities in the digital era (Nurul Fadilah & Sa'adah, 2021; Wijaya et al., 2023) . .

One of the most obvious symptoms of this transformation is the phenomenon of code -switching , which is the practice of alternating languages in one communication context. In virtual space, code-switching not only shows linguistic flexibility but also becomes an adaptive strategy for individuals in navigating their social and cultural identities. A user may use English in a TikTok upload to reach a global audience, but return to using Indonesian or a regional language when interacting with friends in the community. This practice is increasingly prominent

among students, especially those who are active in the digital space as part of their academic, social, and professional lives (Ramadhina Assidiq et al., 2023) .

Amidst this phenomenon, Communication Science students at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) have become important representatives of changes in communication dynamics in the digital era. They are not only active users of digital platforms but also actors in code-switching practices that reflect the integration of local and global cultures. Through online communication practices, students often display a fluid collective identity that moves between traditional values and evolving global influences. This transformation requires a sharp academic study to understand how their linguistic and cultural identities are formed and interpreted in a virtual context (Febreza & Junaidi, 2022) .

In the context of Islam, the importance of communication as a means of effective message delivery is emphasized in the Qur'an, as Allah says in QS. Ibrahim verse 4:

"We did not send any messenger, but in the language of his people, so that he could explain clearly to them..." .

This verse emphasizes that language is the primary medium of communication and that the effectiveness of a message depends heavily on the ability to adapt to the context of the audience. Thus, in the digital age, when audiences come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, code-switching skills become an important asset in conveying messages effectively and meaningfully.

The existence of algorithms as curators of information also influences the code-switching practices carried out by students. Intense exposure to foreign language content, especially English, through digital platforms can influence their choice of language in communicating. This phenomenon not only reflects openness to global culture, but also shows how technology helps shape new linguistic norms. At this point, virtual space is no longer just a place to share information, but also an arena for the formation of a dynamic language- and culture-based collective identity. (Yuwita, 2022) .

Research conducted by Farmasi et al. (2022) discusses the impact of code-switching on English language acquisition from a sociolinguistic perspective. This study highlights how code-switching can be an effective foreign language learning strategy in academic contexts, particularly in health education settings. The main focus is on the cognitive and linguistic outcomes of the practice, especially in improving English comprehension and use. Although it has a common thread with this study in terms of the phenomenon of code-switching, the study is still limited to an individual functional approach, not touching on the dimensions of collective identity and cultural construction which are the core of my research (Putri, 2018) .

In contrast to the academic approach, Maharani (2023) explores the phenomenon of code switching and code mixing in the Cinefoxx film fan community. This study emphasizes the context of the popular culture community as a discursive space that gives birth to hybrid language practices. The use of code

switching in the community reflects the emotional closeness of community members to a particular language, as well as being a means of building social cohesion. This study makes an important contribution in showing how linguistic practices can be symbols of social affiliation, but does not explicitly discuss the relationship between these practices and identity transformation in academic digital spaces, as studied in the context of UINSU Communication Science students (MAHESA, 2017) .

Research by Setiawan (2023) focuses on the use of Jaksel (South Jakarta) language which is a popular form of code-switching in interpersonal communication of high school students in Medan. This study highlights linguistic phenomena that occur in the informal realm, especially as a form of social class symbol and urban lifestyle. Using a phenomenological approach, Setiawan links this practice to the individual identity of adolescents who are trying to build a certain self-image. In this context, my research broadens the scope of the discussion by positioning code-switching not only as a status or style symbol, but as a tool for negotiating collective identity in a virtual space influenced by globalization and media algorithmization. (Eliya & Zulaeha, 2017) .

Compared to the three studies, my research focus is not only looking at code-switching from the aspect of linguistic function, social symbols, or individual identity expression. More than that, this study examines the cultural interconnection that occurs in students' virtual communication as a form of collective identity transformation. By placing UINSU Communication Science students as cultural agents in the digital ecosystem, this study underlines the symbolic, political, and structural dimensions of code-switching in forming new communication norms in the algorithm era. Thus, this study seeks to go beyond surface analysis and towards a critical reading of language practices as identity construction in the era of digital globalization (Dalimunthe et al., 2018).

The urgency of this research lies in the importance of understanding the dynamics of increasingly complex cross-language communication in the digital era, especially among UINSU Communication Science students who actively interact in virtual spaces. The code-switching phenomenon they practice is not just a linguistic choice, but a representation of cultural interconnection that reflects the transformation of collective identity amidst the flow of globalization and media algorithmization. Given the role of students as agents of social and cultural change, this research is relevant to identify the factors that influence their language behavior, as well as explore broader implications for the formation of communication patterns and cultural identities in academic environments. A deep understanding of this phenomenon can also contribute to formulating language education policies and communication strategies that are more inclusive and adaptive in the digital era (Harianto et al., 2023).

2. **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type to explore in depth the subjective experiences of UINSU Communication Science students in code-switching practices in virtual spaces (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2020; Weyant, 2022) . Qualitative research was chosen because it is able to reveal the meaning behind language interactions in digital social and cultural contexts. The phenomenological approach allows researchers to understand how students interpret code-switching practices as part of their identity and communication in online environments.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through UINSU Communication Science students who are active on social media, while secondary data came from literature such as journals, books, and relevant scientific articles. The combination of these two sources is used to provide a theoretical basis while enriching field findings, so that the analysis becomes more complete and contextual.

Data collection techniques were carried out through three main methods: interviews, observation, and documentation (Creswell & Creswell, 2022) . In-depth interviews were used to explore students' personal experiences related to code-switching . Observations were carried out in a participatory manner to directly observe language practices in various digital platforms, such as social media and discussion forums. Meanwhile, documentation was used to support the analysis through written evidence such as screenshots of conversations and academic references.

Data analysis refers to the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model, which includes three main stages: data collection, data condensation, visualization, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2020) . The collected data were filtered and summarized, then arranged in a descriptive narrative form so that communication patterns could be clearly seen. Furthermore, conclusions were drawn iteratively and linked to relevant theories to produce valid and meaningful findings.

To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation techniques were used, both source triangulation and data triangulation (Flick, 2022) . Source triangulation is done by comparing information from various participants, while data triangulation involves combining the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. This approach strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings, and ensures that the research results reflect the reality of student communication as a whole in virtual space.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Code-Switching Phenomenon in Communication of Communication Science Students at UINSU

The phenomenon of code-switching among UINSU Communication Science students is not just an ordinary linguistic practice, but rather a reflection of the dynamics of identity and cultural orientation that develop in the digital communication space. In this context, code-switching becomes a practice that is inherent in students' daily lives as part of a response to symbolic diversity and technological mediation. Students do not only switch between languages because of vocabulary limitations, but also because of the need to adapt to the context of the conversation, the identity of the interlocutor, and the norms of the virtual community in which they interact (Prihandini et al., 2016) .

The use of a mixture of Indonesian, English, and even elements of other foreign languages such as Japanese in students' speech shows that their communication has undergone a process of glocalization - a combination of global and local cultures. This can be seen from the choice of words such as "nice ingfo" , "thank u atas responnya" , or "arigatoo" which are not only communicative, but also performative; showing affiliation with global identity without letting go of their local roots. This phenomenon shows that students use language as a medium to negotiate social positions and demonstrate symbolic sophistication in a competitive digital environment.

In addition to being an expression of individual identity, code-switching also functions as a community strategy to build social cohesion. Students use mixed language to show closeness, equality, or solidarity in conversation groups. For example, terms such as "tag" , "suprise" , or "feed" are used not only because of the influence of social media, but also to maintain a rhythm of communication that is considered relevant to today's digital culture. In this case, code-switching becomes a tool to create an inclusive dialogical space, where language is no longer rigid but flexible following the dynamics of fluid social relations (Yoandra et al., 2022) .

However, this phenomenon also presents challenges. On the one hand, linguistic flexibility indicates students' adaptive skills in communicating. But on the other hand, if not criticized reflectively, excessive code-switching practices can erode the structure of Indonesian as a national and academic language. The tendency to mix languages uncontrollably can give rise to message ambiguity and create gaps in understanding, especially in the context of formal communication or across generations who do not have the same exposure to digital idioms. Researchers have conducted observations to review the phenomena that occur as in the following tabulation:

Table 1. Code-Switching Phenomenon Among UINSU Communication Science Students

Phenomenon	Description
Intra-sentential Code-Switching	Students mix two languages in one sentence, for example: "thank you for your response." This reflects spontaneity and linguistic flexibility.
Use of Social Media Loanwords	Terms such as *repost* , *story* , and *feed* are used in everyday conversation, indicating the internalization of digital terms as part of the language.
Expression of Foreign Cultural Affiliation	Words like *arigatoo* (Japanese) are used as an expression of gratitude, signaling openness to foreign cultures and a form of self-branding.
Signs of Solidarity and Social Intimacy	Code switching is used to build closeness and equality, as in the phrase "suprise yakan kak" which combines informality and familiarity.
Language Adaptation in Virtual Environments	The phenomenon of code switching commonly occurs in digital spaces such as WhatsApp or Instagram groups, reflecting adaptation to online communication norms.
Symbolic Glocalization Through Language	Students show a tendency to mix local and global languages as a form of glocalization, combining local values and global identities.
Lack of Code-Switching in Formal Academic Contexts	In formal academic communication, the use of code switching is not found significantly, indicating awareness of academic language norms and etiquette.

Code-switching phenomena above shows that UINSU Communication Science students do not only use language as a means of conveying messages, but also as a performative medium to negotiate their identities, social relations, and cultural positions. The practice of intra-sentential code-switching that dominates the interaction, such as in the phrase "thank you for your response," indicates spontaneity and adaptive linguistic ability in combining cross-language elements. This shows that students are able to navigate two language systems simultaneously, by considering context and audience intuitively (Kholil et al., 2024).

The use of loanwords from social media, such as repost , story , and feed , shows how digital terms have become embedded in the structure of students' everyday language. This internalization process occurs not only because of the frequency of use, but also because of the need to demonstrate digital literacy as part of social competence. In this case, language reflects students' ability to read and follow global cultural dynamics that are packaged in familiar and widely standardized digital idioms (Fatubun, 2022; Ritonga et al., 2024) .

Phenomena such as expressions of foreign cultural affiliation and markers of social solidarity through code-switching indicate that foreign languages are used not merely because of lexical needs, but also as symbols of identity. Students use linguistic elements from popular culture (e.g., Japanese) to construct a certain self-image or demonstrate membership in a certain symbolic community. Likewise, code-switching also becomes a tool to strengthen interpersonal relationships through a relaxed, fluid, and non-hierarchical communication style—especially in informal spaces such as chat groups or social media (Eli, 2023; Ritonga et al., 2023) .

The existence of symbolic glocalization and minimal code-switching in formal academic contexts underscores the pragmatic awareness among students regarding language use. Although they are flexible in using mixed languages in informal spaces, they still maintain appropriate linguistic norms in academic spaces. This reflects the existence of two linguistic identity domains that are run in parallel: one that is fluid and experimental in the digital world, and another that is standardized and normative in the academic environment. This pattern emphasizes that code-switching is not just a linguistic phenomenon, but part of a complex and layered communication strategy.

Code-Switching Patterns in Virtual Interaction of UINSU Communication Science Students

Code-switching phenomenon in virtual interactions of UINSU Communication Science students shows a dynamic and contextual pattern. The most prominent pattern is intra-sentential switching, which is the shift in language within a sentence structure. For example, in utterances such as "thank you for your response" or "okay understand arigatoo", students spontaneously mix English, Indonesian, and even other foreign language elements into one speech construction. This shows their linguistic flexibility in adjusting language to specific expressive and social needs in digital communication.

Another pattern that emerged was the use of digital and social media terms in the form of loanwords from English. Students tend to use terms such as repost , feed , story , and tag without translating them into Indonesian. These terms are used consistently in group conversations, social media comments, and instant messages. This use is not only practical, but also shows that students have adopted digital registers as part of their communication style which is considered relevant, modern, and connected to global culture (Sukatmo Sukatmo, 2022) .

In virtual interactions, code-switching is also used as a social and affective expression. Students use code-switching to build a friendly, relaxed, or even humorous impression. Examples such as "suprise yakan kak" show how English words are inserted to create certain effects in communication—whether to soften the tone, strengthen the expression, or convey a non-rigid meaning. This proves that language choice is not just a matter of efficiency, but also an interpersonal strategy that is full of social meaning (Wulandari, 2018) .

Another noteworthy pattern is the attachment of code-switching practices to digital spaces and contexts. The majority of code-switching was found in informal interactions that took place on platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, or YouTube comments. Outside of these contexts, especially in formal academic spaces such as class discussions or written assignments, the use of code-switching was almost invisible. This shows that students are able to identify social and institutional boundaries in language use, and adjust their linguistic practices to the norms that apply in each space (Mustikawati, 2016) .

From these patterns, it can be concluded that the code-switching practices of UINSU Communication Science students are a form of linguistic adaptation that is closely tied to social, media, and cultural contexts. They do not only use language technically, but also strategically to build identity, community affiliation, and self-expression in virtual space. Thus, code-switching cannot be viewed as a linguistic deviation, but rather as a socio-cultural symptom that reflects the sophistication of digital generation communication. Researchers have conducted observations to review the code-switching patterns that occur as in the following tabulation:

Table 2. Code-Switching Patterns Among UINSU Communication Science Students

No	Username	Message Content	Code Switching	Context of Use	Language Patterns
1	R	"Okay, nice info"	Indonesian and English	Informal communication on social media	English loanwords ("nice", "info") with phonetic changes ("ingfo")
2	R	"thank you for your response"	English and Indonesian	Group chat	A combination of the words "thank u" (English) and the phrase "untuk responnya" (Indonesian)
3	PCY	"Okay, understood, arigatoo"	Indonesian and Japanese	Informal discussion	The use of the Japanese word "arigatoo" as an adaptive form of gratitude
4	Z	"Those who don't tag won't be recorded, those who don't make a surprise, right sis?"	Indonesian and English	Discussion about tagging on social media	The use of the words "tag" and "suprise" (English) in Indonesian sentence structure
5	S	"The form is just a repost on the story, it doesn't have to be posted to the feed"	Indonesian and English	Social media strategy	Use of social media terms from English ("repost", "story", "feed") in Indonesian sentences

Code-switching phenomenon in virtual communication of UINSU Communication Science students shows typical symptoms in the language practices of bilingual or multilingual communities as explained in sociolinguistic theory. Students actively mix two languages, such as in the phrases "thank you for your response" or "Okay nice ingfo," to adjust to the informal and casual communication context. This pattern emphasizes that language selection is not solely based on linguistic structure, but is closely related to the social context in which the interaction takes place.

In sociolinguistics, code switching is seen as a form of adjustment to social norms that apply in a particular speech community. In this case, the virtual community of students becomes a social arena that allows, even encourages,

language mixing. Students feel more expressive and relevant when using foreign terms such as repost , story , and feed because these terms have become part of a shared lexicon that is understood and accepted in their digital communication environment (Mustakim Sagita, 2019) .

In addition, the use of code switching also reflects social identity and membership in the community. Students use a foreign language not only to demonstrate language skills, but to convey closeness, a relaxed communication style, or even affiliation with popular culture. In sociolinguistics, this shows that language becomes a symbol of social interaction and a marker of position in a group. Expressions such as "arigatoo" for example, are not just loan words, but a means of social expression that is collectively accepted in conversation. (Dewi, 2022) .

The use of code-switching also shows that students understand when and how to use language appropriately based on unwritten norms. They do not use code-switching carelessly in academic or formal contexts. This strengthens sociolinguistic findings that language variation is always related to factors such as the purpose of the interaction, the status of the interlocutor, and the place where the communication takes place.

Code-switching patterns of UINSU Communication Science students show that their language practices are highly influenced by social and situational factors. Sociolinguistic theory asserts that language is not just a technical tool, but rather part of a social construction that reflects how individuals position themselves, understand situations, and adapt to community norms in everyday interactions.

Indicators of Code-Switching Practices Among Communication Science Students at UINSU

Code-switching practices carried out by UINSU Communication Science students in virtual space show a number of distinctive and consistent indicators. The first prominent indicator is the frequency of code-switching in digital conversations. Students tend to switch languages spontaneously and repeatedly, especially on platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and other social media. This code-switching appears not as a form of linguistic error, but as a natural and collectively accepted communication practice in their community.

The second indicator is the form and type of language used in code switching. Generally, English dominates as a partner of Indonesian in conversation. Students use words such as "thank u" , "repost" , "story" , and "suprise" flexibly in Indonesian sentence structures. In some cases, elements from other languages such as Japanese ("arigatoo") also appear, although more limited. This shows the influence of cultural globalization on students' linguistic preferences (Haryadi & Riyanto, 2023) .

Furthermore, the third indicator relates to the social function of code-switching, namely as a tool to build familiarity and adapt to the community's communication

style. Students not only use foreign languages to speed up understanding, but also to show a more relaxed, familiar, or even humorous attitude. This can be seen from how they insert foreign languages in the context of joking or showing closeness to peers. This social function strengthens the role of language as a symbol of group identity (Tjahyana, 2021) .

The fourth indicator is the context of code switching, which predominantly occurs in informal and digital interactions. Students are freer to use code switching when in non-formal spaces, such as discussion groups, social media comments, or private chats. In contrast, in more formal academic contexts—such as written assignments or class presentations—they tend to restrain themselves and follow standard language rules. This indicates a pragmatic awareness of language norms based on different social contexts (Pasaribu et al., 2024) .

The fifth indicator is the lexical adaptation pattern that occurs in code switching. Many loanwords from foreign languages are no longer used in their original form, but have undergone phonetic or spelling changes according to the digital language style, for example, "ingfo" from the word "info" . This adaptation process shows how students do not simply import language, but also process and shape it according to the character of their community, making mixed language part of their digital identity (Damayanti & Khusna, 2023) .

The sixth indicator is awareness of linguistic boundaries, where students are able to choose when and how to use code-switching strategically. They show control over when to stick to Indonesian and when to switch to suit communication style or needs. This awareness reinforces the sociolinguistic view that code-switching is not a random act, but rather a reflection of mature socio-linguistic skills in responding to the dynamics of digital communication space (Wardhani et al., 2022).

Discussion

Code-switching phenomenon that occurs among UINSU Communication Science students does not only function as a linguistic choice, but also as a reflection of social, cultural dynamics, and collective identity in virtual communication spaces. The findings of this study indicate that code-switching is carried out consciously and structured by students as part of a communication strategy that is appropriate to the digital context they face. In everyday use, students often combine Indonesian and English flexibly in one utterance, either in the form of loan words or complete sentence structures. This practice not only facilitates communication, but also creates a globally oriented self-representation without ignoring their local background.

This study strengthens several previous studies, but at the same time offers a deeper reading of aspects of collective identity that have not been widely reviewed. One of them is a study by Farmasi et al. (2022) which highlights code-switching in the academic context of health education. The study shows that code-switching

contributes positively to improving English language proficiency and is a cognitively beneficial linguistic strategy. However, their main focus is on language acquisition and the individual aspects of learners, so they have not reached the dimensions of social relations and the formation of collective identity which are the main highlights of this study. Thus, although relevant in terms of linguistic function, Farmasi et al.'s approach is still functional and has not addressed the social complexity inherent in students' language practices in the digital space (Pratiwi, 2024) .

The findings of this study also show that students use code-switching as a form of social strategy to build solidarity, a relaxed communication style, and as a form of adaptation to virtual community norms. Words such as "repost", "thank u", "arigatoo", and "story" are part of the general register accepted in the digital environment. They not only function linguistically, but also have a symbolic function in forming a nuance of familiarity and self-image that is in accordance with the values of cosmopolitanism that are spread through social media. This process shows that code-switching plays a role in forming a hybrid collective identity of students, namely local in the context of cultural origin, but global in the way they communicate (Mutawakkil & Nuraedah, 2019) .

Considering the data exposure and interviews that have been collected, it can be concluded that students do not only use language mechanically, but also reflectively towards social and technological changes. Code-switching is not a passive linguistic act, but rather part of the process of negotiating identity and social symbols. They demonstrate high sociolinguistic competence in distinguishing formal and informal contexts, as well as in building symbolic affiliations through the language choices they use. Therefore, code-switching in this context should be read not as a deviation, but as an adaptive and contextual communicative strategy in a digital society (Manihuruk et al., 2023) .

Data triangulation in this study was conducted through three main sources: observation of students' virtual conversations on social media platforms, documentation of screenshots of digital interactions, and in-depth interviews with five key informants. The results of the observations showed consistent code-switching patterns that were also reflected in the informants' narratives, which explained their reasons for using two languages alternately as part of a communication style that was considered "cool", relevant, and more expressive. The validity of the data was strengthened by the correspondence between the language practices recorded directly and the students' reflective awareness of their language choices in the interviews. With this triangulation, it was found that code-switching among students is not a random phenomenon, but rather part of a coherent and meaningful linguistic and social strategy in the digital context.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the phenomenon of code-switching among UINSU Communication Science students is not just a linguistic practice, but rather a representation of the process of cultural interconnection and collective identity transformation in the digital era. Through code-switching practices in virtual interactions, students demonstrate adaptive abilities in navigating various social contexts, both formal and informal. They use a combination of Indonesian, English, and sometimes other foreign languages as a communication strategy to show affiliation, build familiarity, and assert a flexible and dynamic identity. This finding strengthens the sociolinguistic perspective that code-switching is not only influenced by language skills, but also by social, cultural, and symbolic awareness in the digital community.

Considering the results of observation, documentation, and interviews, it can be concluded that the code-switching practices of UINSU students are contextual, reflective, and strategic. Students are aware of when and how to use code-switching, and make it part of their identity construction in virtual space. This phenomenon shows the need for a more inclusive educational policy response to changes in the dynamics of digital communication. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of language learning strategies, intercultural communication, and a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, identity, and digital space in the context of higher education in Indonesia.

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