Code-Mixing in Multilingual Digital Spaces: Linguistic Patterns among Ambonese Social Media Users

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media has created multilingual and transnational communication spaces where users actively mix languages to express identity, build social connections, and participate in global digital culture. In Ambon, Indonesia , a multilingual region where Indonesian, Ambonese Malay, and English coexist , code-mixing is increasingly evident across platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Yet, research on its linguistic patterns and social motivations in Eastern Indonesia remains scarce, with most studies centered on classrooms or major urban areas. This study analyzes the linguistic patterns of code-mixing among bilingual Ambonese social media users, identifies underlying motivations, and examines how local, national, and global languages interact to shape linguistic identity online. Adopting a descriptive–qualitative design, data were collected through purposive sampling from social media accounts of active bilingual users aged 17 and above. The corpus comprises status updates, comments, captions, and short video texts, supported by brief interviews. Analytical frameworks include Muysken's typology and Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame Model. Findings show dominant use of word, phrase, clause, idiomatic, and hybrid insertions. Code-mixing serves to project cosmopolitan identity, enhance digital creativity, and negotiate belonging. This study contributes novel insights by situating code-mixing in Ambon's multilingual context and integrating structural and functional analyses of online discourse.
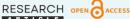
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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital communication technologies has transformed the ways people interact, construct identities, and negotiate social roles in contemporary societies. Social media functions not only as a channel for sharing information but also as a space for self-expression that allows users to display identity, affiliations, and social closeness through language choices (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022; Zhakin, 2023). In Indonesia, a country rich in linguistic diversity, this phenomenon is particularly salient because users can draw on multiple linguistic repertoires they command (Hukubun et al., 2022; Litualy et al., 2022). One linguistic practice that attracts particular attention in this context is code-mixing, i.e., the blending of elements from different languages within a single discourse. Although not new, code-mixing acquires more complex social meanings and functions within digital spaces, since social media presents transnational, fluid, and heterogeneous audiences (Henry & Thorsen,

2018; Lane et al., 2019).

Ambon is a locality with a long history of multilingualism. Residents there grow up with Bahasa Indonesia as the national language, Bahasa Ambon as a local marker of ethnolinguistic identity, and English increasingly present as a global language (Apituley et al., 2022; Tableessy & Umkeketony, 2022). The coexistence of these three languages creates distinctive dynamics, especially when social media enables users to negotiate their identities before local, national, and international audiences. This phenomenon is visible in statuses, comments, captions, and short stories/reels posted by Ambonese youth (Hukom, 2021; Litualy & Serpara, 2021). They frequently mix Bahasa Ambon, Bahasa Indonesia, and English in ways that are both creative and strategic. Despite the growing prevalence of this practice, however, systematic scholarly attention to patterns of code-mixing in Ambon's digital sphere remains limited. Existing studies tend to focus on formal educational contexts, particularly classrooms, or on large metropolitan centers such as Jakarta and Surabaya.

A number of prior studies have underscored the importance of understanding code-mixing as both a linguistic and social phenomenon. Schlosser (2020), for example, classifies forms of code-mixing into insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. This model has been widely used in Southeast Asian studies to show how speakers mix languages for specific communicative purposes. Mewengkang & Fansury (2021) and Nordin (2023), drawing on the Matrix Language Frame model, emphasize grammatical structure in mixing and how one language often functions as the dominant matrix. Research by Jakob (2020), Santika et al. (2023), and Syafaat & Setiawan (2019) demonstrates that code-mixing in digital spaces is not a sign of linguistic deficiency but rather an efficient communicative strategy laden with social meaning.

In Indonesia, research on digital code-mixing has expanded over the last decade. Studies by Arrizki et al. (2020) and Ohia (2023) find that code-switching and code-mixing on Facebook are often driven by identity motives and the desire to signal familiarity. Research by Salsabila et al. (2021) and Sutrisno & Ariesta (2019) highlights English use among Indonesian university students online as a symbolic means of affiliating with global communities. Astri & Fian (2020) and Rosmiaty et al. (2020) show that code-mixing on social media is frequently used to increase message attractiveness and to construct a cosmopolitan image. Herman et al. (2022), studying urban youth in Surabaya, similarly conclude that English functions as a prestige marker.

The Ambon context, however, has attracted relatively little attention in the literature. Ethnographic studies in the region indicate dynamic multilingual practices: Tanasy & Fachrunnisa (2022) found that Bahasa Ambon is dominant in fostering social solidarity in public interaction, while Hukubun et al. (2022) and Treffers-Daller et al. (2022) report that Ambonese youth are increasingly adept at mixing Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Ambon in everyday conversation. Yet studies examining how this local language interacts with English in digital spaces, particularly social media, are scarce. This contrasts with research in larger cities, where interactions between national and global languages in digital contexts have been more extensively explored (Balla, 2023; Jalaludin et al., 2023).

International literature on multilingual digital spaces highlights the important role social media plays in shaping linguistic identity. Jiang (2023) and Mahmud et al. (2023) document how European social media users combine local and global languages to present flexible personae. Jacquemet (2019) and Kelly-Holmes (2019) show in Hong Kong that language mixing is not merely a linguistic choice but a strategy for negotiating social position within transnational networks. Rusk's (2019) African studies emphasize that digital code-mixing can function both as resistance and as creativity, allowing users to craft identities simultaneously at local and global levels.

Taken together, this literature indicates that code-mixing in digital spaces is a salient phenomenon capable of revealing dynamics of identity, solidarity, and participation in global communities. Yet there are few studies that specifically examine how communities in eastern Indonesian archipelagos, whose linguistic experiences are shaped by distinctive colonial histories and forms of cosmopolitanism, articulate themselves through code-mixing. Research tends to privilege large urban populations as representative, thereby marginalizing the linguistic experiences of geographically distant regions. Ambon's users, however, can offer valuable insights into how local, national, and global repertoires are creatively positioned in digital communication.

This study addresses that lacuna by providing empirical data on code-mixing practices in the social media of bilingual Ambonese users. By combining analysis of linguistic forms with investigation of social motivations, the study offers a new perspective on how Bahasa Ambon, Bahasa Indonesia, and English interact within multilingual digital spaces. It also demonstrates that code-mixing reflects not only linguistic competence but also how Ambonese youth negotiate identity before local and global audiences. Accordingly, the present research aims to analyze linguistic patterns of code-mixing in social media content, identify the social functions underpinning these practices, and explain how they relate to linguistic identity and participation in global digital communities. Through this inquiry, the study seeks to advance understanding of multilingual dynamics in the digital era and to contribute to scholarship on language, education, and digital literacy in Indonesia's linguistically rich contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive–qualitative approach because its primary objective is to understand meanings, motives, and patterns of linguistic practice emerging in the everyday digital experiences of Ambonese users, phenomena not fully captured by numerical measures or surveys. A qualitative approach enables in-depth exploration of discourse, description of variation in code-mixing forms, and interpretation of their social functions within complex digital lifeworlds (Doyle et al., 2019; Shorey et al., 2020; Sipayung et al., 2021). Ambon was selected as the research site for its distinctive linguistic and social history: it is a multilingual space where Bahasa Ambon, Bahasa Indonesia, and English coexist, yet it has received comparatively little attention in digital sociolinguistics that tends to focus on metropolitan centers. This location thus offers a unique opportunity to observe how local and global repertoires are combined in the digital interactions of Ambonese youth (Ropponen et al.,

2023; Sundler et al., 2019).

Primary informants comprised Ambonese social media account holders who met the following criteria: aged 17 years and above, routinely active in posting public content, and proficient in both Bahasa Indonesia and English. A purposive sample of 16 accounts was selected as a reasonable size to achieve analytical depth and data saturation consistent with common qualitative practice (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Pyo et al., 2023; Renjith et al., 2021). The purposive selection ensured variation across platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), expressive styles, and gender/age representation so that meaningful code-mixing patterns could be identified. Ethical considerations guided the selection: only public accounts were archived, and consent was obtained from informants for the use of any identifiable quotations.

Data collection proceeded in layered stages. First, digital content (statuses, captions, comments, and transcribed text from reels/stories) was documented via manual archiving and screenshots during the research period to capture discursive variation. Second, brief semi-structured interviews were conducted with account owners to probe motivations for code-mixing, contexts of text production, and perceptions of digital identity. Third, non-intrusive participant observation of interactional patterns (responses, reposts, emoji use) contextualized language fragments within audience reception. Combining digital documentation and interviews allowed the researcher to pair observable practice with informants' subjective intent and meaning (Lindgren et al., 2020; St. Pierre, 2020).

Data analysis was conducted in systematic stages. Initial transcription and open coding followed a thematic approach to identify formal patterns (e.g., word insertion, phrase insertion, hybrid forms) and social functions (Roberts et al., 2019). Structural analysis then applied frameworks from Naeem et al. (2023) and Urcia (2021) to classify types of mixing and determine the matrix language within clausal constructions. To enhance reliability, the study employed data triangulation (digital content, interviews, interactional observation), theoretical triangulation (applying two theoretical frameworks), and researcher triangulation via co-coding by two analysts so that interpretations were cross-validated. Selected interpretations were also subjected to member checking with informants to ensure contextual accuracy. Research ethics were strictly observed: informed consent was recorded, sensitive quotations were anonymized, and only public content was archived. The researcher maintained reflective field notes to document positionality in digital interaction and to mitigate interpretive bias (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; St. Pierre, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Patterns of Code-Mixing in Ambon's Digital Space

The phenomenon of code-mixing in Ambon's digital space demonstrates a complex diversity of forms and functions. Data collected from sixteen active social media accounts across platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok reveal that language mixing is not merely a habitual linguistic behavior, but rather a meaningful communicative strategy. The most prominent forms identified include word insertion, phrase insertion, clause mixing,

idiomatic blending, and hybrid forms. These practices occur intensively in post captions, peer comments, and short status updates, often accompanied by emojis and hashtags.

Word insertion represents the most frequently observed form. Many users insert English words within Indonesian or Ambonese Malay sentences. For instance, in one Instagram post, an informant wrote, "Beta su capek banget, need some rest dulu lah," combining the words "need" and "rest" within an Ambonese-Indonesian construction. During interviews, informant M. mentioned that using such English expressions makes the post appear more "trendy" and signals closeness to global culture. This suggests that word insertion is not merely a linguistic mixture but a strategy for expressing cosmopolitan identity.

In addition, phrase insertion appears consistently. Some users prefer inserting full English phrases such as "by the way," "long time no see," or "thank you so much." An example observed in informant R.'s Facebook status reads, "Dorang bilang besok ada acara, but in the end, cancelled lagi toh." The phrase "but in the end" fills an expressive gap that local languages may not easily convey. Field observations indicate that such phrases are often used to add dramatic or humorous effects in interaction. This aligns with Bugliarello et al. (2021), who explain that insertion involves the integration of lexical or phrasal elements from a donor language into the matrix language framework without disrupting syntactic flow.

Although clause mixing occurs less frequently, it adds a new dimension to multilingual practices. For example, a TikTok comment reads, "Beta rasa seng gampang toh… because you know life is too complicated." This sentence illustrates a smooth shift from Ambonese Malay to English at the clause level. Informant D. stated that switching entirely into English is often used to emphasize certain emotions, especially when the imagined audience is broader or includes international friends. These findings align with Bao et al. (2023) and the Matrix Language Frame Model, which posits that while the matrix language (in this case Ambonese Malay/Indonesian) remains dominant, full clauses from another language can be inserted for pragmatic purposes.

Idiomatic blending adds another layer of creativity to code-mixing. For instance, one informant used the expression "beta stay cool saja, biar orang lain yang panik." The English idiom "stay cool" is not translated but seamlessly integrated into an Ambonese sentence. This shows the recontextualization of foreign idioms as part of everyday expressive repertoires. According to Xiong et al. (2022), linguistic flexibility in digital spaces enables cross-linguistic idioms to be used fluidly, as social media audiences are already familiar with such hybrid forms. Field observations confirm this trend: foreign idioms frequently appear in Instagram captions related to personal feelings or lifestyle expressions, such as "no pain no gain" or "keep fighting," often juxtaposed with local phrases like "beta kuat seng?"

The most intriguing form, hybrid forms, reflects the linguistic creativity of Ambon's younger generation. In a TikTok caption, an informant wrote, "Kamu seng bisa handle beta punya feeling, better go away saja." This example combines Indonesian, Ambonese Malay, and English simultaneously. Such hybrid forms cannot be reduced to mere word or phrase insertions but instead constitute new constructions that transcend linguistic boundaries. This practice exemplifies what Kelly-Holmes (2019) describes as digital multilingualism, where

language is no longer seen as discrete systems but as fluid resources that can be mobilized contextually.

Field observations also indicate that code-mixing occurs not only among teenagers but also among young working adults. In popular coffee shops around Ambon's city center, face-to-face conversations dominated by Ambonese Malay often shift into code-mixed expressions when transferred to social media posts. This suggests that social media provides a distinct space for linguistic experimentation, differing from offline interactions. In other words, code-mixing in Ambon's digital space reflects the interplay between offline and online realities shaping the digital identity of the younger generation.

Table 1 Linguistic Patterns of Code-Mixing in Ambonese Social Media

Code-Mixing Form	Example	Languages Involved	Primary Function
Word Insertion	"*Beta su capek banget*, need some rest *dulu lah*."	Ambonese, Indonesian, English	Cosmopolitan identity, expression of familiarity
Phrase Insertion	"*Dorang bilang besok ada acara*, but in the end, cancelled *lagi toh*."	Ambonese, Indonesian, English	Dramatic or humorous effect
Clause Mixing	"*Beta rasa seng gampang toh*… because you know life is too complicated."	Ambonese, English	Emphasis, emotional expression
Idiomatic Blending	"*Beta* stay cool *saja, biar orang lain yang panik*."	Ambonese, English	Lifestyle expression, digital status symbol
Hybrid Forms	"*Kamu seng bisa handle beta punya* feeling, better go away *saja*."	Ambonese, Indonesian, English	Linguistic creativity, identity play

Source: Social media documentation of 16 informants (2023–2024)

The analysis reveals that code-mixing in Ambon's digital environment cannot be understood as random linguistic blending. Instead, it serves as a flexible and creative communicative strategy, where users mobilize linguistic resources to construct identities, foster solidarity, and participate in global digital culture. Following Mirzoyeva & Syurmen (2020), the linguistic forms can be systematically classified, yet the digital context introduces a new dimension of meaning play and identity performance. As emphasized by Leppänen & Sultana (2023), digital multilingualism provides a space for fluid linguistic experimentation, where the boundaries between local, national, and global identities become increasingly blurred.

Social Functions of Code-Mixing: Identity, Expression, and Audience

The practice of code-mixing in Ambon's digital sphere extends beyond linguistic phenomena, it plays a vital social role in shaping identity, expressing emotion, and managing audience relationships. Social media serves as an arena where Ambonese youth perform language as a symbolic resource to signal who they are, who they relate to, and how they

wish to be perceived. In this context, language functions not merely as a communicative tool but as a socially meaningful performance.

One of the most prominent functions of code-mixing is the expression of cosmopolitan identity. Ambonese youth, particularly those active on Instagram and TikTok, often use English in short captions to signal their connection to global culture. In interviews, informant R. stated that using phrases like "chill vibes" or "life goes on" is not merely stylistic, but a marker of belonging to a global digital community. This cosmopolitan identity represents an aspiration to transcend local spatial limitations and assert oneself as a modern global citizen. This resonates with Schneider's (2022) notion that multilingual practices on social media constitute identity work, where individuals construct and negotiate their identities through flexible language choices.

In addition to expressing global identity, code-mixing also reinforces local solidarity. Users often combine Ambonese Malay and Indonesian to convey intimacy and group belonging. For instance, an informant's Facebook post reads, "Beta rasa ini hari panas abis, seng kuat," followed by a comment, "same here bro, panas gila." The interplay between Ambonese Malay and popular English expressions demonstrates that local linguistic elements are retained to maintain communal ties. Field observations in a Batu Merah coffee shop revealed that expressions like "beta lapar so, ayo hunting makan" frequently migrate to social media as captions or stories. Thus, language serves both as a marker of community membership and as a signifier of Ambonese identity.

Code-mixing also functions as a means of emotional expression. Many social media posts use mixed languages to convey feelings that cannot be fully captured in a single language. For instance, informant D. stated that when feeling deeply disappointed, she prefers to write, "Beta seng sanggup lagi, it's too much for me." For her, English offers an intensified and universal emotional tone, while Ambonese Malay retains a personal resonance. Observations show that such expressions often appear in temporary Instagram stories, suggesting that linguistic blending mirrors transient yet significant emotional states. This supports Horvath (2021) and Leppänen & Sultana's (2023) view of linguistic fluidity in digital spaces, where language is used to construct affective nuance.

Another key aspect is audience design. Language choice in online posts is often shaped by perceived audience composition. In Ambon's context, users tend to mix English when aware that their audience extends beyond the local circle, while Ambonese Malay dominates when addressing close community members. Informant M. admitted she uses Ambonese-Indonesian mixes more on Facebook, where most friends are local, but prefers adding English on Instagram due to her more diverse followers. This phenomenon supports Wu & Chen's (2022) argument that code-mixing reflects audience awareness and identity positioning.

Finally, the social function of code-mixing can be interpreted as performative action. Through language mixing, users not only convey messages but also craft digital personae, choosing when to appear global, when to emphasize local ties, or when to distance themselves from specific audiences. Field observations indicate that in public posts (e.g., open Facebook statuses), English use is more prominent, while private spaces (e.g., family

WhatsApp groups) feature more Ambonese-Indonesian blends. This dynamic demonstrates how identity shifts depending on audience context, affirming the performative nature of code-mixing as a conscious communicative strategy:

Table 2 Social Functions of Code-Mixing in Ambon's Digital Space

Social Function	Common Code-Mixing Forms	Example	Social Implication
Cosmopolitan Identity	Word insertion & hybrid forms	"*Beta su tired banget*, need a break *cepat*."	Signals connection to global culture
Local Solidarity	Phrase insertion & idiomatic blending	"*Beta lapar* so, *ayo* hunting *makan*."	Reinforces Ambonese community bonds
Emotional Expression	Clause mixing & word insertion	"*Beta seng sanggup lagi*, it's too much for me."	Conveys deeper and more personal emotions
Audience Design	Variation across platforms/audiences	Facebook: Ambon-Indonesian; Instagram: more English	Adjusts self-presentation for target readers
Performative Identity	Hybrid forms, idiomatic blending	"Stay cool *bae, biar dorang yang stress*."	Uses language to shape digital self-image

Source: Interviews with informants (2023–2024)

These social functions indicate that code-mixing is neither arbitrary nor purposeless. Instead, it constitutes a deliberate strategy for social interaction and identity display in digital contexts. This aligns with Lexander's (2021) perspective that multilingual practices on social media represent identity work, a conscious process of constructing, negotiating, and performing identity through language. In this sense, code-mixing among Ambonese youth embodies both linguistic creativity and strategic communication in the digital era.

Local, National, and Global Languages in the Negotiation of Digital Identity

In Ambon's digital spaces, linguistic practices are never singular. Social media users fluidly alternate and combine three linguistic levels, Ambonese Malay, Indonesian, and English, creating patterns of interaction that reveal layered negotiations of identity. These languages function not merely as communicative media but as symbolic tools that convey intimacy, neutrality, and global connectedness. Ambon, as a city with a long colonial history and multilingual traditions, offers a unique sociolinguistic dynamic in which the boundaries between the local, national, and global are often blurred within a single caption, comment, or story.

Ambonese Malay holds a special position as a marker of solidarity and intimacy. Observations of several Facebook and Instagram posts reveal recurring expressions such as "Beta lapar so, siapa mau temani makan?" or "Seng kuat, panas sekali ini hari." The use of this language signals local belonging, reminding audiences that behind the digital screen, they are part of a shared Ambonese community. As informant L. noted during the interview, writing in Ambonese Malay makes her feel emotionally closer to friends and family because "they

instantly understand the emotional tone" behind her words. Thus, Ambonese Malay functions not merely as a conversational tool but as a symbolic language of intimacy that reinforces a sense of belonging in digital spaces.

Indonesian, by contrast, is often positioned as a neutral medium that bridges communication across communities. When users intend to reach a wider audience, particularly those who are not from Ambon, they tend to use Indonesian. Field observations in a popular café frequented by young people showed that conversations mixing Ambonese and Indonesian in person often transition into purely Indonesian posts online. For instance, a Facebook status reading, "Ayo kita healing sebentar, kerjaan bikin stress," is entirely in Indonesian, signaling the writer's intent for universality. Informant M. stated that she deliberately uses Indonesian for Instagram captions so her friends from Java and Sulawesi can understand her posts. This supports the function of Indonesian as a lingua franca that facilitates cross-ethnic digital communication.

English serves a different function, it is employed to project cosmopolitan identity and signal global connectivity. Many posts incorporate English words or phrases as markers of modernity, lifestyle, or affiliation with global popular culture. For example, a TikTok post reads, "just chilling with my gang, beta happy." As informant R. explained, using English makes her posts appear "cooler" and more relatable to peers accustomed to international content. Here, English is not only a tool for communication but also a symbol of aspiration, signifying that speakers are not confined to local spheres but are participants in the global digital culture.

These three linguistic levels frequently intersect within a single post, producing intriguing hybridity. One Instagram story caption read: "Beta cape abis, need holiday cepat-cepat." The sentence seamlessly integrates Ambonese Malay ("beta cape"), Indonesian ("cepat-cepat"), and English ("need holiday"). Such combinations illustrate how local, national, and global identities are negotiated simultaneously in digital discourse. This practice aligns with Prada's (2022) concept of translocality, which argues that local identity is not erased in global networks but rather projected and negotiated through interaction with global languages and symbols. In this sense, Ambonese youth do not abandon their local identity; they mobilize it as a resource for broader global participation.

Field observations further indicate that this linguistic hybridity transcends platform boundaries. On Facebook, Ambonese Malay and Indonesian dominate due to the locally centered audience. On Instagram, combinations involving English are more prevalent, reflecting a more diverse and globally oriented audience. TikTok, meanwhile, encourages more dynamic and creative linguistic blending through music, short captions, and fast-paced commentary. In one observation, a TikTok video by Ambonese youth was captioned: "Seng kuat kerja terus, let's go party guys!", eliciting responses in mixed Ambonese, Indonesian, and English. This demonstrates how each platform promotes different linguistic styles while maintaining the same underlying negotiation of dual, local and global, identity.

Table 3 Functions of Local, National, and Global Languages in Ambon's Digital Space

Language	Primary Social Function	Example (Digital Data)	Identity Implication
Ambonese Malay	Intimacy, solidarity, emotional expression	"*Beta lapar* so, *seng kuat lagi*."	Marks local belonging and community closeness
Indonesian	Neutrality, cross-ethnic accessibility	"*Ayo kita* healing *sebentar, kerjaan bikin* stress."	Serves as a communicative bridge across communities
English	Cosmopolitanism, global lifestyle, modern identity	"Need holiday *cepat-cepat, beta* tired *abis*."	Projects connection to global digital networks
Hybrid Forms	Dual identity negotiation (local + global)	"*Beta seng kuat,* just chilling *aja bro*."	Translocal identity: locally rooted yet globally visible

Source: Data from interviews with informants (2023–2024)

These findings show that digital identity negotiation in Ambon occurs through a sophisticated play of languages. By choosing Ambonese Malay, users assert their local roots; by using Indonesian, they ensure wider comprehensibility; and by adopting English, they display global connectivity. The combination of these languages creates translocal identity, where users remain grounded in local belonging while situating themselves within broader global flows.

Linguistic Creativity in Ambon's Digital Culture

Linguistic creativity in Ambon's digital culture demonstrates that code-mixing extends beyond communication, it becomes an aesthetic expression shaping new styles of discourse. Ambonese youth creatively manipulate language by blending Ambonese Malay, Indonesian, and English to produce humor, satire, stylistic play, and distinctive digital identities. Thus, code-mixing is not a mechanical mixture of forms but a deliberate creative strategy. As Selfa-Sastre et al. (2022) emphasize, digital language creativity characterizes communication in the social media era, where language, symbols, emojis, and textual forms combine to create novel expressive modes distinct from face-to-face interaction.

Across Instagram and TikTok, bilingual idioms and hybrid forms often serve as tools for humor. For example, one caption read: "Beta seng kuat lagi, Monday blues parah e, need kopi before mati gaya." This sentence blends Ambonese, Indonesian, and English, not merely to convey exhaustion but to generate a playful, relatable tone. As informant A. explained, adding English words makes posts "funnier and lighter," while using only Indonesian or Ambonese would make them sound "too serious." This aesthetic awareness reflects playfulness in digital linguistic creativity.

Such aesthetic practices also extend to social critique. On Facebook, a user wrote: "Janji manis itu cuma sweet words bae, action kosong." The combination of local and English expressions amplifies the irony, as the foreign element adds sharpness and sophistication to the message. Informant R. remarked that English terms make her posts sound "smart and classy," giving her critiques more impact. Observations in Ambonese student Facebook

groups support this pattern: English-Indonesian code-mixing is often used to soften or stylize serious commentary.

This linguistic creativity is further enhanced by digital symbols such as emojis, hashtags, and short-form media. A TikTok post captioned "Beta tired but let's keep moving 💪🔥 #AmbonStrong" illustrates the integration of multilingual text with visual markers. Emojis complement textual brevity by amplifying emotional meaning, while hashtags build digital community links that connect Ambonese local identity to wider audiences. Field data show that posts containing mixed-language hashtags like #AmbonVibes, #SantaiDuluBro, or #MoodMonday tend to receive higher engagement, suggesting that linguistic creativity in Ambon's digital culture extends beyond language to include multimodal expression.

Informant L. also noted that she frequently uses abbreviated English expressions like "LOL" or "OMG" in comments, often blending them with Ambonese, e.g., "LOL eee, lucu parah" or "OMG beta kaget." This reflects the digital multilingualism described by Leppänen & Sultana (2023), where speakers flexibly draw from multiple linguistic repertoires to construct fluid, context-sensitive digital styles.

Field observations in Ambon's popular cafés revealed that such hybrid linguistic practices are closely tied to the social use of media. Groups of young people were often seen recording TikTok videos while joking in Ambonese, then adding English captions before uploading, such as "We don't care, beta happy tonight!" The local language asserts intimacy in in-person interaction, while English serves to stylize the digital text and align it with global communication norms. Thus, linguistic practice in Ambon is both communicative and performative: language becomes a means of self-presentation, constructing a unique digital voice (Li & Lan, 2022; Nouri et al., 2020).

This digital voice, the stylistic signature of Ambonese online expression, reflects how communities negotiate identity within global digital networks. Through code-mixing, users express that they are simultaneously Ambonese, Indonesian, and global citizens. This multi-layered identity is displayed creatively through language play, digital symbols, and adaptive communicative strategies.

The implications of these findings are significant for language education and digital literacy. First, multilingual competence displayed through code-mixing should be recognized as an asset rather than a deviation from linguistic norms. As informant M. shared, regularly using English phrases in Instagram captions has improved her confidence and familiarity with the language, suggesting that social media can serve as an informal learning environment that supports both local and foreign language use.

Second, these findings emphasize the need for digital literacy education that acknowledges multilingual realities. Ambonese youth demonstrate an acute awareness of audience and context when navigating linguistic choices online. This aligns with Behnamnia et al. (2020), who argue that digital literacy involves not only technical but also critical and creative language skills. Integrating such practices into formal language education could make learning more relevant to students' lived experiences.

Third, within digital linguistics, this study contributes to underexplored contexts in eastern Indonesia. Most Indonesian code-mixing research centers on Jakarta or other major urban areas, while Ambon presents a distinctive dynamic where local language retains a central role. This enriches global sociolinguistic literature by expanding understandings of digital multilingualism beyond dominant metropolitan contexts.

Ultimately, these findings suggest that multilingual practices on social media are not threats to linguistic "purity" but pedagogical opportunities and valuable sites of sociolinguistic insight. In Ambon, code-mixing does not signify linguistic deficiency or erosion of local language; rather, it represents a creative strategy for presence, interaction, and self-expression in digital spaces. This linguistic creativity illustrates that language continually evolves with its speakers, and in the hands of Ambonese youth, it becomes a bridge connecting local rootedness with global participation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that code-mixing practices in Ambon's digital sphere are not merely reflections of daily linguistic habits but constitute complex social and cultural strategies for constructing identity, expanding communication networks, and negotiating positions between locality and globality. The interplay of Ambonese Malay, Indonesian, and English demonstrates that social media functions as a space where Ambonese speakers consciously construct cosmopolitan self-images without abandoning local solidarity, revealing their embeddedness in global digital culture. These findings affirm that code-mixing operates not only at the structural level, as mapped through Muysken's typology and Myers-Scotton's Matrix Language Frame, but also at a performative level, as creative acts of style, emotion, and social intimacy. By situating this phenomenon within eastern Indonesia, a region rarely examined in digital sociolinguistics, this study contributes both theoretically and empirically to a deeper understanding of how multilingualism in social media represents not linguistic deviation but a meaningful practice that embodies the dynamism of identity and linguistic creativity in Ambonese society.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

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