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CODE SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING IN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY MALAYSIA

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Abstract: This study explores the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic dimensions of code-switching and code-mixing among participants in the International Service Learning (ISL) program at Kampung Jawa Batu, Malaysia. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research investigates how multilingual speakers alternate between Malay, Indonesian, English, and Javanese to construct meaning, express identity, and foster intercultural understanding. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis framework. Findings reveal three dominant forms of language alternation: internal code-switching, external code-switching, and code-mixing. Internal switching primarily signaled solidarity and cultural empathy, while external switching indexed professionalism and institutional authority through the strategic use of English. Code-mixing, often occurring intra-sententially, served affective and relational functions—expressing politeness, emotional warmth, and shared belonging. These practices reflect a dynamic interplay between linguistic creativity and social harmony, illustrating how multilingual speakers in ISL settings perform identity and negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries. The study concludes that code-switching and code-mixing in service-learning contexts extend beyond linguistic adaptation; they embody acts of empathy, inclusion, and intercultural collaboration. The findings contribute to broader discussions on multilingualism, translanguaging, and cross-cultural communication in global education.
Keywords: *code-switching; code-mixing; cross-cultural communication; multilingualism; International Service Learning.*

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized educational landscape, code-switching and code-mixing have emerged as fundamental communicative strategies in multilingual societies, reflecting speakers' linguistic competence and sociocultural identity rather than language deficiency (Treffers-Daller, 2024; Turner & Lin, 2024). These phenomena represent natural, purposeful alternations between languages that facilitate meaning-making, solidarity building, and intercultural negotiation (Fang et al., 2022; Pillay, 2025). Within educational contexts, particularly in bilingual and multilingual classrooms, code-switching and code-mixing serve as vital pedagogical tools that enhance comprehension, reduce anxiety, and foster inclusivity among learners (Mulyani et al., 2024; Pham & Nguyen, 2024).

The strategic use of multiple languages in learning environments has been shown to support cognitive processing and facilitate the transition from first language (L1) to additional languages (Lauta & Estremera, 2025; Shaikh, 2025). In Southeast Asia, a region characterized by remarkable linguistic diversity, the coexistence of multiple languages creates particularly fertile ground for exploring these multilingual practices (Akhyaruddin et al., 2023; Sania & Lubis, 2023). The complex linguistic ecology of Malaysia specifically presents an ideal context for examining how speakers navigate multiple linguistic systems in everyday communication (Anderson, 2023; Samad et al., 2023).

International Service Learning (ISL) programs represent a unique educational space where multilingual communication becomes essential for both learning outcomes and community engagement (Anderson, 2023). These programs bring together students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, creating dynamic environments where language alternation serves as both communicative strategy and cultural bridge (Javaid et al., 2025; Villamor, 2025). In such cross-cultural educational experiences, the ability to flexibly move between languages reflects not only linguistic competence but also cultural sensitivity and adaptive communication skills (Huda et al., 2025; Noni Febriana et al., 2025).

The communicative demands of ISL settings—where participants interact with local communities, peers from different linguistic backgrounds, and institutional partners—necessitate a more dynamic understanding of multilingualism than typically required in traditional classroom settings (Gustia & Syukri, 2025; Sakura, 2023). As such, ISL environments function as natural laboratories for observing how code-switching and code-mixing operate in authentic, meaningful interactions (Damanik, 2023; Setyawan & Mandarani, 2024).

The theoretical landscape surrounding code-switching and code-mixing reveals both evolving understandings and ongoing debates. Code-switching typically refers to the alternation between two or more languages within a single conversation, often at phrase or sentence boundaries (Poplack, 1980, as cited in Tarigan et al., 2024). In contrast, code-mixing generally involves the hybridization of two languages within a single utterance, such as incorporating lexical items from one language into the grammatical framework of another (Auer, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 1993). The theoretical framework has been further complicated by the emergence of translanguaging as a distinct concept that challenges traditional boundaries between named languages (García & Wei, 2014, as cited in Fang et al., 2022).

Unlike code-switching, which often assumes distinct language systems, translanguaging posits that multilingual speakers have a unified linguistic system from which they select features appropriate to the communicative context (Treffers-Daller, 2024; Turner & Lin, 2024). This perspective represents a significant paradigm shift from viewing bilingualism as "double monolingualism" to understanding it as a dynamic, integrated linguistic competence (Putrawan, 2022; Aribah & Pradita, 2022).

The theoretical understanding has evolved significantly from early deficit perspectives toward contemporary understandings that recognize their strategic and cognitive value (Cedden et al., 2024; Rayo et al., 2024). Seminal work by sociolinguists such as Gumperz (1982) demonstrated the sophisticated conversational functions of code-switching, identifying it as a contextualization cue. Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model provided additional theoretical depth by framing code-switching as a rational choice based on social norms. In educational contexts, theoretical perspectives have similarly evolved from viewing code-switching as a classroom problem to recognizing its pedagogical potential (Lauta & Estremera, 2025; Nordian, 2024). Contemporary pedagogical frameworks now often embrace translanguaging pedagogy that intentionally leverages students' full linguistic repertoires to support learning (Fang et al., 2022; Pham & Nguyen, 2024). This approach recognizes that meaning-making and knowledge construction often flow most naturally when learners can access all their linguistic resources (Pillay, 2025; Shaikh, 2025).

Research has identified multiple communicative functions and social motivations underlying code-switching and code-mixing across diverse contexts (Ahmad et al., 2022; Arsad et al., 2023). In educational settings, these practices commonly serve functions such as clarifying complex concepts, reinforcing vocabulary, and building rapport (Amaliah & Haryadi, 2025; Setyawan & Mandarani, 2024). Beyond pedagogical functions, code-switching serves important social functions including establishing group membership, signaling cultural identity, and expressing emotion (Andi Suwarni, 2025; Santuso et al., 2023). The motivations for language alternation are influenced by the linguistic background of interlocutors, the formality of the setting, and the relationship between speakers (Setiaji & Mursalin, 2023; Awit & Setiawati, 2023). Studies conducted in Malaysian and Indonesian educational contexts have found that code-switching occurs more frequently in informal settings and serves as a strategy for managing conversations (Hasbi et al., 2025; Maharani et al., 2024).

Code-switching and code-mixing are increasingly recognized as significant practices for identity negotiation and navigating power dynamics in educational settings (Javaid et al.,

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2025; Přívratová, 2025). Research reveals that language choices often reflect complex negotiations between different aspects of identity, including cultural heritage and academic affiliation (Huda et al., 2025; Noni Febriana et al., 2025). The relationship between language practices and educational equity has emerged as another significant area of research, particularly in postcolonial contexts (Anderson, 2023; Villamor, 2025). Critical scholarship examines how historical hierarchies between languages continue to shape educational opportunities and outcomes (Turner & Lin, 2024). In such contexts, code-switching and translanguaging can function as strategies for challenging linguistic hierarchies and affirming the value of marginalized language varieties (Aribah & Pradita, 2022; Putrawan, 2022).

The impact of code-switching and code-mixing on language acquisition and academic development has been the subject of extensive research with somewhat mixed findings (Lauta & Estremera, 2025; Rayo et al., 2024). Numerous studies report positive effects of strategic language alternation on second language acquisition, particularly in supporting comprehension and reducing anxiety (Mulyani et al., 2024; Pham & Nguyen, 2024). Research in EFL classrooms across Asia has found that teachers' judicious use of code-switching can scaffold learning and build student confidence (Amaliah & Haryadi, 2025; Nordian, 2024). However, other studies present more nuanced findings regarding the educational impacts (Cedden et al., 2024). Some research suggests that the effectiveness of these practices may depend on factors such as students' proficiency levels and specific learning objectives (Guna, 2024; Natan Barus et al., 2024). Additionally, some learners perceive extensive L1 use as limiting their exposure to the target language (Dewirahmadanirwati & Aditiawarman, 2023; Margaretta & Rangkuti, 2024).

Despite substantial research, several significant research gaps remain, particularly regarding multilingual practices in cross-cultural, experiential learning environments like ISL (Anderson, 2023). First, while previous studies have extensively documented code-switching in traditional classroom settings (Sakura, 2023; Gustia & Syukri, 2025), few have examined how these practices operate in the unique communicative environment of ISL. Second, existing research has focused predominantly on teacher-student interactions (Damanik, 2023; Setyawan & Mandarani, 2024), with limited attention to peer-to-peer communication among multinational student cohorts. Third, methodological limitations persist, including a predominance of small-scale qualitative studies and vague operationalization of translanguaging practices (Cedden et al., 2024; Rayo et al., 2024). The current study addresses these gaps by investigating code-switching and code-mixing in ISL activities at the University of Technology Malaysia, with the following research questions:

Q1: What types and linguistic patterns of code-switching and code-mixing occur in multilingual interactions during International Service Learning activities at University of Technology Malaysia?

Q2: What pragmatic functions do these language alternations serve in facilitating communication, building intercultural understanding, and supporting learning in ISL contexts?

Q3: How do code-switching and code-mixing practices reflect processes of social adaptation, identity negotiation, and relationship building among ISL participants from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Huda et al., 2025; Noni Febriana et al., 2025)?

This study offers several original contributions to the field. First, it examines code-switching and code-mixing in the under-researched context of International Service Learning, moving beyond traditional classroom settings to investigate multilingual practices in community-engaged, experiential learning environments (Anderson, 2023). Second, the study adopts an integrated theoretical framework that combines sociolinguistic perspectives on code-switching (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Poplack, 1980) with translanguaging theory (García & Wei, 2014) to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how multilingual speakers utilize their linguistic repertoires (Treffers-Daller, 2024; Turner & Lin, 2024).

Third, the study focuses on the distinctive linguistic ecology of Malaysia, where multiple languages coexist and interact in complex ways (Akhyaruddin et al., 2023; Samad et al., 2023). Fourth, the research examines multilingual communication from multiple perspectives, including both student participants and community members (Hasbi et al., 2025). Finally, the study has pedagogical implications for designing more effective and equitable ISL programs that strategically leverage participants'

multilingual resources (Pillay, 2025; Villamor, 2025).

This study holds significant implications for theoretical development, educational practice, and methodological innovation. Theoretically, it contributes to refining conceptual frameworks for understanding code-switching and code-mixing by examining how these practices operate in the distinctive communicative environment of ISL (Anderson, 2023; Javaid et al., 2025). The findings will help elucidate the relationship between language alternation and processes of intercultural learning and identity negotiation (Huda et al., 2025; Noni Febriana et al., 2025).

In terms of practical significance, the findings offer valuable guidance for educators, program designers, and participants involved in ISL and other cross-cultural educational initiatives (Pillay, 2025; Shaikh, 2025). The research also has practical implications for preparing students for global citizenship by developing their metalinguistic awareness (Turner & Lin, 2024; Villamor, 2025). Methodologically, the study contributes to addressing identified limitations in research on multilingualism (Cedden et al., 2024; Rayo et al., 2024). Finally, the study has social significance in highlighting how strategic multilingual practices can foster more inclusive, equitable educational environments that value linguistic diversity (Aribah & Pradita, 2022; Putrawan, 2022).

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive design to examine the forms, functions, and sociocultural meanings of code-switching and code-mixing in multilingual interactions during International Service Learning (ISL) activities. The qualitative approach, grounded in the interpretivist paradigm, enabled in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences, linguistic choices, and identity expressions within authentic social contexts (Sugiyono, 2024; Harahap et al., 2024). Data were gathered through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, with triangulation applied to ensure validity and credibility (Ely Mulyati et al., 2024).

The research took place in Kampung Jawa Batu near the University of Technology Malaysia (UTM), a linguistically diverse community where Malay, Indonesian, English, and Javanese coexist. This setting provided a natural environment for studying multilingual communication and intercultural encounters (Samad et al., 2023; Hasbi et al., 2025). A total of 18 participants—comprising UTM students, Indonesian students, and local community leaders—were purposively selected for their active engagement in cross-cultural communication (Andrio & Resmi, 2024). The demographic distribution of participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Participant demographic overview*

Participant Group	Number	Gender	Nationality	Role in ISL
UTM Students	10	6M, 4F	Malaysia / International	Participants
Indonesian Students	5	2M, 3F	Indonesia	Participants
Local Community Leaders	3	3M	Malaysia	Informants

Participants in this study possessed diverse linguistic repertoires, ranging from bilingual (Malay–English or Indonesian–English) to multilingual (Malay–English–Javanese or Indonesian–English–Arabic), allowing for a nuanced exploration of code-switching and code-mixing across cultural boundaries (Agoes Hendriyanto & Juliani, 2025). Data were collected over four weeks during the International Service Learning (ISL) program in Kampung Jawa Batu using non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation to capture authentic multilingual interactions (Tarigan & Girsang, 2025; Susanti et al., 2024).

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework—data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing—combined with Poplack's (1980, as cited in Tarigan et al., 2024) typology to classify intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching patterns. Thematic analysis was used to identify communicative functions such as clarification, solidarity, humor, and identity performance (Amaliah & Haryadi, 2025; Huda et al., 2025). Reliability was strengthened through peer debriefing and member checking (Harahap et al., 2024).

Ethical principles were strictly observed, with informed consent, participant anonymity, and institutional approval ensured (Sugiyono, 2024; Pugu et al., 2024). To enhance validity and trustworthiness, the study employed methodological triangulation, audit trails, and reflexive journaling, ensuring credibility and confirmability consistent with rigorous qualitative standards in sociolinguistics (Ely Mulyati et al., 2024; Guna, 2024).

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of field observations and interviews showed that participants in the ISL program at Kampung Jawa Batu frequently alternated between Malay, Indonesian, English, and Javanese. Three main forms of language alternation emerged—internal code-switching, external code-switching, and code-mixing—each serving specific sociolinguistic and pragmatic functions in both formal and informal interactions.

Table 2. *Types and functions of code-switching and code-mixing in ISL interactions*

Type	Example	Function	Context
Internal Code-Switching	Javanese ↔ Malay	Solidarity, humor, intimacy	Informal peer conversations
External Code-Switching	Malay ↔ English	Prestige, professional tone	Formal presentations or meetings
Code-Mixing	Malay + Javanese / English insertions	Politeness, clarification, inclusion	Casual activities or discussions

Internal code-switching (Indonesian–Malay/Javanese)

Internal code-switching between Indonesian, Malay, and Javanese was frequently observed in informal interactions, reflecting both linguistic adaptability and cultural closeness among participants. These switches served not merely as markers of bilingual proficiency but as tools for achieving communicative goals such as building solidarity, expressing humor, and negotiating social relationships. The following table 3 presents selected excerpts illustrating the diverse functions and interpretations of internal code-switching in this study.

Table 3. *Internal code-switching (Indonesian–Malay/Javanese)*

Excerpt	Context	Function of Code-Switching	Interpretation
1. "Dengan Jepun atau Indonesia panggil Jepang kan? Jepang. Jepang kan? Dengan Jepang kan?"	Lecturer explaining cultural terminology differences	Pedagogical and affiliative	The switch between *Jepun* (Malay) and *Jepang* (Indonesian) ensures comprehension and builds rapport, reflecting metalinguistic awareness and cultural sensitivity.
2. "Kecil-kecil cili padi… Di Indonesia kecil-kecil cabai rawit, lebih kurang tu lah, tu dia tukar-tukar bahasa begitu kan."	Lecturer joking with students	Humor and relational bonding	Parallel use of *cili padi* (Malay) and *cabai rawit* (Indonesian) creates humor and signals shared linguistic heritage, showing bidirectional accommodation.
3. "Nek boso jowo nandi manggone?" – "Manggone ting mrikine nopo?" – "Nek griyone kulo niku Jeporo pak."	Exchange between Malaysian elder (Datuk) and Indonesian student in Javanese	Solidarity and ethnic empathy	Code-switching to Javanese expresses shared ancestry, reducing social distance and reinforcing cultural connectedness.
4. "Iye betul… tapi setelah pak cik menjadi kepala desa banyak tempat menjadi terbengkalai." – "Dikarenakan ada faktor politik lagi lagi."	Interview between student and local elder	Politeness and intimacy	Alternation between formal Malay and colloquial Indonesian maintains respect while softening hierarchy, balancing formality with familiarity.

Excerpt 1 – Solidarity

> "Dengan Jepun atau Indonesia panggil Jepang kan? Jepang. Jepang kan? Dengan Jepang kan?" (Dr. Rasyid explaining cultural terminology differences)

This excerpt reflects metalinguistic awareness, where the speaker consciously switches between Malay and Indonesian lexical choices (*Jepun/Jepang*) to ensure comprehension for Indonesian students. The alternation performs a pedagogical and affiliative function, bridging semantic equivalence while reinforcing cultural connection.

Excerpt 2 – Humor

> "Kecil-kecil cili padi… Di Indonesia kecil-kecil cabai rawit, lebih kurang tu lah, tu dia tukar-tukar bahasa begitu kan."
> (Dr. Rasyid joking with students)

Here, humor operates through parallel metaphors — *cili padi* (Malay) and *cabai rawit* (Indonesian). This dual lexicalization symbolizes shared linguistic heritage, functioning as a relational strategy to generate laughter and ease interaction. It also demonstrates bidirectional accommodation (Giles, 1987), where the speaker adapts vocabulary to both linguistic audiences.

Excerpt 3 –Solidarity

Datuk: "Nek boso jowo nandi manggone?"
Farhan: "Manggone ting mrikine nopo?"
Datuk: "Manggone ting mrikone?"
Farhan: "Nek griyone kulo niku Jeporo pak."

This exchange represents intersubjective code-switching to Javanese as a marker of intimacy and shared ancestry. The mutual comprehension establishes a *cultural bridge* between Malaysian Javanese descendants and Javanese-speaking Indonesian students. Such exchanges enhance affective proximity — demonstrating that *code-switching can embody ethnic empathy* rather than linguistic difference.

Excerpt 4 – intimacy

Nadya: "Iye betul, katanya dulu terdapat tempat tempat yang Berjaya tapi setelah pak cik menjadi kepala desa banyak tempat- tempat menjadi terbengkalai…"
Datuk: "Dikarenakan ada faktor politik lagi lagi."

The alternation between formal Malay and colloquial Indonesian here maintains politeness while reducing distance between younger interviewers and elderly respondents. This politeness-based switching allows the students to appear respectful without being overly formal — a subtle linguistic negotiation of hierarchy and intimacy.

External code-switching (Malay/Indonesian–English)

External code-switching between Malay/Indonesian and English mainly occurred in formal or semi-formal settings, signaling professionalism, clarity, and prestige. Unlike internal switching, which expressed solidarity, these alternations reflected academic authority and strategic use of English for precision and identity expression. The table below summarizes key excerpts and their communicative functions.

Table 4. *Functions and interpretations of external code-switching (Malay/Indonesian–English) in academic and social contexts*

Excerpt	Interaction Context	Function	Interpretation
5	Dr. Rasyid mixing English–Malay in explaining government policy	Prestige	English is used to project intellectual authority and connect local discourse with global terminology, aligning with Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model.
6	Facilitator giving directives	Professional tone	English ensures clarity and structure, while Malay maintains empathy and solidarity, reflecting balanced communicative competence.
7	Pak Mad and students engaging in humorous exchange	Professional tone / Humor	English is used playfully, blending local humor with global linguistic style—demonstrating translanguaging and identity performance.
8	Dr. Rasyid explaining academic programs	Prestige	English lexical items emphasize institutional credibility and academic modernity, typical in higher education discourse.

Excerpt 5 – Prestige

"Our policy look is policy, polisi tengok ke timur…"
(Dr. Rasyid mixing English–Malay in explaining government policy)

The alternation between English (*our policy look is policy*) and Malay contextualizes national ideology in globally recognizable terms. The switch indexes intellectual authority and aligns the academic discourse with English as the *language of knowledge*, consistent with Myers-Scotton's (1993) *Markedness Model*.

Excerpt 6 – Professional tone

"Okay, listen. Sekarang semua tolong bersihkan area depan dulu, then continue to the right side. Make sure safety first."
(Facilitator's directive speech)

This excerpt displays structured bilingualism. English commands are used for precision and formal tone (*listen, continue, safety first*), while Malay is employed for communal warmth (*tolong bersihkan*). Such alternations demonstrate functional duality — clarity and care — reflecting how multilingual educators balance authority and empathy.

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Excerpt 7 – Professional tone

> Pak Mad: "How are you today budak cantek nan ganteng?"
> Mahasiswa: "Im fine and im God pak Mad."

Here, English phrases are inserted into otherwise Malay-based utterances. The humorous blending of registers and accents illustrates playful identity performance. Students intentionally mimic "global English" while maintaining local humor — creating a translanguaging moment (García & Wei, 2014) that celebrates linguistic fluidity rather than correctness.

Excerpt 8 – Prestige

> "International Business School but this one only focusing on PG only post graduate untuk master dan PhD."
> (Dr. Rasyid's bilingual academic explanation)

Switching to English lexical items (*post graduate, master, PhD*) denotes academic precision and institutional credibility. The pattern reflects domain-specific borrowing, common in tertiary contexts where English is associated with academic modernity and prestige.

Code-mixing (Malay–Indonesian–English insertions)

Code-mixing among Malay, Indonesian, and English speakers reflects not only linguistic flexibility but also deep sociocultural ties. The interweaving of languages during interaction serves various communicative purposes — from showing inclusion and politeness to clarifying meanings and expressing shared emotions. Each instance demonstrates how multilingual speakers construct identity and solidarity through language blending.

Table 5. *Functions and meanings of Malay–Indonesian–English code-mixing in social interaction*

Excerpt	Context	Type of Code-Mixing	Function	Interpretation
9	Semi-formal academic exchange	Intra-sentential (English insertions)	Inclusion and professional identity	English lexical insertions like *kolaborasi*, *university*, and *program* reflect international affiliation and academic professionalism.
10	Informal hospitality setting	Inter-sentential (Malay–Indonesian–Javanese)	Politeness and warmth	The mixture of *monggo*, *icipi*, and *iye* conveys hospitality and respect, representing linguistic hospitality and intercultural inclusion.
11	Reflective storytelling	Intra-sentential (Malay–Indonesian)	Clarification and emotional recall	Alternation between *dulu ada pasar* and *beda beda mase* signals nostalgia, showing emotional bilingualism and generational continuity.
12	Farewell interaction	Continuous mixing (Malay–Indonesian–English)	Inclusion and relational closeness	Mixing in *makasih ye*, *maaf kan kite*, and *boleh monggo* expresses gratitude, humility, and shared emotional bonds between speakers.

Excerpt 9 – Inclusion

> Nadya: "Kita juga berkolablorasi dengan university teknologi Malaysia jadi sudah terprogramkan jadi kite hanya dating kesini mengikuti program program."

The insertion of English lexical items (*kolaborasi, university, program*) within Indonesian syntax illustrates natural lexical borrowing. The utterance indexes professional identity and participation in an international framework — an example of how multilinguals recontextualize English words without losing local rhythm.

Excerpt 10 – Politeness

> Mak Cik: "Sambi lah sambil minum di unjuk monggo."
> Mahasiswa: "Iye mak cik terimakasih."
> Farhan: "Icipi kalo di jawe yak an."
> Mak Cik: "Iye."

This excerpt demonstrates intercultural hospitality conveyed through a mosaic of Malay, Indonesian, and Javanese expressions. The shift between *sambi/sambil*, *monggo*, *icipi*, and *iye* signifies warmth and inclusion. Code-mixing thus functions as *linguistic hospitality* (Kramsch, 2009), where mutual accommodation replaces linguistic hierarchy.

Excerpt 11 – clarification

> Mak Cik: "Dulu ada pasar bermacam macam tempatnya bersih cantik hingga kita dapat penghargaan desa tercantik."
> Nadya: "Betul beda beda mase beda."

Here, Malay–Indonesian mixing carries nostalgic emotion. The alternation between *dulu ada pasar* and *beda beda mase* embodies intergenerational storytelling — emotional bilingualism that unites memory and respect.

Excerpt 12 – inclusion

> Nadya: "Makcik pakcik kite nak pamit, makasih ye sudah menyambut kedatangan kami semua, maaf kan kite ye kalua ada salah dalam bertanya, kite pamit dulu ya makcik senang bertemu dengan makcik dan pakcik semoga kite juga sama seperti makcik dan pakcik sebab merasakan bagimana menua Bersama ye, kita foto dulu boleh?"
> Datuk: "Boleh monggo."

This final excerpt encapsulates affective multilingualism. The blending of Indonesian and Malay expressions (*makasih ye, maaf kan kite, monggo*) creates a deeply emotional farewell. Code-mixing here is not linguistic confusion but an act of empathy — a way to express gratitude and affection in hybrid linguistic form.

Across all 12 excerpts, participants demonstrated multilingual fluency that extends beyond grammar into social meaning.

Internal switching (Excerpt 1–4) symbolized intimacy, humor, and ethnic connection.

External switching (Excerpt 5–8) marked professionalism, clarity, and global identity.

Code-mixing (Excerpt 9–12) expressed empathy, warmth, and intercultural belonging.

In essence, language alternation in ISL was not a barrier but a bridge — a living testament to Southeast Asian multilingual harmony. It reflects that linguistic flexibility is both a communicative skill and a social virtue, revealing how young learners and local hosts co-create understanding through shared voices.

Code-switching as a marker of solidarity and familiarity

Internal code-switching among Indonesian, Malay, and Javanese speakers reflects not just linguistic diversity but also emotional and social connectedness. Within multilingual interactions, speakers strategically switch languages to express solidarity, familiarity, and humor. These alternations act as contextual cues that shape interpersonal dynamics, reinforcing shared identity and reducing social distance.

Table 6. *Functions of internal code-switching as markers of solidarity and familiarity*

Excerpt	Language(s) Involved	Context	Function of Switching	Interpretation
1	Malay–Indonesian	Pedagogical discussion	Recognition of shared identity	Alternation between *Jepun* and *Jepang* highlights mutual intelligibility and respect for national linguistic variation — an "unmarked choice" signaling bilingual harmony.
2	Malay–Indonesian	Informal humor exchange	Solidarity through humor	Use of *cili padi* and *cabai rawit* creates a shared cultural image, reinforcing equality and reducing social distance.
3	Indonesian–Javanese	Casual peer conversation	Ethnic pride and empathy	Switching into *ngoko* (informal Javanese) expresses intimacy and cultural pride, serving as an affective bridge across ethnic identities.
4	Malay–Indonesian–Javanese	Multicultural setting	Transnational solidarity	Alternation across regional codes signals inclusion and mutual respect, exemplifying linguistic empathy and collective identity in ISL contexts.

Consistent with Gumperz's (1982) concept of *contextualization cues*, internal code-switching between Indonesian, Malay, and Javanese in Excerpts 1–4 demonstrates how language alternation signals shifts in social meaning. Participants did not merely translate across languages but *performed identity and intimacy* through subtle lexical and pragmatic choices.

For example, the alternation between *Jepun* and *Jepang* in Excerpt 1 functions as a pedagogical cue that recognizes shared lexical similarity yet indexes two national identities — Malaysian and Indonesian. The repetition and negotiation of these forms enact what Myers-Scotton (1993) terms "unmarked choice", where switching is the expected behavior in a bilingual encounter.

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Similarly, in Excerpt 2, the parallel expressions *cili padi* and *cabai rawit* are deployed humorously to evoke shared cultural frames. Humor, as a communicative resource, neutralizes power distance and affirms relational equality.

Excerpt 3 extends this phenomenon through the use of Javanese, functioning as a translocal identity bridge. The speakers' comfortable alternation into *ngoko* (informal Javanese) indexes ethnic pride and cultural belonging, reinforcing Huda's (2025) view that multilingual speakers use language alternation to enact *ethnolinguistic empathy*. In multicultural ISL settings, such empathy enables transnational solidarity — an alignment of affect and identity that transcends linguistic boundaries.

External code-switching and the performance of professional identity

External code-switching between Malay/Indonesian and English reflects how speakers strategically perform professionalism and intellectual identity in academic and institutional settings. Rather than signaling linguistic imbalance, such alternation embodies agency and adaptability — positioning English as a communicative tool for precision, prestige, and inclusivity. Through this practice, speakers construct and display professional competence while maintaining relational harmony in multilingual contexts.

Table 7. *Functions of external code-switching in performing professional identity*

Excerpt	Language(s) Involved	Context	Function of Switching	Interpretation
5	Malay–English	Academic explanation	Projection of authority and global awareness	English phrase *our policy look is policy* integrates international discourse within a local framework, signaling intellectual prestige and clarity.
6	Malay–English	Instructional directive	Clarity and interpersonal balance	English used for procedural precision (*listen, continue, safety first*), Malay for communal tone (*tolong bersihkan*), illustrating functional bilingual pedagogy.
7	Malay–English	Informal-professional interaction	Playful identity performance	The humorous mix of *How are you today budak cantek nan ganteng?* demonstrates linguistic creativity and approachability, blending professionalism with familiarity.
8	Malay–English	Academic description	Institutional and academic legitimacy	English academic terms (*postgraduate, master, PhD*) convey credibility and align with global academic norms, reinforcing professional authority.

In formal and semi-formal domains, the alternation between Malay/Indonesian and English (Excerpts 5–8) serves as a symbolic resource for professionalism, intellectual authority, and institutional legitimacy. This finding aligns with the *Markedness Model* (Myers-Scotton, 1993), which posits that speakers choose languages that mark specific social roles and relationships.

In Excerpt 5, Dr. Rasyid's statement, *"Our policy look is policy, polisi tengok ke timur"*, exemplifies *double-voicing* — embedding English terminology within a Malay framework to connect global discourse with local comprehension. The alternation enhances conceptual clarity and projects academic prestige while sustaining accessibility.

Similarly, the directive in Excerpt 6 — *"Okay, listen. Sekarang semua tolong bersihkan area depan dulu, then continue to the right side. Make sure safety first"* — shows deliberate alternation for instructional clarity. The use of English for procedural terms and Malay for politeness reflects what Pillay (2025) describes as *functional bilingual pedagogy*, where teachers switch codes to manage both efficiency and empathy.

Excerpt 8, where English academic terminology (*postgraduate, master, PhD*) is inserted, further reveals the institutional function of code-switching. English lexical items index *academic capital* and align the discourse with global academic conventions (Villamor, 2025). In this way, external switching becomes a performative act of professional identity, signaling both intellectual competence and intercultural adaptability.

The ISL participants thus recontextualize English not as linguistic domination but as a shared lingua franca of collaboration, a linguistic

repertoire that carries both prestige and inclusivity.

Code-mixing as a reflection of empathy and emotional expression

Code-mixing among ISL participants reveals that multilingual expression is not merely linguistic hybridity but a vehicle for empathy, warmth, and emotional resonance. Through intra-sentential blending of Malay, Indonesian, Javanese, and English, speakers construct inclusive spaces that transcend linguistic boundaries. These mixed utterances express gratitude, humor, and humility — demonstrating that emotional connection often emerges through the fluid interplay of languages rather than strict linguistic separation.

Table 8. *Functions of code-mixing as empathy and emotional expression*

Excerpt	Language(s) Involved	Context	Function of Mixing	Interpretation
9	Indonesian–English	Academic explanation	Professional inclusion	English lexical items (*university*, *program*) index participation in international collaboration while maintaining local authenticity.
10	Malay–Indonesian–Javanese	Informal hospitality	Politeness and cultural empathy	Expressions like *sambi*, *monggo*, and *icipi* blend languages to convey warmth and mutual respect, reflecting linguistic hospitality (Kramsch, 2009).
11	Malay–Indonesian	Storytelling	Nostalgia and emotional bonding	Alternations such as *dulu ada pasar* and *beda beda mase* evoke intergenerational connection through emotionally charged bilingualism.
12	Malay–Indonesian–Javanese	Farewell expression	Intimacy and gratitude	The mixed utterance (*makasih ye... monggo*) embodies affective code-mixing that communicates humility, sincerity, and shared humanity.

Code-mixing in Excerpts 9–12 is characterized by intra-sentential alternation — short English or Javanese insertions within Malay or Indonesian utterances — and serves as a key site for emotional and relational meaning-making. Unlike full code-switching, which often marks boundaries between discourse modes, code-mixing performs *intra-personal blending*, revealing what García & Wei (2014) conceptualize as translanguaging — the dynamic use of all linguistic resources to make sense of experience.

Excerpt 9, for instance, contains the expression *"Kita juga berkolaborasi dengan university teknologi Malaysia…"*, where English insertions (*university*, *program*) highlight participants' engagement with international academic discourse. Yet the surrounding Indonesian syntax retains local authenticity, reflecting hybrid academic bilingualism (Turner & Lin, 2024).

Excerpt 10, featuring the mixed expression *"Sambi lah sambil minum di unjuk monggo"*, exemplifies how local hospitality is linguistically encoded through blending, creating a *linguistic choreography of politeness* (Kramsch, 2009). The code-mixing here is deeply affective, evoking warmth rather than hybridity confusion.

In Excerpt 12, during farewell, emotional expressions like *"Makasih ye sudah menyambut kedatangan kami semua, maaf kan kite ye…"* demonstrate affective code-mixing. The deliberate blending of Malay and Indonesian constructs intimacy, gratitude, and humility traits culturally valued in both societies. The insertion of *monggo* further symbolizes openness and sincerity. These findings confirm that multilingual speakers in ISL settings employ code-mixing to humanize formal interactions, transforming them into spaces of empathy and shared humanity.

Pedagogical implications: Translanguaging in experiential learning

From a pedagogical perspective, the multilingual interactions observed reveal that language alternation functions as a learning strategy within experiential and service-based education. Participants navigated real-life communication scenarios where linguistic boundaries were fluid, validating García and Wei's (2014) argument that translanguaging promotes deeper cognitive engagement and socioemotional growth.

In the ISL context, switching between English, Malay, and Indonesian served multiple pedagogical functions: (1) Cognitive scaffolding – English terms clarified academic content, while local languages contextualized understanding. (2) Affective mediation – Alternation maintained rapport and reduced anxiety, fostering a

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psychologically safe environment. (3) Cultural reflection – Participants realized the symbolic meaning of linguistic diversity as a component of global citizenship.

Excerpt 5 and 8 particularly demonstrate how bilingual communication enhanced comprehension and participation. Facilitators' switches between instructional English and relational Malay exemplify translanguaging pedagogy — validating multilingual identities while ensuring task clarity. This aligns with Pillay (2025) and Huda et al. (2025), who emphasize that multilingual learning environments encourage inclusivity and collaborative empathy, essential for 21st-century education.

Sociocultural dynamics: Language, power, and identity

Beyond linguistic functionality, code-switching in ISL reveals power negotiation and identity positioning within intercultural encounters. The coexistence of English as a global language and Malay/Indonesian as regional lingua francas creates layered power dynamics. However, participants in this study subverted traditional hierarchies by employing switching to equalize relationships rather than reinforce status differences.

Excerpt 3's use of Javanese underscores identity restoration — reclaiming a minority heritage within a dominant bilingual setting. Meanwhile, Excerpt 7's playful mix of English and Malay humor (*"How are you today budak cantek nan ganteng?"*) transforms linguistic prestige into *relational intimacy*. Such creativity confirms Canagarajah's (2013) assertion that multilinguals "resist linguistic purity" through fluid identity performances.

This finding challenges monolingual ideologies often prevalent in formal education. ISL participants enact *multilingual citizenship* — embracing linguistic diversity as a social asset. Through switching and mixing, they negotiate belonging across borders, embodying what Heller (2011) terms "the sociolinguistics of globalization", where language becomes both a communicative and political practice.

Reframing code-switching as cultural intelligence

The ISL findings extend existing literature by reframing code-switching as a form of cultural intelligence (CQ) — a set of adaptive behaviors that allow individuals to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts. Through spontaneous language alternation, participants demonstrated not only linguistic awareness but also emotional intelligence, choosing the appropriate code to maintain harmony, show respect, and build mutual understanding.

For instance, Excerpts 9–12 illustrate how students instinctively adjusted their linguistic register depending on interlocutor and situation — switching from formal English to friendly Malay when engaging local residents. This adaptability supports Earley and Ang's (2003) notion of *CQ behavior*, where cultural understanding manifests through micro-level communicative choices.

Thus, code-switching in ISL is more than bilingual performance; it is a lived practice of intercultural empathy. The use of hybrid utterances, honorifics, and emotional expressions reflects the participants' growing capacity to navigate difference through shared linguistic and moral sensibilities.

Overall, code-switching and code-mixing in ISL settings are multidimensional acts simultaneously linguistic, social, and pedagogical. Internal switches foster solidarity and humor, external switches project professionalism and clarity, while code-mixing conveys empathy and relational depth.

These findings contribute to the evolving understanding of multilingualism in Southeast Asia, highlighting that language alternation functions as both a communicative resource and a pedagogical strategy. In the ISL context, multilingual practice emerges as a vehicle for *transformative learning* where participants co-construct meaning, identity, and community through the rhythm of their shared voices.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that code-switching and code-mixing among participants in the International Service Learning (ISL) program at Kampung Jawa Batu serve complex sociolinguistic and affective purposes. Internal code-switching between Malay, Indonesian, and Javanese primarily functioned to express solidarity, humor, and cultural empathy, strengthening interpersonal bonds and shared identity among speakers. In contrast, external code-switching involving English indexed professionalism, academic prestige, and communicative clarity, reflecting the globalized norms of higher education and institutional discourse.

Code-mixing, meanwhile, emerged as a subtle yet powerful expression of emotional nuance and relational warmth, particularly in informal and

intercultural encounters. Through the fluid blending of linguistic elements, participants demonstrated translanguaging competence—using their entire linguistic repertoires to convey respect, hospitality, and authenticity.

The findings underscore that language alternation in multilingual service-learning contexts is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a social act of empathy, inclusion, and identity negotiation. It highlights how multilingual speakers dynamically construct meaning, maintain harmony, and navigate intercultural boundaries through their strategic and affective use of language.

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