

## Youtuber's communicative strategies: Code-switching usage by Windah Basudara in "Black Myth: Wukong" first gameplay

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### Abstract

This study explores how an Indonesian YouTuber, Windah Basudara, uses code-switching as a communicative strategy in his first gameplay livestream of "Black Myth: Wukong". The study aims to identify the functions of his code-switching and how it reflects his public image. The data were collected using a transcription technique in the "Black Myth: Wukong" first live-stream and identified all his use of code-switching. By using descriptive-qualitative method, the data were then analyzed within Gumperz's framework of code-switching functions: Quotation, interjection, message qualification, reiteration, addressee specification, and objectivization vs. personalization. It was revealed, there are 31 instances of code-switching used toward the audiences, functions to share game information, express emotions, add humor, and build audience engagement. His use of code-switching between English and Indonesian also reflects his gamer identity and helps him build a friendly relationship with his viewers. Overall, it was concluded that code-switching not only as a mere casual linguistic phenomenon but also one of communicative approach that builds Windah Basudara's image as an engaging and relatable gaming YouTuber, showing the influence of language choice in building closeness in online gaming communities.

## INTRODUCTION

Language as a communication device for humans has an inseparable relation with society and culture. The relation of both involves aspects within a social community such as power dynamics, social classes, or culture (Wardhaugh, 2006). As technologies have advanced, society has expanded into an online platform, namely social media. People across the world with various backgrounds in this era use social media for daily activities. Due to its wide accessibility in using language in different forms (text, audio, or video), social media has been considered a language-based social platform. There is a high potential of language development specifically on social media that is possible and needs to be studied. One of the language developments is the increasing use of multilingualism (Androutsopoulos, 2015).

Multilingualism has become a common occurrence in modern society. The widespread use of social media by all segments of society has created more space for multilingualism (Androutsopoulos, 2015). Multilingualism is prevalent among online communities; one of them is the gaming community (Huomo, 2023). The rich diversity in the content and people in the gaming community have invented special linguistic phenomena, including code-switching (Miswaty et al., 2024).

YouTube is one of the platforms where gaming communities emerged. Since the advent of live-streaming, gamers have been playing games while streaming on platforms such as YouTube and Twitch (Brandis & Bozkurt, 2021). Rahman et al. (2023) and Kristiantoro & Nuraeni (2023) argue that gaming content is the most searched for on multimedia platforms such as YouTube. Prominent figures such as PewDiePie and Paul Logan influenced the rise of fame and interest in the creation of gaming content on YouTube (Törhönen, 2021).

Indonesia is not an exception in the case of gaming content creation. One of the most subscribed game content creators is Windah Basudara (Kristiantoro & Nuraeni, 2023). Both gamers and non-gamers hold Windah Basudara in high regard. Brando Franco, who manages Windah Basudara's YouTube channel, attracts a large audience each time he conducts a livestream due to his use of bidirectional, multi-directional, and multi-dimensional communication styles (Hermawan & Kristiyono, 2023). In his livestreams, Brando often uses code-switching to communicate, given that the majority of the game content he plays is in English.

Code-switching, other than being a linguistic phenomenon, has been recognized for its functional roles in daily discourse (Gumperz, 1982; Tay, 1989). Code-switching is commonly found and used by people in multilingual environments like YouTube and gaming communities (Wentker & Schneider, 2022). It also serves as an effective communicative strategy, especially for image construction and engagement among community members (Hasan & Benny, 2025).

In context of playing an English-based game, Brando's use of code-switching is likely to occur as he needs to engage and sharing the gameplay experience with his audience through speaking. In doing so, he often read aloud the in-game instructions and translate them into Indonesian to increase the viewers' understanding of the game progress, or he would say expressive phrases in English spontaneously to express his emotions while playing the game.

One of many games he played, "Black Myth: Wukong" is one of his most popular stream series, seeing how the first gameplay has around two million views in a year. This game was requested and expected a lot by his subscribers as it has overwhelming positive reviews of the 3D animation and gameplay which made the game sell more than 10 million copies (\$852 million) in only two weeks after release (Praptono, 2024). Another reason was this game is an ARPG (Action Role Play Game) adapted from the famous Chinese fictive mythology "Journey to the West" that is widely known (Han, 2024).

The game features narratives and dialogues in English which made situations where Windah is required to employ switching languages between English and Indonesian with implication of his aim in conveying to the audience as it is stated that "The language that people use can reveal many things about them without them saying anything about it" (Malisi & Setiawan, 2017). Therefore, this research will be conducted in order to examine Windah Basudara's use of code-switching in "Black Myth: Wukong" first gameplay livestream as one of his communication ways in building his persona.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Code-switching as a Communicative Strategy**

Code-switching is now common in many social settings, which shows the rise of bilingualism and multilingualism due to increasing diversity in communities. Soon (2021) has stated that there is a higher possibility for code-switching to occur in a multilingual society. It was once considered substandard language use, but it is now seen as one of communicative strategies (Junaidi & Majid, 2019). Gumperz (1982) has defined one of

code-switching types, conversational code-switching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems.” This type of code-switching typically occurs in two consecutive sentences, as in a speech for certain purposes.

Code-switching functions vary depending on the context and the speaker's intent, such as filling the gap of second language incompetence or expressing emotions when another language better captures certain feelings (Záňová, 2011). These situational code-switching is proven to be used frequently, as the research of code-switching and code-mixing use in the Pakistan Defense Force by Muhammad & Shahid (2023) resulted in 44%. It can be concluded that code switching used as a communication tool in fulfilling a purpose has been acknowledged as effective (Beatty-Martínez et al., 2020).

People in various settings recognize that code-switching is more than just a language phenomenon, instead, an intentional use of language used to deliver messages better, build relationships, or assert one's identity. This is evident as Li et al. (2024) found that Chinese-English bilinguals frequently switch between languages when a word in their other language better expresses the exact meaning they're looking for. This suggests that language switches are intentional strategies for both effectiveness and clarity rather than linguistic limitations. Aside from that, code-switching also helps to maintain smooth interaction and build better connections. Tay (1989) discovered that bilingual Singaporean speakers use it to elaborate on meaning, build connections, and express their cultural background. Alif et al. (2021) discovered a similar phenomenon in Malaysia, where speakers switch languages to highlight topic changes, quote sayings, highlight points, add humor, or suit language preference. Overall, code-switching has a great potential as an intentional communicating approach used to express meaning effectively.

### **Gumperz's Classification of Code-switching Functions**

Gumperz (1982) has addressed some code-switching functions in a discourse context. He classified them into six categories: quotation, addressee specification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification, and personalization vs. objectivization. Code-switching in the form of quotation serves to report others' speech in other languages. Addressee specification means that alternation of language also functions to address particular person/people. Interjection as a form of code-switching is identified as a sentence filler, often functions to express emotions. Reiterating a sentence in another language is also one of the code-switching's functions. Alternating language between

sentences to elaborate is identified as message qualification. Lastly, situational code-switching also functions in differentiating between personal opinion and facts.

Das (2012) has conducted research by using Gumperz's framework to determine the communicative functions of code-switching in Bangladesh-English bilingual speaker which sets in a school. It has shown that code-switching plays roles such as reducing or highlighting social differences, showing language preference, handling linguistic constraints, organizing discourse, contrasting objectification and personalization tones, expressing cultural messages, emphasizing key words, lowering language barriers, keeping communication appropriate to the context, and repeating messages for clarity. The variety of code-switching serves as a recognition of code-switching as a communicative strategy.

### **Language and Image in YouTube and Gaming Communities**

YouTubers are now considered public figures as they influence the community on YouTube. The gaming community is the most well-known community on YouTube due to the advancement of the platform, such as the live-stream feature. It eases people to create content related to games as a media consumption for the community (Brandis & Bozkurt, 2021). It has been claimed by Petrova & Gross (2017) that "73% of YouTube gamers say they enjoy watching others play games on YouTube." This explains the rise of gaming content and the creator on YouTube.

To reach a larger audience, a gaming YouTuber has to use certain strategies by considering some aspects. Törhönen's (2021) research results show that most content creators consider entertainment value, interactivity, personality, uniqueness, and activity levels to be crucial for their popularity. In doing so, constructing an identity to build a rapport with the audience is often done by YouTubers by using certain strategies, one of which is language choice.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The researcher employs a descriptive-qualitative method to capture communicative strategies in the form of code-switching used in Windah Basudara's "Black Myth: Wukong" first gameplay and to give an in-depth perspective of Windah's purpose in using code-switching in order to build the wanted online persona.

In collecting the data, the researcher transcribed the video and highlighted the use of code-switching. The data then were analyzed based on Gumperz's (1982) theory of communicative strategies types in code-switching to find and describe the functions and Windah's aim in using code-switching as a popular gaming YouTuber.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Windah's Use of Code-switching as a Communicative Strategy and Its Aim

Windah Basudara often switches between English and Indonesian in his "Black Myth: Wukong" gameplay, showing how naturally he used both languages to communicate and connect with his audience. Out of 43 total switches, 31 were used to interact with viewers. The changes in language are not random; they serve different functions such as interjections, quotations, message qualifications, reiterations, and address specifications, which together shape how he expresses himself while playing.

For instance, at the beginning of the stream, Windah says, [1.15] "By the way, available on 2K guys. *Ini karena grafiknya katanya gg banget, gue bikin bisa nyala 2K*". Here, the code-switching moves from English to Indonesian as he informs and emphasizes, showing his excitement about the game's visual quality. He blended English sentence with Indonesian information to keep his speech natural and engaging. Then, he started the game with, [1.26] "*Langsung aja guys, kok gak mau gerak? Kita mainkan. Ok, 'New Journey,'*", where he quoted the in-game phrase in English to mark the transition to gameplay.

Windah often uses English interjections to express emotion or surprise. When reacting to the visuals, he exclaimed, [1.39] "*Ini komputer gue gak meledak kan ini? Bro, look at that bro!*" His quick switch adds excitement and humor to the moment. Similarly, when surprised by a sudden fight, he shouts, [6.55] "*Gila langsung baru main langsung war guys! Oh shit!*", using an English curse word to show disbelief and thrill. During tense moments, the switch emphasizes his emotions, as seen when he said, [8.37] "*Kenapa jadi batu guys? The hell?*", after accidentally used a skill for petrifying his character.

He also used code-switching to read or quote what appeared on the screen while commenting on it. When he said, [35.38] "*Ha, gue pengen naikin yang ini nih. Maksudnya apa sih? 'Each talent level slightly increase the health..'*", the quotation in English is followed by Indonesian. The same happened when he reads, [29.07] "'Grant more focus when the second move of light attack...' *Ini kayaknya juga gg guys*", where the English quote is followed by his Indonesian evaluation.

Windah's code switch also encourages participation by addressing his audience. In [53.16], he stated, "*Lumayan dapat ilmu baru ya. Where should we go now, guys?*" To include viewers in making decisions during the journey. Similarly, when faced with an obstacle, he addresses his concern in both language, [50.24] "*Sabar, sabar. My stamina is*

low, bro." These switches made the viewers reassured and feel included, implying that his bilingualism is one of the means he maintains interaction.

He frequently reiterated in two languages to highlight his point of view. For example, his praise, [1.03.51] "*Wih, indah banget lihat grafiknya*. Look at the graphic guys, look at the graphic!", was repeated in English to attract the viewers. His switch, such as "*Wih anjir! Bisa berdiri di tongkat guys! Let's go, let's go!*" [41.29], which combines Indonesian slang and English interjection was used to keep the mood lively.

Windah's code-switching shows how involved and expressive he is when he plays. He uses English phrases to describe how he feels or explain the technical details of the game, whereas Indonesian keeps his conversation warm and easy to understand. His switches are not just language tools, they are also emotional tools that help connect the game's English interface with his Indonesian-speaking viewers, making the overall experience more interesting and relevant.

### **Reflection to Windah Basudara's Persona as a YouTuber**

Windah often switches between languages, which is also a sign of his personality as a content creator who wants to share his in-game experience with his audience. His switch of English and Indonesian is like how a lot of young people talk to each other these days, especially when they're playing games online. He speaks English to seem natural when playing an English-dubbed game, and he switches to Indonesian to keep the interaction enjoyable and genuine.

In [51.12], he said, "Bro that's so easy bro. That's so easy, man. *Gampang banget ini daripada yang thanos, guys,*" after beating a boss. His repetition and switch made his conversation entertaining and showed that he was confident. Similarly, [58.52] "Ok that's not good bro. Shit! *Gede banget!*", also shows how he genuinely conveys frustration playfully.

His wit and word choice make his streams interactive. For example, when confused, he asked, [1.13.31] "*Q itu apa? Q itu apa guys? Q, what is Q?*", repeating in both languages to show viewers his curiosity. This switching makes him seem friendly and open, leading viewers to comment. In yet another instance, [42.17] "*Oh, jadi berdiri gitu guys. Ok, ok, ok, ok, wish me luck, wish me luck*", showed his excitement and anticipation in a way that is both genuine and funny.

These switches bring Windah and his viewers closer. His casual switch of languages sounds like everyday conversation, allowing the audience to feel welcomed. He

interacts with his audience by speaking like them. His frequent code-switching adds humor and energy to what makes him an approachable, genuine, informative, and audience-focused YouTuber.

## CONCLUSION

Windah Basudara's usage of code-switching in "Black Myth: Wukong" first experience is an excellent means to express emotions, explain game features, and keep viewers interested. This strategy lets him connect with more viewers and makes him appear like a relatable game content creator. It encourages inclusion and connects the gaming culture around the world with locals.

Future study could look into code-switching practices among various gaming YouTubers, explore audience perceptions of code-switching, and figure out if multilingual content allows viewers to pick up new languages or gaming terms. These study recommendations might reveal more systematic patterns and applications of code-switching within the gaming setting, thus improving our knowledge of code-switching as an approach for communication and connection in digital environments.

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