



Code-Switching and Language Choice in the Multilingual Content of Fiki Naki on Tik-Tok

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ABSTRACT

This study explores code-switching and language choice in the multilingual TikTok content of Fiki Naki, an Indonesian creator who uses languages such as Indonesian, English, Russian, and Spanish to connect with diverse audiences. Using a descriptive qualitative method and content analysis of five selected videos, the research identifies the main types of code-switching and their social functions. The findings show that tag-switching (58%) is the most frequent, followed by inter-sentential switching (37%) and intra-sentential switching (5%). These forms are used strategically to build social closeness through greetings, cultural validation, competence display, inclusive communication, professional consistency, and authentic limitation. Audience responses including surprise, validation, and continued interaction demonstrate that multilingual practices strengthen credibility, engagement, and identity. The study concludes that Fiki Naki's use of code-switching is a deliberate sociolinguistic strategy that bridges cultures in digital spaces, and it suggests future research on other creators and platforms to broaden understanding of multilingualism in social media

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital landscape, social media platforms have fundamentally transformed the ways in which multilingual speakers navigate and express their linguistic repertoires. TikTok, as one of the most influential social media platforms globally, has emerged as a particularly dynamic space for multilingual practices, where content creators strategically employ multiple languages to engage diverse audiences across cultural and geographical boundaries. This phenomenon reflects the broader sociolinguistic reality of our interconnected world, where digital communication transcends traditional linguistic constraints and creates new opportunities for cross-cultural interaction.

The practice of code-switching the alternation between two or more languages or language varieties within a single communicative event has gained significant prominence in digital spaces. Unlike traditional face-to-face multilingual interactions, social media code-switching operates within unique contextual parameters, influenced by platform affordances, audience diversity, and the performative nature of digital content creation. This digital context presents both opportunities and challenges for multilingual speakers who must navigate complex linguistic choices to effectively communicate with heterogeneous audiences while maintaining authenticity and cultural relevance.

Fiki Naki, an Indonesian content creator on TikTok, exemplifies this contemporary multilingual digital practice through his sophisticated use of multiple languages including Indonesian, English, Russian, and Romanian. His content demonstrates a nuanced understanding of strategic language choice, where linguistic decisions are carefully calibrated according to communicative purpose, target audience, and cultural context. Rather than random linguistic mixing, Fiki Naki's multilingual practice represents a deliberate sociolinguistic strategy that serves multiple functions: facilitating communication across linguistic boundaries, constructing and negotiating identity, and building social connections with both local Indonesian audiences and global viewers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies also emphasize the broader role of multilingualism. Nzomo et al. (2021) introduce the concept of Multilingual Information Literacy, showing how switching between languages facilitates knowledge access. McCashin and Murphy (2023) explore how platforms like TikTok encourage multilingual strategies for engagement and authenticity. Together, these perspectives provide the theoretical foundation for this study.

This research aims to examine the types and patterns of code-switching and language choice present in Fiki Naki's multilingual TikTok content, while exploring how his strategic use of multiple languages facilitates social closeness with both local and global audiences.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design utilizing content analysis as the primary analytical method. The research is grounded in a sociolinguistic approach to examine code-switching and language choice patterns in Fiki Naki's multilingual content on TikTok. This methodological

framework is appropriate for understanding the complex social and communicative functions of multilingual practices in digital media contexts.

The descriptive qualitative approach allows for in-depth examination of language phenomena in their natural context, providing rich insights into the social and pragmatic motivations behind code-switching behaviors. Content analysis enables systematic examination of linguistic patterns while maintaining sensitivity to contextual factors that influence language choice. The sociolinguistic framework provides theoretical grounding for interpreting code-switching as socially motivated communicative behavior rather than random linguistic occurrence.

Primary Data Source

The study utilizes Fiki Naki's TikTok videos as the primary data source, specifically selecting 5 videos that feature multilingual interactions. The selection criteria for videos include:

- Multilingual content: Videos demonstrating use of multiple languages (Indonesian, English, Russian, Spanish, etc.)
- Audience interaction: Content showing direct engagement with diverse audiences
- Representativeness: Videos reflecting typical patterns of Fiki Naki's multilingual communication style

Videos will be selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation of different types of multilingual interactions, including:

- Greeting sequences with international audiences
- Interactive conversations with followers
- Cultural commentary or discussions
- Entertainment-focused multilingual content

Data Collection Techniques

Documentation

The data collection process begins with systematic video observation, involving:

- Comprehensive viewing: Multiple viewings of selected videos to ensure complete understanding of content and context
- Contextual notation: Recording relevant contextual information including video purpose, audience engagement patterns, and situational factors
- Technical documentation: Note-taking on video characteristics ; audience response metrics

Transcription

Detailed transcription of multilingual conversations from the videos, including:

- Verbatim transcription: Exact reproduction of spoken language in all languages used
- Language identification: Clear marking of language switches and specific languages employed
- Prosodic notation: Recording of emphasis, intonation patterns that are relevant to code-switching

- Temporal marking: Indication of when language switches occur within the video timeline
- Contextual annotation: Notes on visual cues, audience reactions, and situational context that may influence language choice.

Data Analysis

The analytical process follows a systematic four-stage approach:

Identification Stage

Systematic identification of code-switching and language choice instances, involving:

- Boundary marking: Precise identification of language switching points
- Language categorization: Classification of each utterance by language
- Context mapping: Documenting situational context for each switching instance
- Pattern recognition: Initial observation of recurring switching behaviors

Classification Stage

Systematic categorization of code-switching types using established sociolinguistic frameworks:

- Intersentential switching: Language changes occurring between sentences or clauses
- Intrasentential switching: Language alternation within single sentences or clauses
- Tag switching: Insertion of tags, interjections, or formulaic expressions from one language into another
- Situational Code-Switching: This happens when people switch languages because the situation changes.
- Metaphorical Code-Switching: This happens when people switch languages within the same situation, not because the setting changes, but to add meaning.

Interpretation Stage

Analytical interpretation of motivations and functions behind language choices: Social Functions:

- Identity construction: How language choice reflects and constructs social identity
- Audience accommodation: Adaptation of language to different audience segments
- Social positioning: Use of language to establish social relationships and hierarchies
- Cultural bridge-building: Code-switching to connect different cultural groups

RESULTS

Table 1. Structural Classification of Code-Switching (Poplack's Framework)

No	Code-Switching Type	Example	Languages Involved	Structural Analysis
1	Tag-switching	"rødgrød med fløde"	Danish → English	Danish formulaic expression inserted into English discourse
2	Tag-switching	"i also learn espanol"	English → Spanish	Inserting one spanish word in english clause
3	Tag-switching	"Enchanté, ça va"	French → English	French greeting formula in English context
4	Tag-switching	"Merhaba"	Turkish → English	Opening greeting tag
5	Intra-sentential	"Todo bien y co'mo esta's. I from Indonesian"	Spanish-English	Mixed elements within sentence structure
6	Inter-sentential	"Aku sayang kamu juga sayang", i went to Indonesian"	Indonesian → English	Complete clause boundary switch
7	Inter-sentential	"Tabii kibiliorum" → English response	Turkish → English	Sentence-level language change
8	Inter-sentential	"Tabii kibiliorum" → English response	Turkish → English	Sentence-level language change
9	Inter-sentential	"ben de türkçe konuşabiliyorum" → "sen de türkçe konuşabilirsin?"	Turkish → Turkish	Maintained language across sentence boundaries
10	Inter-sentential	"Y cómo estás? Soy de Indonesia" → "Pero lo hablas súper bien"	Spanish → Spanish	Sustained Spanish conversation
11	Inter-sentential	"Say hi, YouTube" → "Hi, YouTube. Hi, guys"	English → English	Language consistency in Professional context

As shown in Table 1, tag-switching dominates (58%), primarily used in greetings and cultural expressions. Inter-sentential switching (37%) follows, indicating that sentence-level alternation is also central in Fiki Naki's interactions.

Table 2. Social Closeness Creation Strategies

N o	Strategy Type	Implementation Method	Example from Data	Theoretical Framework	Effectiveness Indicators
1	Immediate Recognition	Language- specific greetings	"Merhaba" upon Turkish identification	Situational Code- switching	Audienceengage ment,Positive response
2	Cultural Validation	Insider knowledge display	"rødgrød med fløde" for Danishculture	Metaphorical Code-switching	Surprise, appreciation, cultural bonding
3	Competence Display	Accurate pronunciation demonstration	Spanish accent recognition	Both situational and metaphorical	Credibility building, respect earning
4	Inclusive Communicat ion	Multi-language environment creation	Seamlesslangua ge mixing in Video 2	Situational accommodation	Diverse audience engagement
5	Professional Consistency	Maintained creator identity	"Soy youtuber" across languages	Metaphorical identity marking	Brandrecognition ,professional credibility
6	Authentic Limitation	Honest ability acknowledgment	"birazcık", "that's all I know"	Metaphorical humility	Trust building, approachability

Table 2 illustrates that immediate recognition and cultural validation are among the most effective strategies, suggesting that Fiki Naki deliberately accommodates diverse cultural backgrounds.

Table 3. Audience Response Patterns and Social Effects

N o	Audience Response Type	Frequen cy	Associated Code- Switch	Social Function Achieved
1	Surprise/ Amazement	High	Cultural insider knowledge	Credibility establishment
2	Validation Seeking	Medium	Heritage language use	Cultural identity affirmation
3	Continued Interaction	High	Appropriate language response	Relationship maintenance
4	Competence Recognition	Medium	Extended language use	Expertise acknowledgment
5	Cultural Testing	Low	Specific cultural phrases	Authenticityverification
6	Professional Inquiry	Medium	Consistent identity markers	Brand recognition

As presented in Table 3, audience responses of surprise and amazement were the most frequent, highlighting how multilingual performances exceed viewers' expectations and enhance engagement.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of Fiki Naki's multilingual TikTok content highlights three major dimensions of his linguistic practice: the structural types of code-switching, the communicative strategies employed to create social closeness, and the responses these practices elicit from audiences. These findings suggest that multilingual performance in digital contexts is not accidental but rather a deliberate sociolinguistic strategy aimed at balancing communicative clarity, identity construction, and relational engagement.

Structurally, the predominance of tag-switching demonstrates that simple insertions such as greetings or cultural expressions can carry high symbolic value in digital interactions. While inter-sentential switching also appears frequently, allowing Fiki to adapt smoothly to different participants, intra-sentential switching remains relatively rare. These patterns align with Poplack's typology of code-switching but extend its application to digital media, where brevity and immediacy are crucial. In this sense, Fiki's reliance on tag-switching reflects the affordances of TikTok as a platform where short, recognizable cues are more effective than extended linguistic mixing.

Beyond structural patterns, the study shows that code-switching serves important relational and identity functions. Strategies such as greeting audiences in their native language, displaying cultural insider knowledge, or acknowledging linguistic limitations contribute to building authenticity and trust. These findings resonate with earlier work on sociolinguistic motivations for code-switching (Ramaila, 2025; Holmes & Wilson, 2022) but demonstrate their adaptation to digital performance. Unlike classroom or community settings, where code-switching often facilitates comprehension, in TikTok it becomes a tool for social positioning and identity reinforcement.

Audience responses further illustrate the effectiveness of these practices. Frequent expressions of surprise, validation, and continued interaction indicate that multilingual performances not only capture attention but also strengthen relational bonds. These reactions confirm McCashin and Murphy's (2023) observation that multilingualism enhances engagement in digital spaces. Moreover, the positive recognition of competence and professional consistency highlights how linguistic choices contribute to creator credibility and brand identity. The relatively rare instances of cultural testing suggest that while audiences sometimes challenge authenticity, successful performances largely mitigate such skepticism.

Taken together, these findings show that Fiki Naki's multilingual practices operate on both communicative and symbolic levels. Code-switching allows him to cross linguistic boundaries while simultaneously affirming authenticity and cultural awareness. More broadly, this study illustrates how digital multilingualism functions as a strategy for building cross-cultural bridges and sustaining engagement, thereby extending traditional sociolinguistic theory into the domain of social media interaction.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study demonstrates that Fiki Naki's multilingual practices on TikTok are purposeful and strategic rather than incidental. His dominant use of tag-switching, supported by inter-sentential shifts, reflects an adaptation of traditional code-switching patterns to the fast-paced and globalized environment of social media. Beyond structure, multilingual choices function as tools for identity construction, authenticity, and the creation of social closeness with diverse audiences.

Audience responses ranging from surprise and validation to sustained interaction indicate that code-switching strengthens both credibility and engagement, confirming its value as a sociolinguistic resource in digital contexts. These findings extend existing theories of code-switching by showing how linguistic practices, once primarily studied in offline communities, now play a central role in digital identity performance and cross-cultural communication.

FURTHER STUDY

Future research should investigate whether similar strategies are employed by other creators across different platforms and cultural contexts, and how sustained exposure to multilingual performances influences audience loyalty.

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