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"Code-Switching in Ecotourism Contexts: Linguistic Interactions between Guides and Tourists on Mount Rinjani"

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Abstract:*This study aims to examine the phenomenon of code-switching in interactions between tour guides and tourists in the natural tourism area of Mount Rinjani. The research is motivated by the fact that most tourists visiting Rinjani come from various countries, prompting local guides to frequently switch between Indonesian, English, and local languages. A qualitative approach was employed using a case study method. Data were collected through direct observation and in-depth interviews with ten trekking guides actively working in the Rinjani area. The findings reveal that code-switching is used as a communicative strategy to bridge language differences, foster social closeness, and enhance the comfort of information delivery. These results highlight the significance of bilingual competence in the tourism sector.*
Keywords: *code-switching, ecotourism, bilingualism, tour guides, sociolinguistics, Mount Rinjani, intercultural communication*

Introduction

The phenomenon of code-switching has become an integral aspect of multilingual interaction, particularly in regions that serve as international tourist destinations. In the Mount Rinjani area of Lombok, trekking guides play a crucial role in facilitating communication between foreign tourists and the local environment. In practice, guides frequently switch between Indonesian, English, and even local languages such as Sasak.

According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), code-switching is a linguistic practice in which a speaker alternates between languages within a single conversation—or even within a single sentence—depending on the social context, identity, or communicative intent. Poplack (1980) classifies code-switching into three types: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag-switching. Additionally, Gumperz (1982) argues that code-switching can serve as a contextualization cue that helps listeners interpret the speaker's intent or the tone of an utterance. Yim and Clément (2021) emphasize that code-switching can also function as a tool to strengthen social relationships and express solidarity among speakers. Similarly, Heller (1988) describes code-switching as the alternation between two or more languages within a single conversation by bilingual or multilingual speakers.

Code-switching occurs in bilingual and even multilingual communities and is closely related to individual language choices (Fachriyah, 2017; Sinaga & Hutahaean, 2020; Yim & Clément, 2021). The term "code" is defined as a language or dialect (Junaidi, 2019). The phenomenon of code-switching is commonly observed in multilingual countries such as Indonesia (Moetia et al., 2018; Octavita, 2017). Indonesia is home to a vast number of regional languages, and its people frequently use more than one code or language for communication (Hutauruk, 2016). Speakers often switch between codes, languages, dialects, or language varieties depending on the situation and domain. Moreover, bilingual speakers may alternate between languages in conversation spontaneously, without prior notice (Arlan et al., 2019; Nurmalia & Purwaningrum, 2019).

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The following is an example of a code-switched conversation between a tour guide and a tourist during a Mount Rinjani trek, illustrating a common shift from Indonesian to English in such contexts:

Guide:
Selamat pagi semuanya! Hari ini kita akan mulai pendakian menuju *basecamp Sembalun*. Please make sure your backpack is not too heavy, ya.

Wisatawan:
Pagi, Pak! How long will it take to reach the basecamp?

Guide:
Kurang lebih sekitar 7 jam jalan kaki. Tapi tenang saja, kita akan *break* beberapa kali untuk istirahat dan makan siang.

Wisatawan:
Do we pass any waterfalls on the way?

Guide:
Untuk hari ini tidak, tapi nanti saat turun lewat jalur Torean, kita bisa lihat beberapa *beautiful waterfalls*. So, don't worry!

Wisatawan:
Sounds good! Apakah ada *toilet stops* sepanjang jalur?

Guide:
Ada, tapi sangat terbatas. Jadi, kalau bisa gunakan kesempatan saat break di *pos pendakian*, ya.

Wisatawan:
Noted, terima kasih, Pak.

Guide:
You're welcome. Let's enjoy the hike and don't forget to take some pictures. View-nya bakal *amazing*!

The background of code-switching usage is influenced not only by limitations in vocabulary or comprehension but also by the need to adapt to the social and cultural contexts of tourists. Therefore, this study is important to explore how code-switching functions pragmatically and strategically within nature tourism services, particularly in enhancing the quality of the tourist experience.

Research Questions:

1. What forms of code-switching are used by trekking guides on Mount Rinjani?
2. What are the social and communicative functions of the code-switching observed?
3. What factors influence the use of code-switching in this context?

In the context of tourism, understanding code-switching requires attention to its role as a communicative strategy within cross-cultural interactions. Gumperz (1982) highlights the significance of contextualization cues—linguistic and paralinguistic signals that help interlocutors interpret the meaning and intent behind code-switching instances. These cues enable speakers and listeners to navigate shifts in language choice, which often signal changes in topic, social roles, or cultural alignment.

In multilingual tourism settings, such as Mount Rinjani, guides and tourists engage in dynamic linguistic exchanges where code-switching not only facilitates communication but also constructs social identities and relationships. Code-switching thus functions pragmatically to manage meaning, express solidarity, and accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds (Auer, 1998; Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Moreover, the use of code-switching as a strategic tool aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives that view language choice as influenced by social context, power relations, and communicative goals (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). In ecotourism, where effective communication is essential for safety, information delivery, and cultural exchange, bilingual or multilingual competence becomes critical for guides to meet the needs of international tourists while maintaining connection to local cultural identity.

This study draws upon these theoretical insights to analyze how code-switching operates within trekking guides' interactions, aiming to elucidate both the linguistic forms and social functions that underpin this phenomenon in a multicultural tourism environment.

Previous Studies

Several studies have examined the phenomenon of code-switching in multilingual and tourism contexts, providing valuable insights relevant to this research. Fachriyah (2017) and Sinaga & Hutahaean (2020) explored code-switching as a reflection of individual language choice in bilingual and multilingual societies. Their findings highlight the complexity of linguistic behavior influenced by social identity and communicative needs.

In the context of Indonesian multilingualism, Moetia et al. (2018) and Octavita (2017) documented the pervasive nature of code-switching in everyday interactions, emphasizing its pragmatic functions. Hutauruk (2016) further observed that Indonesians commonly alternate between regional languages and national or foreign languages depending on situational contexts, a pattern that aligns closely with tourism communication dynamics.

Research focused specifically on tourism settings, such as by Arlan et al. (2019) and Nurmalia & Purwaningrum (2019), found that bilingual tour guides frequently employ code-switching spontaneously to bridge communication gaps and foster rapport with tourists. These studies underscore the importance of linguistic flexibility in enhancing service quality and tourist satisfaction.

Yim & Clément (2021) contribute to the understanding of code-switching as a social tool, revealing its role in expressing solidarity and cultural alignment between interlocutors. Their work supports the view that code-switching transcends mere language alternation, serving strategic and identity-related functions in multilingual interactions.

Despite these valuable contributions, research specifically addressing code-switching in ecotourism contexts such as Mount Rinjani remains limited. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the forms, functions, and influencing factors of code-switching between trekking guides and tourists in this unique natural and cultural setting.

Methodology

The data collection techniques in this study are aligned with the qualitative approach and case study method employed. Data were gathered using three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. These techniques were integrated to obtain comprehensive, detailed, and contextual data consistent with the research focus.

First, in-depth interviews were conducted with five active trekking guides in the Mount Rinjani area, each having a minimum of two years of work experience. The interviews were carried out face-to-face using a previously prepared interview guide consisting of open-ended, flexible questions that correspond to the research problem statements. Prior to the interviews, the researcher established rapport with the participants to create a comfortable and open atmosphere. During the interview process, important information was noted, and with the respondents' consent, the sessions were audio-recorded. Subsequently, the interview data were fully

transcribed and analyzed thematically. To ensure data validity, member checking was conducted by re-confirming the findings with the informants.

Second, observation was employed to directly observe the activities of the trekking guides while performing their duties in the field. The aim of this observation was to capture behaviors, interactions, and social dynamics occurring during their work. The researcher conducted non-participatory observations, taking detailed field notes of all relevant activities. Observed aspects included communication patterns with tourists, safety strategy usage, and interactions with the surrounding environment.

Third, documentation techniques were used to complement the data from interviews and observations. Collected documents included training certificates, activity schedules, visual documentation (photos or videos), and travel logs related to the trekking guides' activities. These documents were analyzed descriptively to provide data that strengthen the field findings.

The triangulation of these three data collection techniques was applied to enhance the credibility, validity, and accuracy of the data in this study.

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, alongside the classification of code-switching based on Poplack's (1980) theory.

Results

This study found that trekking guides in the Mount Rinjani area actively employ code-switching practices in their interactions with tourists, particularly foreign visitors. Based on data analysis from interviews, observations, and documentation, the forms of code-switching used can be categorized into three main types: inter-sentential switching, intra-sentential switching, and tag-switching.

1. Forms of Code-Switching

a. **Intra-sentential Switching**

This form occurs when code-switching takes place within a single sentence. The guides often mix English elements into Indonesian sentence structures to convey important information quickly and practically. An example observed in the field is:

"Jangan lupa bawa your headlamp ya, it's important at night."

In this example, the phrase "your headlamp" and "it's important at night" are inserted into an Indonesian sentence structure, demonstrating flexible and contextual use of both languages.

b. **Inter-sentential Switching**

This type of code-switching is characterized by language shifts occurring between sentences. Trekking guides often start a sentence in Indonesian and continue with another in English, or vice versa. For example:

"Kita akan mulai jam 7 pagi. Be ready, okay?"

This form illustrates the alternating use of two languages to ensure that the message is understood by all tour participants, especially tourists who do not understand Indonesian.

c. **Tag Switching**

This form involves the insertion of language elements (usually short phrases or tags) from another language into the main sentence. In this study, the use of words such as *okay*, *you know*, and *let's go* frequently appeared in the guides' conversations. For example:

"Kita istirahat dulu sebentar, okay?"

The insertion of such tags serves pragmatic functions by reinforcing the message and creating an informal and friendly tone in communication.

2. Functions of Code-Switching

The data analysis revealed that code-switching employed by trekking guides is not merely spontaneous but serves specific communicative functions that are important in the tourism interaction context. These functions include:

a. **Clarification of Information**

Code-switching is used to reiterate important information in English after it has been conveyed in Indonesian, especially concerning safety instructions and climbing procedures. This aims to ensure that all participants, particularly foreign tourists, clearly understand the instructions.

b. **Building Rapport**

The informal mixture of Indonesian and English demonstrates the guides' efforts to create a relaxed and familiar atmosphere. This strategy effectively builds positive social relationships between guides and tourists.

c. **Communication Efficiency**

In situations requiring quick explanations, such as describing technical equipment or specific trekking terms, guides prefer using English terms that are more familiar to foreign tourists. This enhances communication effectiveness without compromising the conveyed message's meaning.

3. Implications of the Findings

These findings indicate that code-switching functions as an adaptive and functional communication strategy in the ecotourism context, especially in interactions between local guides and international tourists. The strategic use of mixed languages facilitates more effective, inclusive, and friendly communication in multilingual situations. Moreover, these findings suggest opportunities for developing cross-cultural communication skills training for tour guides to improve the quality of tourism services in the Mount Rinjani area.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that trekking guides in the Mount Rinjani area consistently utilize code-switching practices in their communication with tourists, particularly foreign visitors. The three identified forms of code-switching—namely intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and tag switching—demonstrate the guides' high linguistic flexibility and their ability to adapt language use according to situational needs.

Intra-sentential switching emerged as the most frequently occurring form, indicating that the guides are comfortable inserting English elements into Indonesian sentence structures. This aligns with Poplack's (1980) assertion that intra-sentential switching requires a higher level of proficiency because speakers must simultaneously control the structure of both languages. In this context, the guides not only functionally master both languages but also strategically employ them.

The primary function of code-switching in this setting is closely linked to communication needs within a multilingual and multicultural environment. The clarification of information in two languages reflects the pragmatic awareness of the guides to ensure that critical information—such as safety instructions or logistical details—is well understood by tourists from diverse linguistic backgrounds. This supports Gumperz's (1982) claim that code-switching serves an interactional function, especially in conveying messages that require cross-cultural understanding.

Furthermore, the role of code-switching as a tool to build rapport reflects the social dynamics between guides and tourists. Guides frequently use tags such as *okay*, *let's go*, and *you know* within Indonesian sentences to create a more relaxed and informal atmosphere. This supports Holmes's (2013) finding that code-switching functions not only as a communication tool but also as a social marker that strengthens interpersonal relationships among speakers.

The function of communication efficiency is also evident when guides use English technical terms, such as headlamp, trekking *pole*, or *camp site*, rather than searching for Indonesian equivalents that may be less familiar or more cumbersome. This indicates that code-switching can serve as a strategy to simplify information delivery in time-sensitive and dynamic situations.

Overall, the findings reinforce the understanding that code-switching is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a communication strategy reflecting social and cultural adaptation. In ecotourism contexts such as Mount Rinjani, the guides' ability to flexibly use two languages not only enhances communication effectiveness but also improves the overall tourist experience.

Conclusion

This study concludes that code-switching practices constitute a significant and functional communication strategy in the interactions between trekking guides and tourists in the Mount Rinjani area. Based on data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation, three primary forms of code-switching were identified: intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, and tag switching. These forms are employed contextually and flexibly across various communicative situations.

In terms of function, code-switching plays a role in (1) clarifying important information, particularly related to safety and technical aspects of trekking; (2) building social rapport through a relaxed and informal communication style; and (3) enhancing communication efficiency in delivering terms or instructions that are more commonly recognized in English.

These findings affirm that code-switching not only reflects the linguistic competence of the guides but also serves as an adaptive communication strategy within a multilingual tourism environment. Therefore, code-switching can be regarded as a pragmatic competence that should be supported through bilingual or intercultural communication training to improve the quality of tourism services and tourist satisfaction at destinations like Mount Rinjani.

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