

A STUDY OF TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICES EXPRESSED IN A SOCIAL APPLICATION

Magdalena Kartikasari Tandy Rerung*

English Language and Culture Department, Bunda Mulia University

Received on 4 October 2019 / Approved 10 October 2019

ABSTRACT

Inspired from several articles that discussed about digital communication, the following article also discussed about the role of languages in some digital platforms such as Whatsapp. The study focused on a group of employees from various nationalities that work for the same company. The dominant language used is English yet most of the members were Indonesian. There are five examples provided from the group chatting that discuss various topics which are mostly related to the company matters. The methodology used was qualitative by observing the group chat activities and collecting the data from the screenshots. The pattern of translanguaging occurred in some parts of the conversation chatting, and the pattern was found based on the category of topic and relationship among the employees. On the other hand, the translanguaging practices expressed are the switching code from L1 to L2 when it depends on the situations and responses from the users.

Keywords: translanguaging, digital communication, digital literacy

ABSTRAK

Terinspirasi oleh beberapa artikel yang membahas tentang komunikasi di era digital yang membahas tentang peran bahasa dalam berbagai media online seperti Whatsapp. Penelitian berikut membahas tentang komunikasi antar karyawan sebuah perusahaan swasta yang menggunakan aplikasi Whatsapp sebagai alat komunikasi mereka. Para karyawan tersebut berasal dari berbagai negara dan bekerja di sebuah perusahaan yang sama. Bahasa komunikasi yang digunakan adalah Bahasa Inggris dan Indonesia. Berdasarkan hasil percakapan online mereka, ada lima sampel dalam percakapan online group yang sebagian besar membahas tentang topik perusahaan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan ada kualitatif yang mengumpulkan sebagian aktivitas obrolan dan dirangkum dalam screenshot. Pola translanguaging yang nampak dikelompokkan berdasarkan topik dan hubungan antar kolega. Disatu sisi, pola translanguaging muncul ketika mereka menggunakan Bahasa Inggris (L2) dan Bahasa Indonesia (L1) secara bergantian dan tergantung dengan siapa dan konteks mereka berbicara.

Kata Kunci: translanguaging, komunikasi digital, literasi digital

INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Social media has become an effective technology mediated communication in every aspect of people lives especially in professional field. Workers from various setting and language backgrounds have made use this technology to raise the access in social networking that can connect lot of users of the world's languages. The diversity has not become an issue since the use of English has

become one of many international languages that is mostly used in the platform. Canagarajah (2013, taken from Demet YİĞİTBİLEK, 2008) mentions that every translanguaging communication that is resulted from multicultural setting may reflect "diverse semiotic resources such as in oral, written, visual and blended in (Lizárraga, 2015) what so called meaning making. Furthermore when it involves "creating, negotiating, transforming, and sharing texts across multiple codes, channels, and symbol system", is

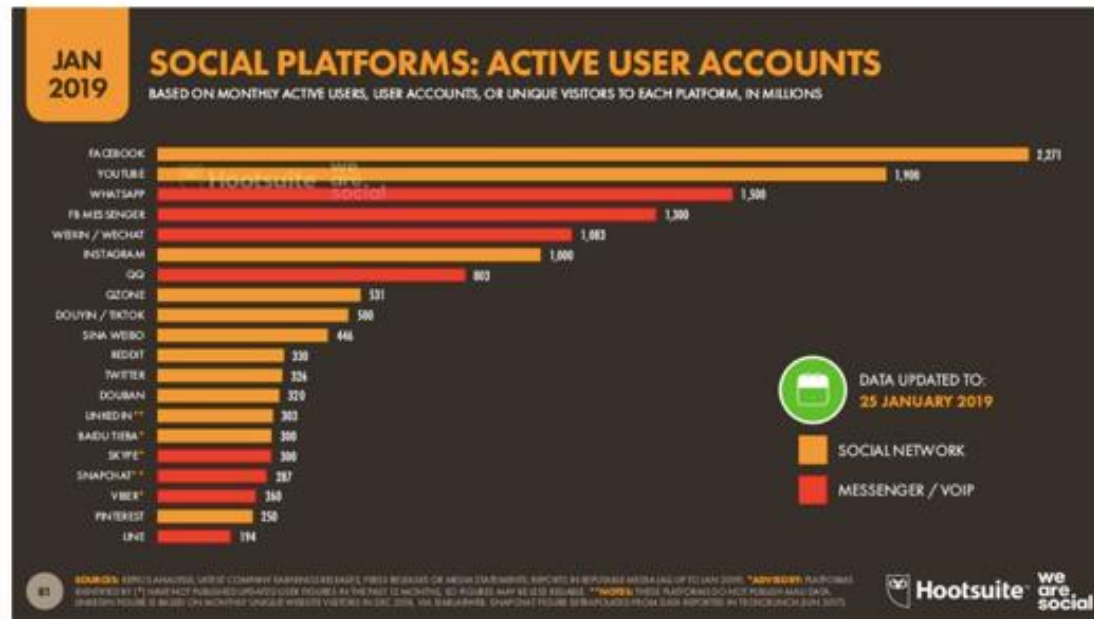
*Author(s) Correspondence:

E-mail: mrerung@bundamulia.ac.id

ergo pertaining to Android devices. As is clear by the swathes of green (similar to that used in the WhatsApp livery) WhatsApp is the dominant messaging app around the world. According to these figures, WhatsApp misses

out on the top spot in only a handful of countries (though these include notable markets such as the US, Australia and much of Asia).

WhatsApp userbase: global



Source: [Hootsuite/We Are Social](#)

Figure 2. Social Platforms Users

Furthermore the following paper to examine a group of Whatsapp chatting platform that use multiple linguistic codes and semiotic resources through the theoretical concept of translingualism. It adopts a qualitative study approach.

2. Translingual Setting and Digital Communication

Since English used variously in different settings and context, it comes into various types of Englishes namely world Englishes, International English and English as Lingua Franca. The language itself has integrated into a hybrid language however it can not be called as translingualism since they have their own limitations. (Jain, 2014, cited

from Yiğitbilek, 2018). Translingual approach focuses on the mixtures of linguistic features within one or among more languages. It is the act of building a bridge among the language ability a person has or can have. Therefore, every translingual writer has their own freedom to express their languages in multiple verbal systems (Kellman, 1996, p. 164, cited from Yiğitbilek, 2018). Translingual looks deeper at the understanding of production, circulation, and reception of texts that are always mobile; that draw from diverse languages, symbol systems, and modalities of communication furthermore it is better to try for competence in a repertoire of codes and discourses (Canagarajah, 2006, cited from Yiğitbilek, 2018).

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: mrerung@bundamulia.ac.id

On the other hand, the concept of bi- and multilingualism being conceptualized as a separate system and multilingual speakers as double or parallel monolinguals. These concepts have been increasingly challenged lately as a ‘complex of specific semiotic resources (Blommaert, 2010, cited from Brooke, 2015) based on their selection in order to accomplish their communicative goals. Furthermore the concept of translanguaging emerged which challenge both “the boundaries around languages” (Cresse & Blackledge, 2010, cited from Brooke, 2015) and the “essentialist restrictions viewing from “multilingualism theories” (Androutsopoulos, 2013, cited from Brooke, 2015). Canagarajah shows an example for a variation on English, as well. In his study (2013, p. 498-499 cited from Yiğitbilek, 2015) students in India change the usage of in-on. While writing, they seem to be constantly (Albawardi, 2018) writing “I’m in the bus”. Although teachers keep correcting students, this usage does not seem to change. Then students are asked why they use this preposition, they explain that as India is a crowded country it is quite normal for anyone to be literally “on the bus”. Therefore, students use ‘in’ to state exactly where they are (Global Englishes). In this particular case, it is not necessary and even confusing to use the right preposition. As readers, by negotiating the purposes of the writers, the meaning is made mutually and students are able to use their Englishes.

Taken from the writer’s previous research, during the writing preparation most students use Bahasa Indonesia as their freewriting and outlining, which in this case helped them to generate their ideas without wasting their time in putting into English. As the result the L1 did not affect their L2 production since they can write in English form better. Therefore, the use of L1 only applied during their pre-writing activities. Translingual writers use the strategies to communicate their ideas to help them not only improving their written language but also in many other aspects. The technology and the move from page to screen have altered the way people use language; new literacies are

emerging as people produce, write, visualize and navigate language in new ways (Synder, 1998). One of the writing product that often used is through the chatting online platform. As mentioned earlier that Whatsapp is one among many other online media used in communication. The computer-mediated communication as “communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers” (Herring, 1996b, p. 1 taken from Albawardi, 2018) emphasizing that people use language online differently according to different situations and purposes.

A study about code switching by Warschauer et al. (2002, cited from Albawardi, 2018) investigates the impact of English on the Arabic language promoted by the Internet users. The study examines the use of English and Arabic by Egyptian participants online and concludes that in formal situations using emails, English is used, whereas Romanized Arabic (Arabish) is used in interpersonal communication in emails and online chats. Furthermore, result shows that the representation of different Arabic dialects in written online interaction has attracted the attention of other researchers. Some online users like to reveal their dialect, and hence origin, whilst interacting with others online. Research approaches that uses text and some other supporting materials in communicating in internet categorized as *multimodal* approach which is defined by Barton and Lee (2013, cited from Albawardi, 2018) as “modes or semiotic modes as systems or resources that people draw upon for meaning making”. Various interpretation would be depending on person once they relate between text and images or vice versa. Here the semiotic modes can be used varied. The shift to the visual has accelerated as literacies have moved into the digital world. The change from text provides from pages to screen has change perspective and the way people think. Users typically have access to a range of semiotic resources to select from depending on the meanings they want to make and the social relationships they want to construct.

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: mrerung@bundamulia.ac.id

Kress (2003, cited from Albawardi, 2018) to argue that digital technologies have ushered in a new kind of literacy, one that is less focused on ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ words, and more on “designing” texts and interactions using a variety of semiotic resources.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodological tools for this study are designed to explore what the participants are doing online, followed by analysis of a sample of their online interaction in WhatsApp. The study relies on self-report methods of data collection as well as samples of participants’ online interaction. The study also selects specific examples from the samples to conduct a close discourse analysis that focuses on the integration between social, technological and linguistic aspects.

This study adopts a qualitative design by collecting data based on a Whatsapp group. The name of a company and the participants

involved are hidden as well. Furthermore, there are 50 participants involving in the group discussions yet more less 10 of them are quiet active in daily chats. The data collection used is by collecting the screen captures relating with the semiotic code exchanging especially when they are discussing some topics. Language mixed are mostly Indonesia since most of the users are from there. However, there are other users come from countries such India, Singapore, USA, and so on. The group also consists of various positions and divisions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, some translanguaging occur in the text below. From the first example below, it can be seen how they express their attention to a member who just lost his parent. Below are the expressions from other users.



Figure 3. Result 1

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: mrerung@bundamulia.ac.id

The result shows that some expressions are stated in L1 as follows:

- *turut berdukacita*
- *semoga diberi ketabahan bagi.. dan keluarga*
- *yang tabah ya bro*
- *semoga amal ibadah beliau diterima dan diberikan tempat terbaik.*
- *semoga khusnul khotimah*
- *kiranya Tuhan memberian kekuatan....*

And for the L2 expressions stated as follows;

- *may she rest in peace*
- *my condolences ya bro*
- *deepest condolences*
- *all my condolences. My prayers are with you and our family*
- *sending my prayers to you and your family*
- *I am very sorry to hear that. My deep condolences...*
- *Really sorry to hear this...My deepest condolences to you and your family*
- *Deepest condolences,.. heartfelt thoughts go out to you in this time of sorrow*
- *Sorry to hear your **sad news**. My thoughts are with you and your family*

Based on the expressions stated, senders who are Indonesian use mixed codes or few of them sent it in L1. On the other hand, users from English-speaking countries fully used English. Some patterns that can be seen here is, the variation use of language especially when it comes to express some religious statements such as prayers. Indonesian usually use the word *tabah* in which probably an uncommon expression in English. Whereas those who use English, stated it as *sending prayers; heartfelt and thought goes with you* which best expressed for sending the attention. The other examples such as *turut berduka* may have similar expression with *deep(est) condolences*. There are some other expressions in Arabic, like *Innalilahi wainailahi rojiun* and *khusnul khotimah* which are the expressions of very

specific prayers for Moslem to send condolences.

Next is the second example taken from a conversation discussing about a certain incident that got to one of the employee. An employee sent an image explained the current condition. Another employee responded directly, below is the chatting conversation.

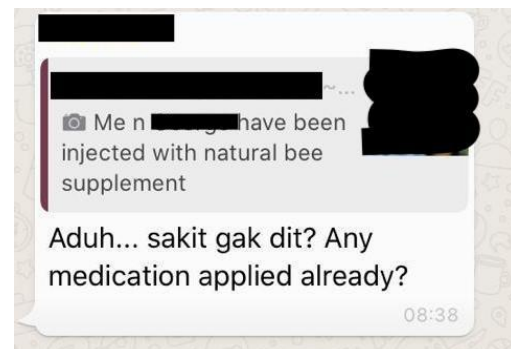


Figure 4. Result 2

The response shown that the employee showed her concern toward the incident, as a fast response she asked whether her colleagues got bad injured or not. The situation persuade her to send her reply spontaneously therefore it can be seen that she used L1 that states her concern "*aduh...sakit ga, dit?*" and switched to L2 for the rest of statement. This might be, that part she remembered a safety procedure once a person got an injury. The safety procedure that includes medication usually listed in English, which probably explain that she switched to L2 once she asked the second question that is "*any medication applied already?*"

The following example discusses about how they contact a client form to get further information, there were three employees involved in the chat, one of them is a native English and the rest are Indonesian. Below are the chatting samples.

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: mrerung@bundamulia.ac.id

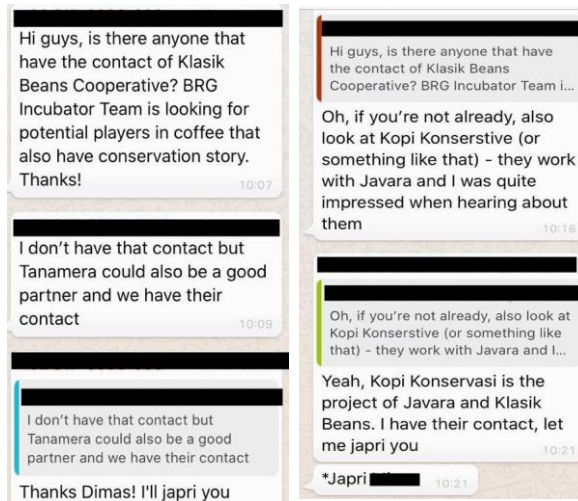


Figure 5. Result 3

From result 3, it can be seen that the employees are discussing in L2. Yet, one employee was trying to send a private message to another and in order to do that, this person then typed "I'll *japri* you" after that the discussion continued by talking about this company. Again, at the right side of the picture another employee said "let me *japri* you". The word *japri* (*jalur pribadi*) means private message (PM) but instead of using "I'll PM you" the user used *japri* which could possibly happen since the other employee that he was chatting with is Indonesian. Therefore they mixed the language with the awareness of the native English involvement in the chat.



Figure 6. Result 4

Result 4 above also shows the mixed-language used by the employees. It seems whenever they aware if they chat to other Indonesian, mixed code would be the preferences.

Furthermore, the following text was discussing about an event that requires all the members to share their meal preferences. Most of the meal suggested were Indonesian food while the rest from various countries.

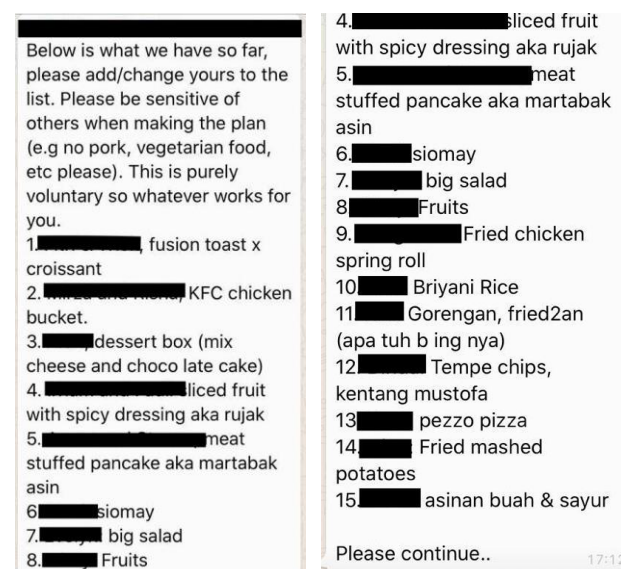


Figure 7. Result 5

Based on the previous tables, it can be seen that many of the meal were expressed in English, however they keep putting the translated version in L1 just in case the English version was confusing such as:

- *sliced fruit with spicy dressing aka rujak*
- *meat stuffed pancake aka martabak asin*
- *gorengan, fried2an*
- *tempe chips*
- *asinan buah & sayur*

Even though the translated version is literally translated, they still insert the Indonesian version. In fact, they tried to make a silly translation about *gorengan* which is translated by using English-Indonesian plural

form *fried2an*. This may explain that Indonesian still preferred Indonesian when it comes to explaining food name since translating the name would sound weird in English.

In example 5, it shows a situation where an employee asked someone's presence and asked whether others may have seen this person below is the chat-version.



Figure 8. Result 6

If we look closer the chat was started in L2 and once it was responded in L1 the answer was also in L1. The users in this case realize that the person she was chatted is Indonesian therefore the language was shifted spontaneously.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on findings, there are several types of chatting conversation which is categorized as follows:

1. Topics were varied, yet it was not only discussing about company matters but also personal matter like a loss of a family member of an employee.
2. Relationship among employees are quite close since there is one case where an incident happened and the reaction was quiet fast and concern.

From the perspective of translanguaging, the switching code occurred based on the following patterns:

1. The L2 is mostly used when a user started the chat conversation yet responded in L1 once the response was also Indonesian.
2. L1 is used when users express in a very specific situations and for example religious content or types of specific names which do not have the similar expressions in L2
3. Mixed of L1 and L2 used in the forum such as *I'll japri you* to reach an effective and clearer communication among users.

Based on the following patterns, it can be seen that translanguaging practices occur to get an effective communication and switching codes does not become the problem in the group even though there are some members from various countries.

REFERENCES

- Albawardi, A. H. (2018). Digital Literacy Practices of Saudi Female University Students. *University of Reading*.
- Brooke, R. S. (2015). "I am what I am": multilingual identity and digital translanguaging. *Language Learning & Technology*, 69-87.
- Demet YİĞİTBİLEK1, I. G. (2018). Translingual Approach to Teaching Writing and Corrective Feedback. *International Journal of Media Culture and Literature*, 67 - 78.
- Lizárraga, J. R. (2015). Translingual Literacies in a Social Media Age: Lessons Learned from Youth's Transnational Communication Online. *Multilingual Learners and Academic Literacies*, 105.

*Author(s) Correspondence:
 E-mail: mrerung@bundamulia.ac.id

Synder, I. (1998). *Page to Screen: Taking Literacy into the Electronic Era*. New York: Routledge.