

INDONESIAN LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND ATTITUDE IN INTERNATIONAL CORPORATE INSTAGRAM: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

As a lingua franca for Indonesia, the Indonesian language has been used to foster a sense of belonging among Indonesians, uniting the socio-cultural diversity that pervades throughout every social practice. One example is its use on social media, where Indonesian has been adapted to meet certain needs—not only as a communication tool, but also as a tool for learning, shopping, working, promotion, and even personal branding. Building on this, the present study investigates language maintenance efforts and attitudes toward the Indonesian language in the Instagram captions of two Indonesian-branch international motorcycle manufacturers' official Instagram accounts used to promote products. The study is descriptive qualitative research in nature, and it employs inductive and deductive content analysis. Elements of quantitative analysis have also been used to record the frequency of occurrences of the selected data in numbers and totals. The study has selected 44 captions (22 each) from the latest posts uploaded by both Instagram accounts. The study finds that there is indeed code-mixing between Indonesian and foreign languages. Regardless, their usage only comes as far as being a transactional or advertising language, whilst the Indonesian language is still positioned as the central language used in the captions. The result also highlights that non-standard writing conventions do not always have to represent language destruction.

Keywords: *Language maintenance, language attitude, Indonesian language, Instagram captions, social treatment method, transactional language*

Introduction

The study of language maintenance and language shift (LMLS) is like ants swarming over food because there have been myriad studies that probed into both topics (Tawalbeh, 2019). Regardless of how cliché this kind of study is, many researchers still foreground this issue due to the diachronic and integrative nature of language in general. In relation to the study of LMLS, and as the latter-included subfield of sociolinguistics, the concept was first proposed by Fishman in his 1964 work, titled “*Language Maintenance and Shift as Fields of Inquiry*” (Benrabah, 2007). Language maintenance refers to the continuous, generational use, respect, loyalty, pride of a language or language variety in the face of competition from a more politically and socially prestigious and powerful language; meanwhile, language shift refers to the gradual replacement of one (usually minority) language or language variety to the dominant or more powerful language in certain domains of social life (Buda, 1992 as cited in Abu-Irmies & Al-Khanji, 2019; Benrabah, 2007; Jendra, 2012 as cited in Astuti, 2019; Holmes & Wilson, 2022; Kridalaksana, 2023; Sofyaningrum & Hidayah, 2023).

In the vein of language shift, the heritage (i.e., ethnic or national) language is usually shifted into another language that is more dominant and powerful, which can occur due to many factors, whilst the heritage language would be at risk of disappearing, or even worse, becoming extinct (language death). However, the present study will not probe into the topic of language shift, but instead into synchronic language maintenance, specifically the language maintenance of the Indonesian language in the digital era in the last two years.

In order to maintain one’s heritage language, there must be supportive repertoires, both internally and externally. Internally, age, gender, awareness, motivation, and attitude potentially contribute to the maintenance of one’s heritage language. Externally, heritage language use in the local communities, worship places, media, literary works, and education has been seen to foster

its use and maintenance (Paulston, 1994; Park & Sarkar, 2007; Tawalbeh, 2019; Holmes & Wilson, 2022; Kridalaksana, 2023; Rahim et al., 2023). In addition, equal socio-economic status of a minority group to that of the dominant group, or when their language is connected to better socio-economic opportunities, then heritage language maintenance is expected to occur (Lieberson et al., 1975; Paulston, 1994). Likewise, if members of a minority language are socially accepted and equal to the members of a majority language, then language maintenance would likely occur (Kuiper, 2005 as cited in Tawalbeh, 2019).

Familism, as reported by Park and Sarkar (2007) and Guardado (2008, as cited in Tawalbeh, 2019), could also contribute to language maintenance because the heritage language acts as the core value and symbol (Holmes & Wilson, 2022) of communication and relationships among family members. In the modern era, controlling the usage of the dominant language (i.e., foreign language), including code-mixing and code-switching (Setyawati & Wibowo, 2024), and adhering to the norms, rules, and guidelines of the heritage language (Astuti, 2019; Sofyaningrum & Hidayah, 2023) within an interaction, both written and spoken, could also promote the maintenance of the heritage language.

All of those supportive repertoires should be utilized not just by individuals and general members of society (communities), but also be supported by the government to further preserve the heritage language constitutionally, such as enacting laws on language and drafting an adequate language education curriculum. Ultimately, in order for a nation to prosper, the purity and harmony of the heritage language in society should be well maintained, despite coinciding with a foreign language and plausibly encountering a diglossic-like situation, which is inevitable (and is not necessarily bad per se) in today's globalized world. Aside from prosperity, through language maintenance, a nation could promote cultural diversity, preserving national and ethnic identity as part of nationalism spirit, enabling

societal adaptability, and fostering children's safety and well-being (Crystal, 1997 as cited in Ibda, 2017).

Within the Indonesian context, the Indonesian language plays an indispensable role in shaping Indonesia's national identity, serving as a unifying medium of communication across diverse ethnicities, cultures, and regions. In today's globalized and modern era, the Indonesian language, just like any other language in general, is beginning to venture into the digital realm, stretching the concept of language unity and identity. The internet, particularly social media, has revolutionized how Indonesians use their heritage language. Through social media, the communicative boundaries gradually dissipate. Indonesians, through their heritage language use, may now utilize such media not only as a communication tool but also as a learning, shopping, working, promotional, and even personal-branding tool. In that regard, social media can both encourage and revitalize the use of heritage language whilst, concurrently, harming its existence.

A study by Nasution et al. (2026) revealed that the use of the Indonesian language in formal and informal digital media differs noticeably. Non-standard abbreviations, slang, and usage of multimodal elements (e.g., emoji, emoticon, GIF, stickers) were often associated with social media; on the other hand, standard language and vocabulary, and official terminology were often associated with government websites, official news portals, academic journals and proceedings, and other e-learning platforms. Kusyanti (2022) further declared, in relation to the previous study, that the recent excessive usage of code-mixing and code-switching between the Indonesian and English languages in social media may result in the Indonesian language becoming a pidgin in the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, all of those occurrences boil down to the language attitude of the users because, in reality, language shift is already a common phenomenon even before the advent of the digital era. In this context, language attitude is the thoughts, knowledge, feelings, and behavior of

language users towards a certain language (Edward, 1994 as cited in Tawalbeh, 2019) and its usage in pragmatic and dynamic social practice and other discourses.

In that regard, there are three major methods in language attitudes research (Garrett, 2010), namely: direct, indirect, and societal treatment. In relation to the present study, the societal treatment method is the most suitable method for understanding language attitude within social media, mainly through Instagram captions. According to Garrett (2010), societal treatment is a method that analyzes language attitude through the content of numerous sources in the public domain, such as perspective (or proscriptive) texts, language policy documents, media texts, and various kinds of advertisements. It is useful because it explores the social meanings and stereotypical associations of the language used in Instagram captions as one of the forms of media texts.

Despite not mentioning the societal treatment method, several researchers have investigated people's attitudes regarding their heritage language on social media. For example, Abu-Irmies and Al-Khanji (2019) investigated how Chechen people in Jordan utilize social media, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, as an effort to maintain the Chechen language. They found that the Chechen people have a high positive attitude towards the Chechen language and that social media has become a powerful tool not just in preserving their heritage language but also in preserving their heritage culture, fostering familism, social networking with other Chechens, and expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Additionally, Astuti (2019) investigated the attitude of the Indonesian academic community at STKIP PGRI Lubuklinggau towards the Indonesian language as seen through the WhatsApp groups. Contrary to the results of the previous study, in terms of their language attitude, Astuti concluded that the academic community at STKIP PGRI Lubuklinggau, instead, did not showcase a positive language attitude toward the Indonesian language, as

seen from their “broken” usage of language (e.g., code-mixing, non-standard written structure). Additionally, as aforementioned, language attitude affects language maintenance, and in Astuti’s case, the language maintenance effort by the individuals within the academic community was very low. She implied that the individuals there were more inclined and prouder of their ability to use the English language in their written communication, and that, as long as it serves their communicative purposes, the written structure did not matter much. Near-identical results were also found in Sofyaningrum and Hidayah’s (2023) study when they investigated the excessive usage of slang by Indonesian younglings in the “5.0 society”.

Conversely, despite concluding similar results to those of Astuti’s (2019) and Sofyaningrum and Hidayah’s (2023), those realizations were not viewed as a threat by Nasution et al. (2026) in their study. Instead, they argued that those kinds of language attitudes showcased the vitality, adaptability, and evolution of the Indonesian language in the digital space. The shift in Indonesian language use reflects not only the speakers’ linguistic creativity and flexibility but also serves as an identity and solidarity marker within the complex digital community.

After a thorough analysis of previous studies and discussion, it was pinpointed that the studies of Indonesian language maintenance in the digital era are not exactly considered novel research, in terms of quantity. However, the researcher found a feasible gap in the focus of the previous studies that validates the existence of the present study, which examines the status of Indonesian language maintenance in the digital era in the last two years (late 2024 until early 2026) as seen in the Instagram captions of two Indonesian-branch international motorcycle manufacturers’ official Instagram accounts. Unlike spontaneous personal communication, captions published by official corporate accounts are deliberately constructed for promotional purposes. In that sense, by analyzing the deliberate use of language in the digital era, this study scrutinized the kind of attitude conveyed by the local caption writers to

upsell their respective products to the audience, which is Gen Z.

Through Garrett's (2010) social treatment method of language attitude research, this study aims to explore whether the caption writers have a positive or negative language attitude towards the Indonesian language and whether the usage of code-mixing realistically threatens the existence of the Indonesian language as the national heritage language of Indonesia. Furthermore, motorcycles from both brands are the best-selling personal transportation (motorcycles) for Indonesians, rather than their other competitors. The statistical evidence can be seen in the Methodology section. This realization and limitation, thereby, is what drives the authors to utilize both brands as the subject of the study. The study then seeks to address the following questions: (1) To what extent is the Indonesian language maintained as the primary language in Instagram captions? (2) How does the incorporation of foreign language vocabulary truly impact the existence of the Indonesian language?

Methods

This study is descriptive qualitative research in nature. Qualitative research is essentially an approach to understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, relying on text or verbal data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is suitable to be used for the present study because it involves a thorough analysis of Instagram captions within two Indonesian-branch international motorcycle manufacturers' official Instagram accounts to understand the reality of the Indonesian language status in the digital era and the language attitudes in constructing the captions that might foster or endanger the actual practice of heritage language maintenance.

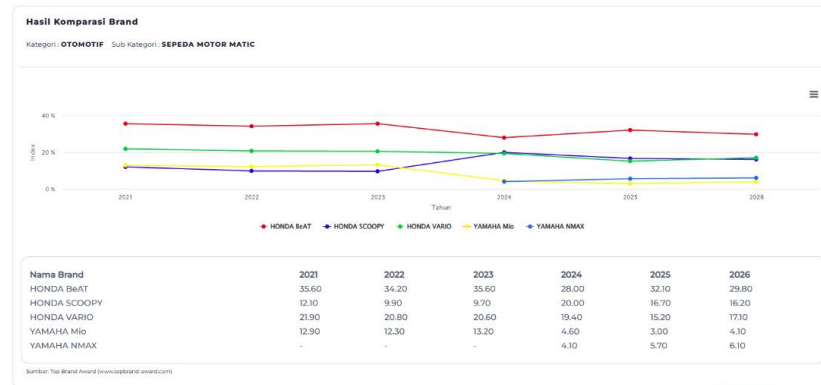
The study was conducted through a comprehensive inductive and deductive content analysis of both Instagram accounts, mainly the captions, to see any possible similarities, differences, and novelty apropos the language

attitude and maintenance effort, followed by descriptive interpretation. In this sense, content analysis is an objective research tool to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, patterns, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts which would later be broken down, categorized, and interpreted according to the criteria of the present study (Dörnyei, 2007 as cited in Toledo-Sandoval, 2020; Shahmohammadi, 2013 as cited in Mayangsari et al., 2018).

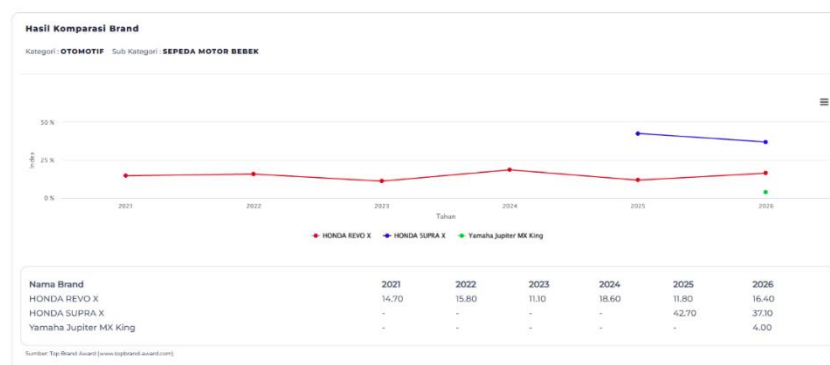
To supplement the qualitative interpretation and provide robust evidence, the study also incorporates a simple quantitative component. This involves recording the frequency of occurrences of selected data in numbers and totals. This quantitative data is not intended for statistical inference but serves to add vivid evidence, highlight patterns of emphasis, and support the qualitative findings (Miles et al., 2014).

The data source for this study comes from two official Instagram accounts: *@welovehonda_id* and *@yamahaindonesia*. As mentioned in the Introduction section, the study focused on synchronic language maintenance; thus, for this investigation, a total of 44 captions (22 each) from posts uploaded from late 2024 until early 2026 by both Instagram accounts have been purposively selected as the data to be analyzed. This decision was made because: (1) both brands are the most beloved motorcycle brands by Indonesian (see Data 1 and 2); (2) the study seeks to address whether the usage of code-mixing realistically threatens the existence of the Indonesian language; and (3) the amount of collected data has already reached its intended data limitation and represents the dominant structural pattern of the captions on each Instagram account.

The data collection procedures are as follows: (1) searching and deciding on the data sources; (2) analyzing the used data sources; (3) analyzing and documenting the findings of the data sources. It is worth mentioning that processes 2 and 3 were repeated multiple times to ensure they were correct and consistent with the study's purpose.



Data 1 The statistics of the best-selling automatic motorcycle brand from the Top Brand Award



Data 2 The statistics of the best-selling manual motorcycle brand from the Top Brand Award

The data analysis underwent two stages. First, content analysis of both Instagram accounts was conducted, which aimed to collect, observe, and filter the captions within the two Instagram accounts. Second, the captions from both Instagram accounts were analyzed, compared, and described in order to understand not just the extent to which the Indonesian language is maintained as the primary language in Instagram captions, including the caption writers' language attitude, but also to understand whether the incorporation of English vocabulary, including code-mixing, truly impacts (i.e., supports or threatens) the existence of the Indonesian language. This way, the study provides pithy insight into the status of the Indonesian language in the digital area as a tool for communication and marketing purposes.

Findings and Discussions

Table 1 The frequency of foreign terms appeared in both accounts

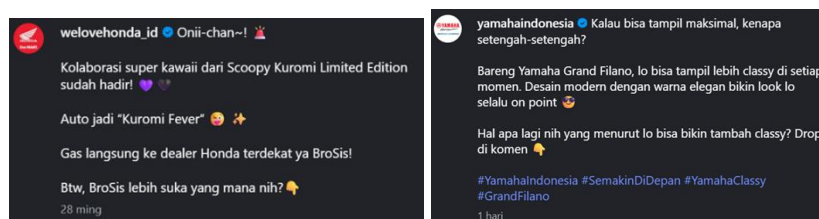
Brands	English			Japanese	Total
	Words	Phrases	Sentences		
Honda	88	12	2	2	104
Yamaha	63	20	7	0	90
Total	151	32	9	2	194

Based on the analysis, the study finds that there are 192 English terms (102 from Honda and 90 from Yamaha) and 2 Japanese terms (from Honda) utilized throughout the selected Instagram posts. In relation to the table above, the study found that out of 192 English terms, Honda's caption writers used the most English terms in their captions as a promotional tool, with 102 English terms, consisting of 88 words, 12 phrases, and 2 sentences. Additionally, one of the captions also contains 2 Japanese words, namely "Onii-chan" and "kawaii". On the contrary, Yamaha's caption writers used only 90 English terms, consisting of 63 words, 20 phrases, and 7 sentences, with the absence of Japanese terms. Though it is nearly on par with its competitors, it showcases that Yamaha uses the Indonesian language more deliberately, although the difference isn't all that significant either.

In addition to the frequency of occurrence, interesting language patterns are also found in both Instagram captions. First, the Honda caption writers mainly shift words (e.g., *Flexing*, *Brosis*, *Hangout*, *Riding*, *Kawaii*) and phrases (e.g., *FOMO*, *clean look-nya*, *on the way*, *take the highway*), which are intended not only to sound more modern and sophisticated, but also to catch the attention of the younger generation, Gen Z, who use Instagram. Second, similar to the Honda caption writers, the Yamaha caption writers are also commonly seen shifting words (e.g., *Brosis*, *Riding*, *Experience*, *Look*) and phrases (e.g., *Starry graphic*, *Mix and match*, *Let's go!*, *Worth to buy*

kan?). In addition to words and phrases, they are seen to employ full English for a whole sentence, like “*LIMITED UNIT! Be a show-stealer with Fazzio Starry Night!*”.

As formerly mentioned, in terms of intensity, the Honda caption writers use more foreign languages in their Instagram captions than the Yamaha ones, with both English and Japanese, as seen in Data 3. However, in terms of marketing and promotional purposes, Yamaha captions are way more engaging than those of Honda’s. Yamaha caption writers often exert English words, phrases, and sentences that raise the audience’s status after having the products, as seen in Data 4.



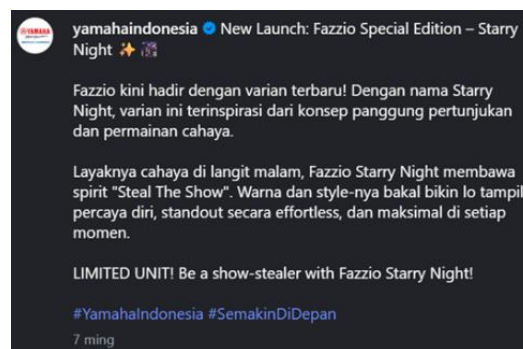
Data 3 (left: https://www.instagram.com/p/DPnVLU-Dy_a/) Captions from Honda containing English, such as “Auto”, “dealer”, “BroSis”, and Japanese, such as “Onii-chan” and “kawaii”, words and Data 4 (right: https://www.instagram.com/p/DXeMJq-EYOI/?img_index=1) Captions from Yamaha using a code-mix, such as “bisa tampil lebih classy”, “desain modern”, and “bikin look lo selalu on point”, to alleviate the prestige of the products and the prospective buyers

Nevertheless, the main focus of the study is not about comparing which brand is better or “more nationalistic”, but the language attitude and maintenance efforts of the Indonesian caption writers in writing them. Thus, despite the code-mixing occurrences, with nearly 200 foreign words, phrases, and sentences disseminated, the caption writers still retain most of the captions in the Indonesian language, regardless of whether it is part of their regulations as an Indonesian-branch Instagram or the heavy dose of non-standard Indonesian writing.

As aforementioned, social media has revolutionized how Indonesians use their heritage language, in which it is used not only as an accessible form

of communication but also as a promotional-marketing tool. In that regard, the study suggests that the existence of foreign languages does not threaten the status of the Indonesian language because they still retain greater textual prominence of the Indonesian language (as the central language), even for promotional purposes. In that respect, the communicative essence of advertisements is basically to persuade potential consumers to acquire a product or service (Wati et al., 2019; Şimon & Stoian, 2020)

Notwithstanding, the presence of foreign languages only functions as “transactional or advertising languages”. This means the relationship between the foreign languages and the Indonesian language is diglossic (co-existing). A strong example of this can be seen in the following data.



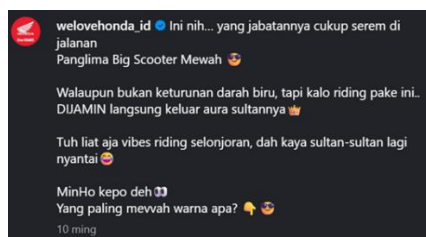
Data 5 Captions from Yamaha that showcase how English and Indonesian are pragmatically used (<https://www.instagram.com/p/DVYL7LIFI9j/>)

Data 5 shows how English and Indonesian are used contextually. The exploitation of transactional/advertising English, as in “*Special Edition*” and “*LIMITED UNIT! Be a show-stealer with Fazzio Starry Night!*”, is used primarily to entice both young followers and ordinary users to buy the product and to make them feel more modern and that their social credit is improved by having the limited and special edition of the product. Likewise, the code-mixing between English and Indonesian languages, as in “*Warna dan style-nya bakal bikin lo tampil percaya diri, standout secara effortless, dan maksimal di setiap momen.*” (*The color and style will make you effortlessly stand out, be confident, and attractive in every moment*), is used to add to, as

well as intensify, the societal attribute of having them, further convincing them to buy that specific product.

Additionally, the mediated usage of full Indonesian in the second line, “Fazzio kini hadir dengan varian terbaru! Dengan nama *Starry Night*, varian ini terinspirasi dari konsep panggung pertunjukan dan permainan cahaya.” (*Fazzio is now available in a new variant! Named Starry Night, this variant is inspired by the concept of a performance stage and lighting effects*), illustrates the linguistic play by the caption writers in pitching an interactive storytelling of the product, particularly in using poetic phrases of “*panggung pertunjukan dan permainan cahaya*”. For Indonesian, the phrase itself has a “flair for the dramatic” in terms of its communicative purpose, yet it is effective in hooking those who see the post in terms of a promotional expression, similar to when they code-mix English and Indonesian.

The same can be seen in Data 3, “*Auto jadi ‘Kuromi Fever’*” (*Automatically be part of the ‘Kuromi’ trend*). In relation to that, the Honda caption writers deliberately assert that by having the product, the owner (including prospective buyers) has “good taste” and is already part of the “Kuromi lover” circle. In relation to Honda’s caption writers, the following data also further show how the status of the Indonesian language is not threatened and is still mainly and well communicated, despite the occurrence of code-mixing.



Data 6 Captions from Honda that showcase how the English and Indonesian language used contextually (<https://www.instagram.com/p/DUnODYjD2CX/>)

Data 6 shows how the English and Indonesian languages are used contextually. The code-mixing in “*Panglima Big Scooter Mewah*” (*The King*

of *Luxury Big Scooter*) and “*tapi kalo riding pake ini..*” (but when [you] riding with this..) implicitly correlates the prospective buyers with foreign motorcycle owners, through the phrase “*Big Scooter*”, who do Western-like communal activity of riding a motorcycle, through the word use of “*riding*”. This communicative significance would be different if the caption writers used the Indonesian translations of “*Skuter Besar*” and “*berkendara*” instead, which only convey the banal meaning of owning and riding a big scooter. Still and all, the preceding words and sentences were still written in Indonesian, meaning that the language is still contested as a central language whilst the English language is used as a transactional or advertising language to display prestige and modernity, as such is their marketing goal.

Şimon and Stoian (2020) and Devos et al. (2024) stated that the communicative purpose of advertisement, such as the prior one, is practically to act in a certain way and to build emotional impact with respect to what is advertised, making them impressed and attracted, thinking that the product is “one of a kind” (Zheltukhina et al. 2019). The results of those data prove that, aside from local merchants (Harsono, 2020) and a TikTok beauty product reviewer (Augustine & Purwanto, 2025), Instagram caption writers are also constantly adapting their language usage to achieve their communicative goal and remain au fait, and in this case, the use of code-mixing as a promotional tool. However, in the process, one does not have to excessively shift, or even worse, omit their heritage language, whether it is their national language or ethnic/mother tongue, to the “powerful” and “expressive” language just to achieve a certain goal, or, in relation to the present study, attribute (i.e., modernity, luxury, special, civilized, prestigious, etc.) (see Nugroho, 2017; Setyawati & Wibowo, 2024).

Overall, the results of the present study support the argument proposed by Nasution et al. (2026), by which the use of code-mixing and non-standard Indonesian writing conventions is not an example of the destruction of the Indonesian language, but rather a collective understanding and

realization that language has evolved and is now used pragmatically. The usage of code-mixing, more specifically, on social media is not without consideration (random); it indirectly negotiates current social identity. Notwithstanding, limitations and functions of the language should also be applied and acknowledged so that its usage does not overlap with the actual function or objective. This dynamic phenomenon is, after all, the nature of language in general. One last example of this can be seen in the following data.



Data 7 Captions from Yamaha in Kartini Day 2026
(<https://www.instagram.com/p/DXYHDUmkWOz/>)

Based on Data 7, the structure of the captions is mostly in Indonesian, both in the standard (as seen in the first and second paragraphs) and non-standard (as seen in the third paragraph) conventions. The only English word used by the caption writers is “Share”, which has already become a part of computer-mediated communication (CMC), especially on Instagram, without any meaningful connotation behind it. In addition, based on the data, the Indonesian language was also used according to that period setting, which is one of Indonesia’s national holidays, Kartini Day. In the end, as Jones (2020, as cited in Nasution et al., 2026) argues, “digital platforms actively shape the users’ language practices by establishing new ‘spaces’ that follow their own norms and logics” (p. 38). This data, then, culminates the arguments being discussed throughout the present study, contesting the traditionalist view of language code-mixing, maintenance, and attitude.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, the study has unraveled that the caption writers from

both Instagram accounts still have a positive language attitude towards the Indonesian language. Despite the occurrence of code-mixing, the foreign languages only serve as a transactional or advertising language (peripheral) in order to intensify the communicative meaning and achieve their pivotal goal, which is marketing. Meanwhile, the status of the Indonesian language, as the heritage language of Indonesia, is still maintained throughout the discourse, and, in reality, it is also employed to achieve that goal as well. In a much broader aspect, the study has discovered that, in the digital space, the use of code-mixing and non-standard writing conventions is currently not threatening the existence of the Indonesian language. Instead, it plausibly determines the adaptability and long-term vitality of the language in today's globalization era, especially in promoting a product to the younger generation, Gen Z.

Generally, despite the study's limited scope, the results of the present study might provide useful information for future critical scholars who want to conduct a similar study, but using different object data, integrate it with another topic, and/or use other prominent analytical tools. Future critical scholars are allowed, if not encouraged, to explore these issues, challenging or extending the view of this study in their own way, and making continuous, impactful, and constructive contributions to both the relevant field of study and their country.

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