



CODE-SWITCHING IN ROBLOX: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF INDONESIAN - ENGLISH PLAYER INTERACTIONS

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ABSTRACT. Communication plays a crucial role in coordinating interaction and collaboration in online multiplayer games. This study investigates patterns of language use and their pragmatic functions in player interactions within the gaming environment of Roblox. The study aims to identify the language patterns used by players, examine the pragmatic functions of these language choices, and explore how such practices reflect solidarity, identity, and communication strategies among players. A qualitative discourse analysis was conducted on 150 player comments collected from gameplay interactions, categorized into three language groups: Indonesian-only, English-only, and mixed Indonesian–English comments. The analysis reveals that Indonesian is primarily used for direct coordination, emotional expression, and requests for assistance during gameplay. English frequently functions as a medium for instructions, gameplay updates, and participation in global gaming discourse. Meanwhile, mixed-language interactions demonstrate instances of code-switching that enable players to combine linguistic resources for efficient and informal communication. The findings also indicate that these language practices contribute to the development of solidarity among players and reflect multilingual identity within the gaming community. Overall, this study highlights the role of multilingual communication in shaping interaction and collaboration in digital gaming environments.

Keywords: Roblox, Online Gaming, Multilingual Communication, Code-Switching, Pragmatic Functions

ABSTRAK. Komunikasi memiliki peran penting dalam mengoordinasikan interaksi dan kerja sama dalam permainan daring multipemain. Penelitian ini mengkaji pola penggunaan bahasa dan fungsi pragmatik dalam interaksi pemain di lingkungan permainan Roblox. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi pola bahasa yang digunakan oleh pemain, menganalisis fungsi pragmatik dari pilihan bahasa tersebut, serta mengeksplorasi bagaimana praktik penggunaan bahasa mencerminkan solidaritas, identitas, dan strategi komunikasi antarpemain. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis 150 komentar obrolan pemain yang dikumpulkan dari interaksi selama permainan Roblox Mt. Daun. Data dikategorikan ke dalam tiga kelompok bahasa, yaitu komentar berbahasa Indonesia, bahasa Inggris, dan campuran bahasa Indonesia-Inggris. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bahasa Indonesia terutama digunakan untuk koordinasi langsung, ekspresi emosional, pemberian dukungan, dan permintaan bantuan selama permainan. Bahasa Inggris banyak digunakan untuk memberikan instruksi, menyampaikan perkembangan permainan, dan berpartisipasi dalam budaya permainan global. Sementara itu, penggunaan campuran bahasa Indonesia dan bahasa Inggris menunjukkan praktik alih kode yang memungkinkan pemain menggabungkan berbagai sumber daya linguistik untuk berkomunikasi secara efektif, informal, dan sesuai dengan konteks permainan. Praktik penggunaan bahasa tersebut juga menunjukkan adanya solidaritas antarpemain serta mencerminkan identitas multilingual dalam komunitas permainan daring. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi multilingual berperan dalam membentuk interaksi, kerja sama, dan identitas pemain dalam lingkungan permainan digital.

Kata kunci: Roblox, Permainan Daring, Komunikasi Multilingual, Alih Kode, Fungsi Pragmatik

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing popularity of online gaming platforms has transformed the ways people communicate and interact across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Online games are no longer merely spaces for entertainment; they have also become social environments where players collaborate, compete, and build communities through digital communication (Cheah et al., 2022; Zervas & Maronitis, 2025). Language use often reflects the diverse linguistic backgrounds of players, leading to dynamic patterns of multilingual interaction (Ibrahim, 2022; Liang, 2021; Vazquez-Calvo & Thorne, 2025). One prominent linguistic phenomenon in such contexts is code-switching, which refers to the alternation between two or more languages within a single interaction (Panhwar & Buriro, 2020; Sahib et al., 2021).

Code-switching has long been a central topic in sociolinguistic research. Speakers often switch languages to signal group identity, clarify messages, emphasize certain meanings, or establish interpersonal relationships (Myers-Scotton, 2020; Noels et al., 2020). In multilingual communities, code-switching functions as a contextualization cue that guides how messages should be interpreted by interlocutors (Rojas, 2025). Consequently, analyzing code-switching practices provides insights into how speakers negotiate meaning and social identity in interaction (Hasan & Benny, 2025; Ramaila, 2025).

With the rapid development of digital communication, code-switching has increasingly been observed in online environments such as social media, messaging platforms, and online gaming communities. Unlike traditional face-to-face communication, digital interactions often occur in informal and fast-paced contexts, where users creatively combine languages to achieve communicative goals (Brahimoh, 2024; Cladis, 2020; Zhang & Yang, 2025). Several studies have examined code-switching in digital spaces, particularly in platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and online forums. These studies suggest that multilingual users frequently employ language alternation to express identity, humor, solidarity, and creativity within online communities (Arshad et al., 2025; Hasan & Benny, 2025).

Despite the growing interest in digital multilingualism, research on language use in online gaming environments remains relatively limited, particularly in the Indonesian. Online games provide unique interactional settings where players communicate spontaneously while engaging in collaborative or competitive activities (Chang et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2022). Language choices are often influenced by both local linguistic norms and the global culture of gaming. English is widely recognized as the dominant language in many international gaming platforms, while local languages continue to play an important role in

interactions among players from the same region (Dubravac & Skopljak, 2020). This coexistence of global and local languages creates opportunities for code-switching practices that reflect both pragmatic needs and identity construction.

Roblox is the one of the most popular online gaming platforms globally, offers an interesting site for examining multilingual communication. The platform allows players to interact through text chat while participating in various user-generated games (Kang et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Roblox attracts players from diverse linguistic backgrounds, interactions on the platform often involve multiple languages (Ramanujam & Ismail, 2024; Zeeshan et al., 2025). Indonesian players, frequently combine Indonesian and English in their in-game conversations. Such language practices highlight how players navigate between local linguistic identities and global gaming culture.

Therefore, this study aims to explore code-switching practices among Indonesian Roblox players. Drawing on Gumperz's (1982) framework of discourse strategies, this study investigates how language choices serve pragmatic functions within player interactions. The study focuses on three aspects of player communication: patterns of language use, the pragmatic functions of these language choices, and their relationship to solidarity, identity, and communication strategies in gameplay.

By examining these patterns, this study contributes to the discussion of multilingual communication in digital gaming environments. More specifically, it examines how Indonesian and English are used as linguistic resources during real-time gameplay and how code-switching serves both communicative and social purposes. The study also provides insight into the relationship between language choice, pragmatic functions, solidarity, and identity in online gaming interactions. In this way, the study highlights how multilingual practices shape communication among players in contemporary digital gaming communities.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with a pragmatic approach to examine language use and code-switching in player interactions on Roblox. A qualitative descriptive design was selected because the study aimed to describe and interpret naturally occurring language practices in their interactional context rather than measure relationships

between variables statistically. The pragmatic approach was used to examine how players' language choices functioned in particular gameplay situations.

The analysis was guided by Gumperz's (1982) framework of discourse strategies, which views code-switching as a communicative practice through which speakers convey contextual and social meanings. This framework was used to examine how language choices and language alternation functioned in player interactions, particularly in relation to communication, coordination, and interpersonal interaction.

Data Source and Data Collection

The data were collected from chat interactions among players in Roblox, specifically in a climbing game known as Mt. Daun. In this game, players attempt to climb a virtual mountain while interacting with other players in real time. The gameplay environment provides opportunities for players to communicate by giving instructions, asking for assistance, encouraging other players, responding to difficulties, and coordinating their actions.

The data consisted of 150 player chat comments collected through direct observation of the in-game chat during gameplay sessions. The researcher observed the interactions and documented relevant comments that appeared in the chat box during the climbing activity. The data were collected because the chat interactions provided naturally occurring examples of language use and code-switching in a real-time gaming environment.

The 150 comments were selected using purposive selection based on their relevance to the research objectives. A comment was included when it met the following criteria: (1) it was produced by a player during the gameplay; (2) it contained Indonesian, English, or a combination of Indonesian and English; (3) it was related to the ongoing gameplay interaction; and (4) its communicative meaning could be interpreted from the available gameplay. Comments that were unrelated to player interaction, such as system-generated messages or messages without relevance to the research focus, were excluded from the dataset.

The selected comments were then classified into three language categories: Indonesian-only, English-only, and mixed Indonesian-English. Each category consisted of 50 comments, resulting in a total of 150 comments. This categorization was used to identify patterns of language use and to facilitate the analysis of the pragmatic functions associated with each language pattern.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using qualitative pragmatic analysis. The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the 150 comments were classified according to their language pattern: Indonesian-only, English-only, or mixed Indonesian-English. Second, each comment was examined in relation to the gameplay in which it occurred. This step was conducted to identify the communicative purpose of each utterance. Third, the comments were analyzed based on their pragmatic functions using Gumperz's (1982) framework of discourse strategies. Particular attention was given to functions such as message qualification, interjection, addressee specification, and personalization. The analysis considered how the choice or alternation of Indonesian and English contributed to the meaning of the interaction. Finally, the identified patterns and functions were interpreted in relation to the social dimensions of gameplay, particularly solidarity, identity, and communication strategies. The interpretation was based on the linguistic forms, the immediate gameplay, and the interaction between players. The findings were then presented descriptively using selected examples from the dataset.

FINDINGS

Indonesian Language Use in Gameplay Interaction

The first category consists of comments written entirely in Indonesian. The analysis of the 50 Indonesian comments shows that this language is primarily used for immediate coordination, emotional expression, and requests for assistance during gameplay. Because many players share Indonesian as a common language, it becomes an efficient tool for communicating gameplay-related information. A common function observed in the Indonesian dataset is requesting assistance. Several comments illustrate players asking others for help in overcoming obstacles during the climbing activity. Examples include “*Bang tolong tarik aku,*” “*Tolongin dong kak,*” and “*Gendong kak.*” These comments demonstrate how players rely on cooperation to progress in the game environment.

Another prominent function is providing instructions or warnings related to gameplay. Comments such as “*Naik disitu susah,*” “*Awas jatuh bro,*” and “*Ayo bareng*” indicate that players frequently share information about the difficulty of certain paths or suggest strategies for climbing the mountain. The dataset also reveals frequent emotional expressions in Indonesian comments. Examples such as “*Capek banget nanjak,*” “*Aduh jatuh lagi,*” and “*Udah males main*” illustrate players expressing frustration and exhaustion after repeated failed attempts.

Additionally, Indonesian is used to express encouragement and solidarity among players. Comments such as *“Semangat bang,” “Coba lagi,”* and *“Ga papa kak”* demonstrate supportive communication. These expressions indicate that players not only focus on individual progress but also provide motivation for others.

English Language Use in Gameplay Interaction

The second category includes comments written entirely in English. Similar to the Indonesian dataset, 50 comments were identified as English-only interactions. However, the analysis shows that English is often used in slightly different communicative, reflecting the global nature of online gaming culture. One of the most common functions of English comments is giving directions or instructions related to gameplay. Examples include *“Don’t jump,” “Go to the top,”* and *“Push me higher.”* These statements function as directives intended to guide other players during the climbing process. English comments also frequently contain requests for assistance, similar to the Indonesian. Examples include *“Help me climb,” “Can you carry me?”* and *“Guys help me quick.”* These requests highlight the cooperative nature of the gameplay activity.

Another function observed is encouragement and motivation. Expressions such as *“You can do it,” “Keep moving guys,”* and *“Almost there wait”* illustrate how players use language to maintain motivation and morale. In addition, some English comments function as status updates that inform other players about their current situation in the game. Examples include *“I’m stuck here,” “Still below,”* and *“I’m lost again.”* These statements allow players to communicate their position or progress during gameplay.

Indonesian - English Code-Switching in Gameplay Interaction

The third category consists of mixed-language comments that combine Indonesian and English elements within the same message. A total of 50 comments were identified as Indonesian–English code-switching. Examples include *“Push aku pliss fast,” “I ga jago kk,” “Carry gue plz ke atas,”* and *“Join me abis try.”* These examples clearly illustrate instances of code-switching, where speakers alternate between two languages within a single utterance. One prominent function observed in interactional efficiency.

In many comments, players combine Indonesian and English words to communicate gameplay instructions quickly. For example, the comment *“Help naek to cp4”* blends English verbs with Indonesian action terms related to climbing. Another important function is identity expression.

Comments such as “*This is my kawan*” and “*I ga jago kk*” illustrate how players blend languages to create a casual and informal communication style. Code-switching also appears in situations where players express humor or emotional reactions. For instance, the comment “*Ada bug can’t jalan wkwk*” combines English and Indonesian elements to describe a technical problem in a humorous way. Another pattern involves requests and coordination. Comments such as “*Carry gue plz ke atas*” and “*Push aku pliss fast*” combine English gaming terminology with Indonesian pronouns and particles.

DISCUSSION

Indonesian Language Use in Gameplay Interaction

The use of Indonesian as a common language among players makes it an efficient tool for communicating gameplay-related information. Such expressions function as directives, where the speaker directly requests action from other participants. In collaborative online environments, requests for assistance often emerge as a key communicative strategy to maintain group progress and interaction (Tsai et al., 2021). The comments providing instructions or warnings can be understood in relation to Gumperz's (1982) concept of message qualification, where speakers provide additional contextual information to clarify the meaning of their message. Indonesian is used to explain gameplay situations that require immediate understanding by other players.

The emotional expressions found in the Indonesian comments highlight the affective dimension of online gaming interactions. Digital game environments often trigger strong emotional responses because players experience repeated challenges and setbacks during gameplay (Cuerdo et al., 2024; Peng et al., 2020). The use of Indonesian for encouragement also demonstrates the interpersonal dimension of gameplay communication. These expressions indicate that players not only focus on individual progress but also provide motivation for others. Previous research suggests that supportive language plays a significant role in maintaining cooperation and engagement in multiplayer gaming environments (Firmansyah & Rosmansyah, 2024; Pham et al., 2023).

English Language Use in Gameplay Interaction

The use of English for directions or instructions demonstrates the importance of directive communication in collaborative gameplay. Such communication is particularly important in collaborative games where players must coordinate their actions to achieve a shared objective

(Rusk & Ståhl, 2022; Saputra & Sawitri, 2023). The requests for assistance in English similarly highlight the cooperative nature of the gameplay activity. When players encounter difficult sections of the climbing path, they often rely on others to assist them. Such interactions demonstrate how communication becomes an essential component of gameplay strategy.

The use of English for encouragement illustrates how players use language to maintain motivation and morale. Encouraging expressions are common in multiplayer games because they help sustain engagement and reduce frustration during challenging tasks (Bowman et al., 2021). The English status updates also support coordination among players. By sharing status information, players help others understand their situation and coordinate further interaction (Du et al., 2021). The presence of English communication in the dataset may also reflect the influence of global gaming culture. English often serves as a lingua franca in international gaming communities, enabling players from different linguistic backgrounds to communicate effectively (Godwin-Jones, 2020). Even when players share the same native language, English expressions may still appear because they are widely associated with gaming terminology and online interaction norms (Kafai & Burke, 2024).

Indonesian–English Code-Switching in Gameplay Interaction

The mixed-language comments demonstrate that players use code-switching as a flexible resource during gameplay. This mixture allows players to convey complex instructions in a concise manner. In multilingual digital environments, speakers often draw from multiple linguistic resources to maximize communicative efficiency (Ibrahim, 2022). The combination of Indonesian and English also contributes to a casual and informal communication style. The combination of Indonesian and English reflects a hybrid linguistic identity commonly found among young internet users and gamers. In digital communication, code-switching often becomes a marker of group identity and social belonging (Hasan & Benny, 2025).

The use of code-switching for humor and emotional reactions demonstrates the creative linguistic practices that emerge in online communities. Multilingual speakers frequently experiment with language mixing to create expressive and playful communication styles (Fatima et al., 2024). Finally, the use of English gaming terminology together with Indonesian pronouns and particles reflects how players adapt language to the gaming. English terms such as carry, push, or join are commonly used as part of gaming communication, while Indonesian elements provide the surrounding interpersonal and contextual meaning.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated patterns of language use and their pragmatic functions in player interactions within the online gaming environment of Roblox. The analysis of 150 player comments revealed three primary language patterns: Indonesian-only, English-only, and mixed Indonesian–English communication. These patterns demonstrate the dynamic and multilingual nature of communication among players in online gaming environments. The findings show that language choice serves several important communicative purposes during gameplay. Indonesian is frequently used for direct coordination, emotional expression, and requests for assistance, while English tends to function as a medium for instructions and participation in global gaming discourse. In contrast, mixed-language interactions illustrate code-switching practices that enable players to combine linguistic resources to communicate efficiently within the fast-paced gaming.

Beyond functional communication, these language practices also reflect broader social dynamics among players. Expressions of encouragement and cooperation indicate the presence of solidarity within the gaming community, while code-switching reflects multilingual identity and adaptive communication strategies among players

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