

An Analysis of Code-Mixing in Web Series: *My Nerd Girl* Season 1

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how code-mixing is employed in the first season of the Indonesian web series *My Nerd Girl*, focusing on its linguistic forms, communicative functions, and specific types. In a multilingual setting like Indonesia, the blending of Indonesian and English frequently appears in everyday discourse, and this series provides a relevant representation of such practices. The main objective of this research is to describe how code-mixing occurs in the characters' dialogues and to explain the roles it plays within the narrative. A qualitative descriptive design was applied, and Muysken's (2000) typology was used to classify the linguistic patterns observed. Through this framework, three major types of code-mixing were identified: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. The analysis shows that insertion predominantly appears in the form of English nouns, adjectives, and short expressions that are embedded into Indonesian clauses to create emphasis or introduce a contemporary tone. Alternation surfaces when speakers shift between the two languages across phrases or clauses, often marking emotional shifts, relational positioning, or stylistic variation. Congruent lexicalization emerges when Indonesian and English elements share the same syntactic structure, reflecting the fluid bilingual practices commonly found among urban youth. Overall, the results indicate that code-mixing in *My Nerd Girl* functions as both a sociolinguistic feature and a narrative technique. Its strategic use supports character development, mirrors real bilingual communication, and enhances the series' appeal to contemporary audiences.

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INTRODUCTION

In multilingual settings, speakers frequently combine linguistic resources from more than one language in a single utterance. This practice, commonly discussed as code-mixing, is not a random departure from language norms but a patterned form of bilingual communication. Classic journal studies have shown that mixed utterances are constrained by linguistic structure rather than produced arbitrarily. Cahayani and Putra (2024), for example, demonstrated that bilingual speech follows recognizable grammatical patterns, while Di Sciullo et al. (1986) argued that code-mixing is structurally regulated within the sentence. These studies establish code-mixing as a legitimate sociolinguistic phenomenon and as evidence of bilingual competence rather than linguistic deficiency.

In Indonesia, code-mixing is especially visible because everyday communication takes place within a multilingual ecology shaped by Bahasa Indonesia, regional languages, and English. Recent journal-based studies show that Indonesian-English code-mixing has become highly visible in digital communication. Research on Twitter found that mixed utterances were used not only as linguistic forms but also for specific communicative purposes, such as expressing emotions, making jokes, and making messages more informative. A separate study on Indonesian Twitter users' attitudes reported generally positive responses to English-Indonesian code-mixing and linked those attitudes to understandability, prestige, confidence, and attention-getting functions. These findings suggest that code-mixing in Indonesia is closely tied to both communication efficiency and social meaning (Nabila & Idayani, 2022; Rizky et al., 2024).

The spread of social media has further intensified this linguistic practice among younger speakers. Studies on Instagram and other digital platforms show that code-mixing is now part of everyday online self-presentation, especially among youth, celebrities, and influencers. (Tarihoran et al., 2022) found that social media significantly influenced the use of Indonesian-English code-mixing among Generation Z. Rezeki and Sagala (2021) similarly showed that Indonesian celebrities' Instagram captions were dominated by external code-switching and insertional code-mixing, while Anggarini et al. (2022) found insertion to be the most frequent form in product endorsement captions by a major Indonesian *selebgram*. In a broader discussion of influencer discourse, Sutrisno and Ariesta (2019) also noted that code-mixing on Instagram is closely related to audience engagement and the projection of a modern social identity. Together, these studies indicate that code-mixing has become a recognizable marker of digital youth culture in Indonesia.

Code-mixing is also prominent in Indonesian audiovisual media. Journal studies on films and television programs consistently show that bilingual dialogue is used to construct character identity, mark prestige, and reflect contemporary urban interaction. Adnyani et al. (2023) found three major forms of code-mixing—insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization—in *Cek Toko Sebelah*, with prestige and lexical need identified as major motivations. Wibowo et al. (2022) reported that code-mixing in *Imperfect: Karier, Cinta & Timbangan* functions not only structurally but also socially within character interaction. In television discourse, Yusuf and Gapur (2024) showed that *MasterChef Indonesia* uses English-derived expressions to represent culinary concepts, commercial appeal, and globalization, while Swandani et al. (2022) demonstrated that bilingual forms in *Yowis Ben* and *Yowis Ben 2* carry multiple communicative functions and remain central even in subtitle translation. These studies confirm that code-mixing in Indonesian media is not incidental; it is a deliberate resource for representing social reality and modern lifestyles.

This broader sociolinguistic pattern is highly relevant to Indonesian web series aimed at adolescent and young adult audiences. Such productions often portray school life, friendship, romance, and digital interaction—domains in which Indonesian-English mixing is already common in daily communication. In this context, *My Nerd Girl Season 1* provides a relevant site for examining how bilingual elements are embedded in scripted dialogue. The series presents youth characters who inhabit a digitally connected environment, making code-mixing a potentially meaningful marker of identity, emotion, and social alignment. Rather than treating mixed expressions as merely ornamental, they can be read as part of how contemporary Indonesian youth speech is stylized and mediated on screen. This interpretation is consistent with journal findings that audiovisual code-mixing frequently reflects modernity, prestige, and interpersonal positioning in Indonesian media (Adnyani et al., 2023; Rezeki & Sagala, 2021; Tarihoran et al., 2022).

Based on this literature, the present study examines the forms and functions of code-mixing in *My Nerd Girl Season 1*. Existing journal studies have shown that Indonesian code-mixing research is concentrated in social media, celebrity discourse, film, and television, with insertion often emerging as a dominant pattern and identity-related motives recurring across contexts. However, web-series dialogue has received far less sustained attention in journal-based discussion than other media forms. By focusing on *My Nerd Girl Season 1*, this study aims to contribute to

sociolinguistic research on contemporary Indonesian youth discourse and to show how code-mixing operates as a linguistic and cultural resource in digital audiovisual storytelling.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Code mixing refers to the use of elements from two or more languages within a single utterance, clause, or sentence. In sociolinguistic research, it is generally treated as a natural feature of bilingual and multilingual communication rather than as a random deviation from grammatical norms. Early journal-based scholarship shows that language mixing is patterned and constrained. Poplack's classic study demonstrates that bilingual speech follows identifiable structural regularities (Poplack, 1980), while Di Sciullo et al. (1986) argue that code mixing is governed by grammatical relations within the sentence. These studies establish that code mixing reflects bilingual competence and systematic language use.

In applied sociolinguistic studies, code mixing is commonly analyzed through three recurring forms: insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization. This three-part classification is consistently used in classroom, media, and digital discourse research. For example, Fanani and Ma'u (2018) identify these three forms in English learning, and Mulyajati (2018) reports the same categories in Indonesian–English speech in a televised talk show. Similar findings are also reported in elementary classroom interaction and Instagram discourse, indicating that the same structural patterns recur across settings (Setiyorini & Setyaningrum, 2021).

Insertion occurs when a lexical item or short phrase from one language is embedded into the grammatical structure of another language. This is often the most frequent pattern in Indonesian–English data. Setiyorini and colleagues, for instance, found that insertion accounted for 70.09% of the code-mixing instances in English learning at SD Teladan Yogyakarta, while Dewi and colleagues likewise reported insertion as the dominant form in Instagram captions. These findings suggest that bilingual speakers often retain one main grammatical frame while importing selected lexical items from another language.

Alternation refers to a shift between languages at the level of clauses or larger syntactic units, so that each segment preserves the grammatical system of its own language. Congruent lexicalization represents a deeper level of integration, in which lexical items from different languages appear within a shared syntactic frame. Studies by Fanani and Ma'u, (2018) and (Haryati & Prayuna, 2020) show that both patterns appear in Indonesian bilingual discourse, although their frequency varies across communicative contexts. In WhatsApp group interaction among university lecturers, for example, congruent lexicalization appeared prominently in several groups, indicating a relatively high degree of bilingual integration in informal academic communication.

Beyond structure, code mixing also serves social and pragmatic purposes. Research shows that speakers use it to clarify meaning, mark group identity, adapt to current trends, or make interaction more effective. In classroom contexts, code mixing may support comprehension and explanation, whereas in social media it may index modernity, bilingual identity, or stylistic preference. Ayeomoni's (2006) study in the Yoruba speech community and more recent Indonesian studies both indicate that code mixing is closely tied to speakers' communicative needs and sociocultural environments.

Overall, the literature suggests that code mixing should be understood as a structured bilingual strategy with linguistic as well as social functions (Di Sciullo et al., 1986; Haryati & Prayuna, 2020; Mulyajati, 2018; Putu Rustika Dewi, 2021). Its occurrence across classrooms, television discourse, WhatsApp groups, and Instagram captions confirms that it is not a sign of linguistic deficiency, but a flexible communicative resource used by bilingual speakers to negotiate meaning efficiently in multilingual setting.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to examine instances of code mixing in the dialogues and narrative exchanges of *My Nerd Girl* Season 1. A qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it aims to provide a direct and systematic account of a phenomenon without seeking to generate grand theory (Patton, 2002), making it suitable for research that focuses on identifying patterns and contextual meanings in naturally occurring language data. To analyze the linguistic data, this study applied qualitative content analysis, which enables researchers to classify recurring verbal patterns through systematic coding procedures rather than impressionistic interpretation. Within this framework, the analysis focused on identifying Indonesian–English code mixing and classifying it into insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization, categories that have also been operationalized in journal-based studies of Indonesian audiovisual discourse.

The data were collected from all eight episodes of *My Nerd Girl* Season 1, which together constitute the primary corpus of the study. Each episode was watched repeatedly to identify utterances containing Indonesian–English code mixing, and the relevant dialogues were transcribed into a textual dataset. The transcripts were then checked against the audiovisual material to preserve contextual cues such as speaker interaction, tone, and situation, which are important for interpreting the function of code mixing in discourse. After transcription, each instance was coded according to its linguistic type, its location in the episode, the speaker who produced it, and the surrounding conversational context. This procedure allowed the analysis to remain systematic, transparent, and replicable, while also aligning with prior journal-based studies that investigated code mixing in Indonesian film dialogue through qualitative categorization and contextual interpretation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified three kinds of code-mixing in movie series: insertion, alternation, congruent lexicalization, based on an analysis based on Musyken’s theory (2000).

Table 1. The Percentage of Total of Code-Mixing

No	Code Mixing	Frequency	Percentage
1	Insertion	36	62%
2	Alternation	17	29%
3	Congruent Lexicalization	5	9%
	Total	58	100%

1. Code Mixing

Based on the data presented in Table 1, there are three types of code mixing that researcher found in *My Nerd Girl* Series Season 1. The result shows insertion emerged as the most frequently occurring type of code-mixing with percentage (62%), insertion is commonly found in multilingual contexts where a dominant language framework accommodates lexical items from another language. The high percentage of insertion in this study therefore suggests that the speakers are more inclined to borrow single words or short expressions during interaction. Alternation making it the second most dominant type of code-mixing with percentage (29%) , the presence of alternation in this study reflects situations in which speakers purposefully shift linguistic codes to express emphasis, emotion, or socio-cultural identity. In contrast, congruent lexicalization was identified the least, the low percentage (9%) implies that the integration of two linguistic systems simultaneously occurs less frequently in the movie series, possibly due to limited contexts requiring highly hybridized utterances.

Insertion

Insertion is a type of code-mixing in which a single word or phrase from one language is inserted into the grammatical structure of another language. The sentence structure remains dominated by one language while borrowing lexical items from another. 36 English words have been inserted into Indonesian from the classified data. Although the characters speak Indonesian, they occasionally use English words in their dialog. Here are a few examples of the results the authors have examined.

Extract 1: “*Salah satu partner papa kan, papa nya Aldi*”

This utterance is categorized as insertion because a single lexical item from Indonesian (partner) is inserted into an Indonesian syntactic frame. The sentence structure remains Indonesian, but it incorporates an English noun that functions as a complement within the clause. According to Muysken (2000), insertion involves embedding lexical items or phrases from one language into the grammatical structure of another, which is clearly seen in this instance. Insertion is characterized by embedding isolated lexical items or short phrases from one language into the matrix (dominant) language’s grammatical frame. Here Indonesian provides the matrix grammar and the English noun is a content-word insertion. The inserted word does not bring its own English syntactic structure; it behaves like any other Indonesian noun for purposes of sentence parsing and meaning.

Extract 2: “*Jadi pas Pak Cakra cari tau tentang Fara, aku interview Pak Cakra*”

This example represents insertion because the verb interview is embedded into the Indonesian grammatical construction. The word interview functions as the main verb but the surrounding sentence structure, morphology, and syntax (prepositional phrases, subject marking, sequencing words such as jadi pas, and Indonesian morphological processes like reduplications or affixation in other contexts) are Indonesian. The verb is a lexical insertion: a borrowed verb used within the host language’s grammatical system. This is prototypical insertion when bilingual speakers adopt a content word from the other language but use it in their native morphosyntactic environment. Muysken (2000) describes such single-word or short-phrase insertions as the hallmark of insertion.

Extract 3: “*Selama ini Fara dandan kayak lo untuk Face ID dia*”

The phrase Face ID functions as a noun phrase embedded in an Indonesian clause. Indonesian grammatical markers and particles (possessive dia, comparative kayak) remain intact. The English phrase is treated like an object or complement without bringing English clausal morphology. The speaker likely chooses face ID because it is a lexicalized term widely recognized in English and perhaps more concise or idiomatic than an Indonesian paraphrase. That lexical convenience supports treating it as insertion rather than a structural switch.

Extract 4: “*No, thank you, mah*”

This utterance is categorized as insertion because the primary structure of the sentence is English (“No, thank you”), but it includes a single Indonesian/colloquial particle mah inserted at the end. The particle mah functions as a pragmatic marker commonly used in Indonesian informal speech from mamah. It does not contribute to clause structure but instead adds nuance to the speaker’s attitude. Here, the English clause remains fully intact syntactically, and mah is simply added for pragmatic effect. It does not form its own syntactic unit and does not create a clause boundary, so alternation does not apply. This makes insertion the most appropriate classification:

a single Indonesian discourse particle is inserted into an otherwise English sentence.

Alternation

Alternation occurs when speakers switch between two languages across clause boundaries or sentence segments. Each language forms its own grammatical structure, and the change of language is clearly noticeable. This switching often occurs at the clause or phrase level, not just the word level. Below is an example.

Extract 5: “*Aldi, get down! turun*”

There are two imperatives presented in sequence: an English imperative (get down!) and its Indonesian counterpart (turun!). Each imperative stands as its own clause with distinct lexical and phonological realization. The alternation is symmetric and occurs at the clause boundary between two full verb phrases. Alternation is evidenced by switching languages across clause boundaries while each clause preserves its language-specific grammar. The speaker uses two separate commands in different languages, perhaps to ensure comprehension, increase urgency, or express emotion. Muysken’s typology treats such clause level switching as alternation because there is no single matrix grammar dominating both clauses.

Extract 6: “*Like what? ngebunuh aku*”

The speaker starts with an English clause (Like what? an interrogative fragment functioning as a discourse question) and immediately follows with an Indonesian clause (ngebunuh aku? ‘kill me?’). Each clause adheres to its language specific syntax and morphology. The alternation happens at a natural sentence boundary between the English question-word phrase and the Indonesian clause. The alternation label fits because the speaker alternates whole clause units, each preserving its language’s grammatical properties. This is a prototypical case of clause-level switching one clause in English, the next in Indonesian matching Muysken’s alternation category.

Extract 7: “*I want to ask you something, mau nggak datang ke acara Valentine days bareng gw.*”

This utterance is categorized as alternation because the speaker switches languages at a clear syntactic boundary. The first clause, “*I want to ask you something,*” is entirely in English, following English grammar and sentence structure. Immediately after this clause, the speaker shifts to Indonesian: “*mau nggak datang ke acara Valentine days bareng gw.*” This second segment is also a complete clause, structured according to Indonesian grammar, including colloquial morphology (mau nggak, bareng gw). The alternation is evident because the speaker does not simply insert isolated English lexical items into an Indonesian structure (which would indicate insertion). Instead, the speaker constructs a full English clause and then a full Indonesian clause, each with its own grammatical system. According to Muysken (2000), alternation occurs when bilingual speakers switch between languages at clause boundaries, producing segments that each preserve the grammatical integrity of their respective languages.

Congruent Lexicalization

Congruent lexicalization refers to the mixing of linguistic elements from both languages within the same grammatical structure. In this case, both languages share and fill the same syntactic frame simultaneously. However, both languages have the same or similar grammatical structures, so elements from both languages can be used flexibly without disturbing the grammar. This type often occurs in bilingual communities and uses languages with similar grammar. The authors discovered 1 data congruent lexicalization from the movie series among the categorized

data. Below are some examples.

Extract 8: “*Anyway, congratulation sekarang kamu jadi ratu lebah yang baru kan?*”

The utterance begins with English discourse markers (*Anyway, congratulation*), then continues seamlessly into Indonesian syntax (*sekarang kamu jadi ratu lebah yang baru kan?*). Importantly, the English discourse items are not clause-final insertions that break Indonesian grammar; they function as integrated discourse particles that feed directly into the Indonesian clause without changing the clause’s morphosyntax. Congruent lexicalization covers cases where bilingual speakers draw from both lexicons within one structural frame here the frame is the Indonesian clause and the English discourse markers occupy slots that are functionally congruent with Indonesian discourse devices. Both languages contribute items that fit into a common syntactic/discourse template; there is no full clause level switch. This joint filling of discourse and clause slots by two languages is characteristic of congruent lexicalization. Use of English discourse markers may index informality or a certain register; their smooth integration into Indonesian clause structure supports the interpretation of a fused, bilingual pragmatic system rather than isolated insertion.

Extract 9: “*kalian berdua so sweet banget sih*”

The English adjectival phrase *so sweet* occupies a predicate/adjective slot inside an Indonesian clause where Indonesian degree adverbs (*banget*) and discourse particle (*sih*) appear as well. The structure shows co-occurrence and stacking of degree and evaluation across languages: the English adjective is modified by Indonesian intensifier *banget*, and the entire phrase is integrated syntactically and prosodically as a single predicative clause. This suggests that the clause’s grammar accepts cross-linguistic combinations of degree and adjective. The mixing may serve stylistic or affective functions (English adjective conveying a particular cultural connotation, Indonesian intensifier providing local emphasis), and the fact that both combine naturally indicates a bilingual competence that treats the clause as a single integrated system.

Extract 10: “*Bentar, hero a she’s*”

This utterance represents congruent lexicalization because elements of English and Indonesian are blended within the same syntactic frame, creating a hybrid clause where neither language dominates structurally. The Indonesian discourse marker *bentar* (“wait a second”) opens the sentence, establishing the Indonesian conversational frame. Immediately after, the speaker produces “*hero a she’s!*”, which appears to follow an English lexical pattern but not a standardized English grammatical structure. Instead, the phrase functions as a stylized, hybrid expression that combines English lexical items (*hero, she’s*) with a nonstandard arrangement influenced by Indonesian informal speech patterns. This utterance shows exactly that: the English words are not inserted into a clear Indonesian grammatical frame (which would indicate insertion), nor do we see two separate clauses in two different languages (which would indicate alternation). Instead, the languages mix freely inside one structural domain.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that *My Nerd Girl Season 1* employs three types of code-mixing—insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization—with insertion emerging as the most dominant form (36 cases; 62%), followed by alternation (17 cases; 29%) and congruent lexicalization (5 cases; 9%). The findings indicate that English elements are most often embedded into Indonesian clauses as nouns, adjectives, or short expressions, while alternation tends to mark emphasis, emotion, or relational stance, and congruent lexicalization reflects more fluid bilingual

integration. Overall, code-mixing in the series functions not only as a linguistic pattern but also as a narrative resource that supports character development, reflects contemporary bilingual communication, and increases the series' relevance for young audiences. These findings imply that code-mixing in Indonesian web series should be understood as a meaningful sociolinguistic and stylistic strategy rather than merely as ornamental language use.

However, this study is limited by its focus on a single web series and one season only, which means the findings cannot yet be generalized to all Indonesian audiovisual media. In addition, the analysis is based on qualitative content analysis of scripted dialogue, so it does not examine audience reception or compare the series with other genres, platforms, or productions. Future studies are therefore recommended to expand the corpus by including more web series, films, or television programs, and to combine textual analysis with audience-based or comparative approaches. Such work would provide a broader understanding of how code-mixing functions across Indonesian digital media and how it shapes identity, style, and contemporary youth discourse.

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