

## Linguistic Identity Negotiation on TikTok: Glocal Practices of Indonesian Content Creators

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### Abstract

This study examines how Indonesian content creators negotiate their linguistic identity on TikTok, striking a balance between global and local influences through glocalized practices. Drawing on qualitative content analysis of 75 viral videos and in-depth interviews with 15 creators, this research examines how code-switching, hybridized language forms, and culturally-specific expressions are strategically used to construct online identities. The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design that integrates digital ethnography, multimodal discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews in order to capture both observable linguistic practices and creators' own reflections on their language choices. The video corpus was selected through purposive sampling from Indonesian TikTok accounts with substantial audience engagement, representing diverse content genres, geographic regions, and sociolinguistic backgrounds. Each video was analyzed for lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and multimodal features, including spoken language, captions, visual cues, and interactional elements, to identify recurring patterns of linguistic identity negotiation. The findings identify four negotiation strategies: strategic multilingualism, cultural-linguistic hybridization, performative authenticity, and audience-adaptive communication. These categories were developed through iterative coding and thematic analysis, supported by qualitative analysis software, allowing patterns emerging from the content to be systematically compared with insights from creator interviews. Interview data further illuminate the motivations behind creators' linguistic decisions, their perceptions of audience expectations, and their awareness of platform affordances that shape communicative behavior. These strategies demonstrate how creators intentionally shift between standardized Indonesian, regional dialects, English, and emerging digital vernaculars to engage diverse audiences while maintaining cultural authenticity. The study indicates that TikTok provides a dynamic space where creators both challenge and reinforce linguistic hierarchies. Creators' language practices are shown to be deeply intertwined with platform logics, including algorithmic visibility, temporal constraints, and multimodal affordances, which together influence how linguistic identities are performed and interpreted. By connecting local practices with global digital trends, Indonesian creators not only reflect the nation's complex sociolinguistic landscape but also exercise cultural agency in shaping new forms of expression in transnational spaces. These findings are interpreted through the theoretical lenses of glocalization, sociolinguistic scaling, and digital linguistic citizenship, situating Indonesian creators within broader debates on language, power, and identity in digital communication. The findings contribute to understanding digital linguistic practices and highlight the Global South's role in the evolving digital culture.

**Keywords:** cultural hybridization; digital linguistics; glocalization; linguistic identity; social media; TikTok.

## INTRODUCTION

The digital landscape has fundamentally transformed how cultural and linguistic identities are constructed, negotiated, and presented across global platforms (Darvin, 2016), creating unprecedented opportunities for linguistic expressions that transcend traditional geographical boundaries. As social media platforms continue to facilitate cross-cultural encounters on a massive scale, content creators from non-Western contexts increasingly find themselves negotiating complex linguistic identities that must simultaneously appeal to local sensibilities while engaging with global audiences (Leppänen, S., & Peuronen, 2012). This phenomenon is particularly evident on TikTok, a platform that has emerged as a dominant force in global digital culture, while remaining highly localized in its content ecosystems.

Indonesia, with its rich multilingual landscape comprising over 700 languages and diverse ethnic identities, presents a fascinating case study for understanding these dynamics. As the fourth most populous country in the world with a rapidly growing digital user base, with over 170 million social media users in 2023, Indonesia represents a significant yet understudied context for examining linguistic identity negotiation in digital spaces (Kemp, 2023). Indonesian TikTok creators navigate a complex sociolinguistic terrain where multiple languages coexist, including Bahasa Indonesia (the national language), numerous regional languages and dialects, English as a global lingua franca, and emergent digital vernaculars unique to online spaces.

These overlapping linguistic resources place creators in a communicative situation where local identities are constantly shaped by global cultural currents. Their linguistic practices, therefore, cannot be fully explained through models of globalization or localization in isolation. Instead, they reflect an ongoing negotiation between global influence and local meaning-making. To conceptualize this process, the present study adopts the notion of glocalization as its central analytical framework.

The concept of glocalization, first popularized by Robertson (1995) and later developed by scholars such as Roudometof (2016), provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding these dynamics. Glocalization refers to the simultaneous processes of globalization and localization, which create hybrid cultural forms adapted to specific local contexts, while remaining connected to broader global trends. In the context of digital linguistics, glocalization manifests through strategic language choices that reflect both worldwide connectivity and local cultural authenticity.

Previous research on linguistic practices in digital spaces has predominantly focused on Western contexts or examined East Asian countries with significant global cultural influence, such as South Korea and Japan (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Studies investigating Indonesian digital linguistics have typically focused on Facebook and Instagram (Tamtomo, 2012; Muhsyanur et al., 2021), with limited attention given to newer platforms, such as TikTok, that enforce different technical constraints and foster distinct communicative norms. Such gap becomes significant as TikTok continues to reshape global digital culture with its emphasis on brief, multimodal content that privileges creative linguistic expression.

The power dynamics inherent in global digital platforms present particular challenges for content creators from the Global South. As Pennycook (2020) argues, the dominance of English and Western cultural norms creates linguistic hierarchies that non-Western users must navigate. However, this process is not one of passive assimilation since it involves active negotiation and resistance through creative linguistic practices. Indonesian creators on TikTok exemplify this agency by incorporating global elements while preserving their local cultural identities.

These dynamics intensified during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, when social media usage surged worldwide. TikTok, in particular, experienced explosive growth in Indonesia, adding more than 30 million new users between 2020 and 2022 (Statista, 2023). This rapid expansion created both opportunities for visibility and heightened questions about linguistic authenticity and cultural representation.

Existing scholarship demonstrates that social media platforms serve as sites of identity performance, where individuals strategically deploy linguistic resources to navigate complex social worlds. In Indonesia, for instance, Tamtomo (2012) documents how Facebook users engage in sophisticated code-switching practices shaped by multilingual repertoires and audience

considerations. TikTok, however, introduces unique multimodal conditions, such as algorithmic distribution, short-form videos, and audio-visual emphasis, that reshape how linguistic identities are performed and negotiated.

To analyze these processes, this study draws on three interrelated theoretical lenses. First, the concept of linguistic identity negotiation provides the foundation for understanding how creators balance competing linguistic demands in transnational digital spaces. Second, Blommaert's (2010) notion of sociolinguistic scales highlights how creators' language choices acquire value across local, national, and global contexts simultaneously. Third, the concept of digital linguistic citizenship (Leppänen, Westinen, & Kytölä, 2016) highlights how users assert their cultural presence and agency by creatively combining local and global resources. Taken together, these frameworks allow us to examine TikTok not merely as a space of performance but as a contested arena where Indonesian creators actively reshape the linguistic landscape of global digital culture.

Despite growing scholarly attention to digital linguistics, the novelty of this research lies in linking glocalized linguistic practices with TikTok's technological affordances, offering fresh insights into how Indonesian creators assert cultural agency within transnational digital spaces. Furthermore, this research responds to calls from scholars, such as Degaf et al. (2019) and Fa et al. (2024), for more nuanced approaches to digital linguistics that recognize the agency of non-Western language users, rather than positioning them as passive recipients of global influences. By documenting the innovative linguistic strategies developed by Indonesian TikTok creators, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of glocalization processes in digital communication.

Against this backdrop, this research aims to investigate how Indonesian content creators negotiate linguistic identities on TikTok, specifically examining the strategies they employ to balance global appeal with local cultural authenticity. By analyzing both content and creator perspectives, this study aims to develop a comprehensive understanding of digital linguistic practices that reflect Indonesia's distinctive position in global digital culture. The findings contribute to the expansion of theories in digital linguistics and glocalization, while documenting emergent communicative practices that may have implications for language policy, education, and cultural preservation in Indonesia's increasingly digitized linguistic landscape.

## METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach, combining digital ethnography, multimodal discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews, to comprehensively investigate the negotiation of linguistic identity among Indonesian TikTok content creators. This methodological triangulation, as advocated by Denzin (2017), enables a more robust understanding of the complex interplay between linguistic choices, creator intentions, audience reception, and platform affordances. The research design followed a three-phase process spanning eight months from March to October 2024, allowing for iterative analysis and theoretical development consistent with constructivist grounded theory principles (Charmaz, 2014).

In the first phase, purposive sampling identified 25 Indonesian TikTok creators with followings ranging from 100,000 to 5 million, ensuring representation across content genres (entertainment, education, lifestyle, and comedy), geographic regions within Indonesia, and demographic characteristics. The selection process began with a broad mapping of Indonesian TikTok creators through trending hashtags (#BahasaGaul [Cool Language], #KontenEdukasi [Educational Content], and #FYPIndonesia [Indonesian For You Page]) and TikTok's "For You" recommendation algorithm. From this pool, creators were shortlisted based on consistent use of multilingual practices and significant audience engagement (measured by follower count and average video views). To avoid overrepresentation of a single genre or region, quotas were applied to balance content categories and geographic diversity.

From the initial pool of over 100 potential creators, 25 creators who most clearly exemplified linguistic identity negotiation through their content were chosen. For each creator, three viral videos (defined as exceeding 500,000 views) were then selected, yielding a total corpus of 75 videos. Selection criteria prioritized content featuring explicit linguistic identity negotiation, including code-switching, language mixing, dialect performance, or metalinguistic commentary. Each video

underwent systematic multimodal discourse analysis following Norris's (2019) framework, which examines how meaning emerges through the interplay of linguistic, visual, audio, and interactive elements. This analysis documented specific linguistic features (lexical choices, grammatical structures, and pronunciation patterns), paralinguistic elements (intonation, rhythm, and gesture), and contextual factors (video descriptions, hashtags, and creator responses in comments).

NVivo software facilitated the coding process. An initial round of open coding generated 42 inductive codes, drawn directly from the data, that captured recurring linguistic practices, such as code-switching, dialectal performance, hybridized lexical forms, English insertions, and explicit metalinguistic commentary. These inductive codes were supplemented by four deductive categories derived from prior scholarship on linguistic identity negotiation (strategic multilingualism, cultural-linguistic hybridization, performative authenticity, and audience-adaptive communication). During axial coding, overlapping codes were consolidated into broader thematic clusters, resulting in eight core categories that mapped relationships between specific linguistic strategies and wider identity negotiation processes. This iterative coding approach ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the data while still guided by relevant theoretical concepts. This approach aligns with Androutsopoulos's (2013) recommendation for digital discourse analysis that accounts for the unique multimodal affordances of social media platforms.

The second phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with 15 creators, purposively selected from the initial 25, to ensure diversity across genres, regions, and follower sizes, while prioritizing those who most clearly exemplified the four identified linguistic negotiation strategies. In addition to video analysis, comment sections and hashtags were also examined as supplementary data, serving as contextual cues to audience reception and content framing. Although not systematically coded, they were used to triangulate and enrich the interpretation of both content and interviews.

Interviews lasting 60-90 minutes were conducted via video conferencing in the language(s) of the participant's choice (Indonesian, English, or a combination) following protocols approved by the university's ethics committee. Questions explored creators' conscious and unconscious linguistic decisions, their perceptions of audience expectations, the influence of platform constraints on language use, and their conceptualization of authentic linguistic identity. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts followed Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step process, with particular attention to how creators described their decision-making processes regarding language use. This approach responds to Blommaert's (2018) call for ethnographic methods that capture the lived experiences and strategic choices of digital language users, rather than focusing exclusively on textual output.

The final methodological phase involved integrative analysis that synthesized findings from content analysis and interviews to identify overarching patterns of linguistic identity negotiation. The corpus focuses on instances of linguistic identity negotiation, which were identified through a combination of theory-driven criteria and data-driven observation. A video was considered to display identity negotiation if it contained explicit or implicit shifts in language use that indexed different cultural or social alignments. Drawing on prior scholarship (Blommaert, 2010; Leppänen et al., 2016; Pennycook, 2020), four a priori indicators guided coding: (1) code-switching and code-mixing between Indonesian, English, and regional dialects; (2) dialect or accent performance signaling local identity; (3) hybridized lexical or stylistic forms that blend global and local linguistic resources; and (4) metalinguistic commentary where creators reflect on or parody language use.

During open coding in NVivo, these deductive categories were supplemented with inductive refinements (e.g., emergent digital vernaculars, algorithmic catchphrases, or localized reinterpretations of global slang). Videos without any of these features were excluded from the final corpus. This ensured that only content explicitly engaging in linguistic identity negotiation was analyzed, while maintaining both theoretical grounding and empirical sensitivity. This process helped to develop analytical categories grounded in the data, while maintaining theoretical sensitivity to existing literature on digital linguistics and identity performance (Charmaz 2014). Throughout the research process, member-checking activities with participants ensured interpretive validity, while peer-checking with colleagues specializing in digital linguistics and Indonesian studies strengthened analytical reliability. This comprehensive methodological approach acknowledges the multilayered nature of linguistic identity negotiation on TikTok. It addresses

previous methodological limitations identified by scholars, such as Leppänen et al. (2016), who emphasize the importance of combining textual analysis with creator perspectives when studying digital linguistic practices.

## ANALYSIS

### Strategic Multilingualism as Identity Positioning

This section examines how Indonesian creators negotiate their linguistic identity on TikTok. The analysis reveals that creators employ “strategic multilingualism,” i.e., deliberately utilizing diverse linguistic resources to convey multifaceted identities. To include sophisticated performances that position creators within global, national, and local contexts, this practice extends beyond simple code-switching. As Creator 7 explained: “Using English gives me global credibility, but mixing in Indonesian slang shows I’m still connected to local culture. It’s like having multiple linguistic personalities for different purposes.” This statement illustrates the conscious calculation behind linguistic choices. This finding resonates with Blommaert’s (2010) concept of sociolinguistic scales. Even so, the authors’ data also show partial divergence: while most creators leverage global scales (such as English), some deliberately resist upscaling, opting instead for consistent use of local dialects to strengthen community ties.

From NVivo coding, 68% (51 of 75) videos demonstrated multilingual negotiation, while 12% (9 videos) showed deliberate monolingual resistance, using only Indonesian or regional dialects as an authenticity marker. This nuance suggests that not all creators align with global linguistic hierarchies, complicating Blommaert’s model of scaling.

Content analysis identified four distinct patterns: (1) professional-personal code distinction, i.e., switching between English/formal Indonesian for professional topics and regional/colloquial forms for personal anecdotes; (2) audience-targeted language modulation, i.e., adjusting language based on target viewers (international vs. domestic); (3) topic-dependent language selection, i.e., using English for technology and regional dialects for cultural content; and (4) trend-responsive adaptation, i.e., rapid incorporation of trending linguistic forms from global and local contexts. Table 1 summarizes the quantification of patterns across the analyzed content in TikTok

Table 1. Quantification of Patterns Across the Analyzed Content

Pattern of Strategic Multilingualism	Percentage of Analyzed Videos	Common Content Categories
Professional-personal code distinction	62%	Educational, business, lifestyle
Audience-targeted language modulation	78%	All categories
Topic-dependent language selection	83%	Technology, cultural, food
Trend-responsive linguistic adaptation	47%	Entertainment, comedy, dance

These findings support Leppänen and Peuronen’s (2012) assertion that multilingual digital practices represent not merely linguistic competence but also strategic identity work. However, the Indonesian context adds complexity to this framework, as creators navigate not only the global-local binary but also multiple local linguistic identities within Indonesia’s diverse ethnolinguistic landscape.

### Hybridized Language Forms and Cultural Intermediation

This section describes linguistic strategies employed in identity negotiation. A salient strategy was the production of hybridized language forms, combining elements from Indonesian, English, regional varieties, and platform-specific vernaculars. These forms are not merely playful word inventions but function as cultural intermediation devices, enabling creators to simultaneously signal local belonging and global literacy.

As Creator 12 expressed: “I’m not just translating global trends for Indonesians or explaining Indonesian culture to foreigners. I’m creating something new that exists between these worlds.” This illustrates how hybridized forms actively construct a “third space” of identity (cf. Bhabha, 1994), positioning creators as mediators across linguistic and cultural boundaries. NVivo coding showed that 41 of 75 videos (55%) contained explicit hybridized constructions, while seven videos (9%)

displayed resistance, with creators explicitly rejecting hybrid forms in favor of "pure" Indonesian or English to maintain credibility. This resistance highlights that hybridization itself becomes an arena of negotiation, rather than a uniform practice.

Four recurrent hybridization strategies were identified. First, morphological hybridization – Indonesian affixes attached to English roots (e.g., *di-cancel-in* [cancelled] and *nge-trend* [trending]). Secondly, semantic extension – Indonesian words repurposed with English-influenced meanings (e.g., *garam* "salty attitude"). Thirdly, there are some syntactic blendings, mixed sentence structures drawing on both Indonesian and English syntax. Fourthly, digital-vernacular integration is found, a term implying an event where local language intertwined with TikTok-specific symbols, memes, and hashtags.

While these categories align with translanguaging scholarship (García & Wei, 2014), authors' findings extend the framework by highlighting how digital vernaculars (hashtags, emojis, comment tropes) function as linguistic resources in their own right, often carrying as much identity weight as verbal language. Figure 1 illustrates these hybridization processes.

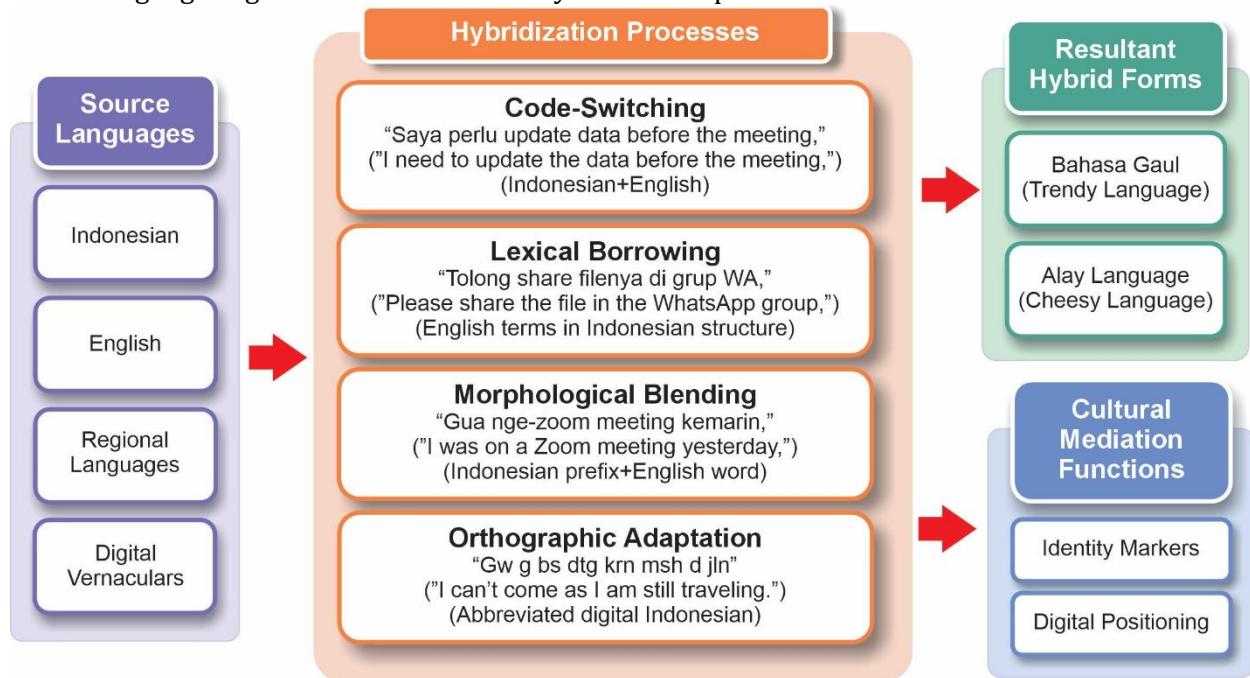


Figure 1. Hybridization Processes

This linguistic hybridization parallels what Pennycook (2020) describes as "translinguality," wherein language boundaries become permeable sites of creativity, rather than rigid categories. However, the Indonesian TikTok context demonstrates that this process is not random but rather highly strategic, with creators consciously developing distinctive linguistic styles that become part of their personal brands.

It is particularly noteworthy that these hybrid forms enabled creators to signal cosmopolitan knowledge and local authenticity simultaneously, a balancing act that Appadurai (2001) identifies as crucial for cultural intermediaries operating in globalized media contexts. Content creators leveraged these hybrid forms most extensively when introducing global concepts to local audiences or when contextualizing local phenomena for potential global viewers.

### Performative Authenticity Through Dialect and Accent

Another salient dimension of identity negotiation involves the performative use of regional dialects, accents, and ethnolinguistic markers. While standardized Indonesian and English dominated informational or educational content, creators strategically shifted to regional varieties in emotionally charged or culturally situated contexts. Content coding revealed that 36 of 75 videos (48%) contained marked regional features, with four recurrent functions. Firstly, emotional

intensification, where dialect surfaces during heightened affective states (e.g., excitement, frustration, joy). Secondly, humor indexing, where regional accents/dialects act as semiotic cues for comedic framing. Thirdly, nostalgic positioning, where dialect marks stories of memory, tradition, and heritage. Fourthly, authority establishment, where regional forms establish epistemic legitimacy in discussing local culture. For instance, Creator 5 explained, "When I'm really excited or want to connect emotionally, I naturally shift to Javanese phrases. It feels more genuine, more 'me'."

Interview data complicates this picture: several creators reported *initially suppressing* regional features to optimize algorithmic reach, only to later reincorporate them once they had secured a follower base. This oscillation illustrates that authenticity is not a stable attribute but a negotiated performance. In fact, 5 interviewees (33%) explicitly acknowledged fears that heavy dialect use might restrict algorithmic circulation or alienate non-local audiences. These findings highlight that regional language use functions as both a resource and a risk, as it simultaneously enables creators to authenticate themselves to local audiences while potentially limiting their global reach. Thus, dialect deployment exemplifies identity negotiation in digital spaces, where linguistic authenticity must be continuously calibrated against platform logics and imagined audiences.

### Audience-Adaptive Communication Strategies

A further dimension of identity negotiation emerges in the ways creators adapt communication strategies to heterogeneous audiences. Rather than relying on a single language variety, creators engaged in multilayered accommodation practices designed to balance accessibility, cultural specificity, and performative identity. From the 75 analyzed videos, 42 (56%) contained at least one audience-adaptive strategy. The most common strategies are: Firstly, parallel translation, where key points are delivered sequentially in Indonesian and English (observed in 18 cases). Secondly, visual scaffolding, where on-screen captions or text overlays in one language complement spoken narration in another (21 cases). Thirdly, contextual explanation, where culturally-specific terms are glossed for presumed non-local audiences (12 cases). Fourthly, linguistic metacommentary, in which creators explicitly address language choice, such as joking about code-switching or noting difficulties in translation (9 cases). As Creator 8 explained, "Even if I speak Indonesian, sometimes I add English captions, just so people outside can still follow. But I also don't want to lose the local vibe."

These strategies illustrate a dynamic negotiation between reach and authenticity: creators seek to maximize intelligibility for global viewers without erasing localized identity markers. At the same time, several interviewees acknowledged the presence of tensions. For instance, three creators worried that excessive explanation of cultural terms risked making the content feel "didactic" or "inauthentic," while others reported that balancing bilingual captions slowed down their creative workflow. Table 2 shows how frequently audience-adaptation strategies are seen in the observed dataset.

Table 2. The Frequency of Audience-Adaptation Strategies Observed in the Dataset.

Audience Adaptation Strategy	Frequency in Analyzed Content	Primary Function	Identity-Related Effect
Parallel Translation	36/75 (48%)	Accessibility	Signals inclusivity but sometimes slows down narrative pacing
Visual Linguistic Scaffolding	57/75 (76%)	Comprehension Support	Enhances clarity while reinforcing multimodal creativity
Contextual Explanation	28/75 (37%)	Cultural Translation	Positions the creator as a cultural mediator or educator
Linguistic Metacommentary	17/75 (23%)	Authenticity Signaling	Makes language choice itself part of identity performance

These findings extend beyond simple bilingualism or translation to exemplify what Canagarajah (2018) terms "translingual practice". A communication practice that transcends discrete language boundaries through the creative negotiation of meaning. Indonesian creators displayed remarkable metalinguistic awareness, anticipating comprehension barriers and preemptively addressing them through multimodal resources. Interview data confirmed that these

strategies emerged through iterative experimentation and feedback loops with the audience. As Creator 9 explained, "I started noticing which videos got more international comments and analyzed what made them more accessible. Now I've developed almost instinctive techniques for creating content that works across language barriers."

Yet, creators also reported tensions. Several noted that parallel translation sometimes disrupted comedic timing, while others felt that too much contextual explanation risked "lecturing" the audience. This reflects a broader identity negotiation: creators must balance accessibility, authenticity, and algorithmic visibility, often recalibrating strategies based on evolving audience composition.

### Platform Affordances and Linguistic Constraints

TikTok's technical architecture significantly shaped the linguistic negotiation strategies employed by Indonesian creators. The platform's original 60-second time constraint (later expanded to 3 minutes for some accounts) pushes creators to condense information and prioritize communicative impact. At the same time, TikTok's algorithmic distribution system, perceived by many as privileging particular linguistic forms, emerged as a powerful force shaping language choice.

Content analysis revealed three main adaptation strategies. First, time-efficient code-switching: Creators strategically alternated between languages to maximize informational density (e.g., using English for technical terms and Indonesian for narrative context). Second, multimodal linguistic layering: Spoken language was often complemented with on-screen text and captions in different languages, enabling creators to bypass temporal and linguistic limitations. Third, algorithm-responsive tagging practices: Hashtags in multiple languages (e.g., #fyp, #belajaringgris [learning English], #indonesiatiktok) were utilized to enhance discoverability across various audience segments. Interview data highlighted how creators framed these adaptations as both enabling and constraining. Creator 4 reflected: "Sixty seconds is short. I can't explain everything, so I mix spoken Indonesian with English text overlays. That way, I say less but still reach more people." Meanwhile, others expressed ambivalence toward algorithmic pressures, "Sometimes I feel forced to put English hashtags just to get views. It's not really my style, but that's how TikTok works" (Creator 7).

These findings illustrate how platform affordances (Bucher & Helmond, 2018) not only enable creative linguistic practices but also introduce structural constraints that mediate identity performance. Indonesian creators' language strategies thus emerge not purely from cultural preference but from ongoing negotiation with technical and algorithmic environments. Figure 2 shows how platform constraints affect linguistic adaptation.

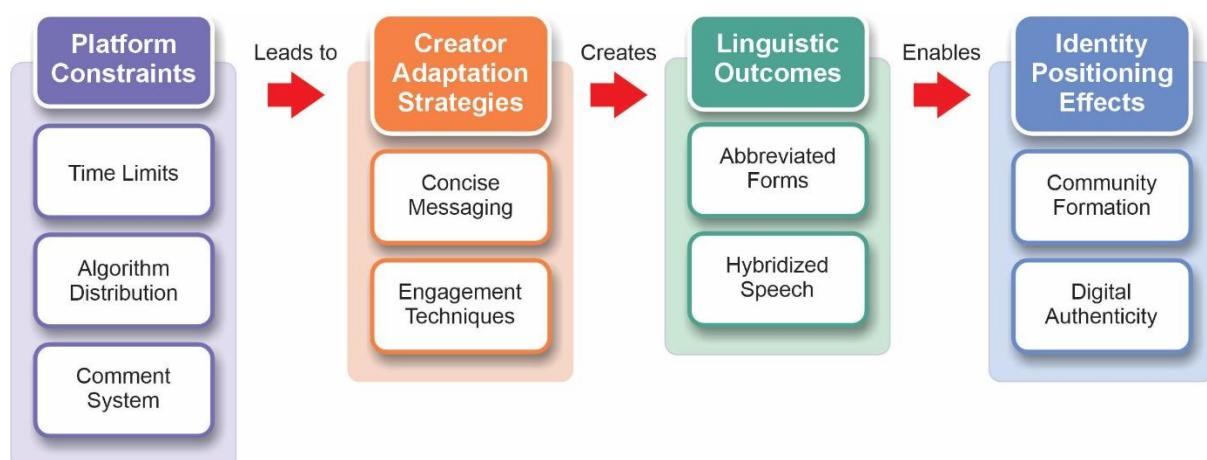


Figure 2. The Relationship Between Platform Constraints and Linguistic Adaptation

These findings support Bucher and Helmond's (2018) argument that platform affordances function as "grammars of action", shaping user behavior in subtle yet powerful ways. For Indonesian creators, TikTok's affordances presented both constraints and opportunities for negotiating linguistic identity, compelling them to develop platform-contingent linguistic strategies that

diverged from practices on other platforms, such as Instagram or YouTube. In this sense, identity work on TikTok cannot be understood apart from its technical architecture, as linguistic choices were simultaneously cultural expressions and algorithmically-mediated performances.

### Linguistic Hierarchy Navigation and Resistance

These practices align with Pennycook's (2020) notion of "linguistic resistance" in digital spaces, wherein marginalized language users assert the value of their linguistic resources against dominant ideologies. In the Indonesian context, such resistance operated simultaneously at the global level (against English dominance) and the national level (against standardized Indonesian hegemony). It was particularly notable how creators leveraged TikTok's global reach to reframe regional languages as cosmopolitan resources rather than parochial remnants. As Creator 14 explained, "When I use Sundanese expressions in videos that go viral internationally, it's a powerful statement, showing that our local language can exist in global spaces."

By coding for moments where creators valorized regional forms, engaged in satirical commentary, or explicitly addressed language hierarchies, the analysis demonstrated that linguistic identity negotiation was not merely implicit but often overtly articulated. This finding highlights TikTok as a site where creators both reproduce and contest linguistic hierarchies through multimodal performance.

### Generational and Educational Variations in Linguistic Strategy

Significant variations in linguistic negotiation strategies emerged across both generational and educational lines. Age-related differences were particularly salient: younger creators (18–25) tended to embrace more hybridized practices, combining Indonesian, English, regional expressions, and digital vernaculars with playful creativity. In contrast, older creators (26 and above) more frequently emphasized regional language preservation and relied on standardized Indonesian to maintain broader comprehensibility. These distinctions suggest that youth-driven digital subcultures prioritize linguistic experimentation, whereas older cohorts adopt strategies that emphasize cultural continuity.

Educational background also shaped linguistic repertoires. University-educated creators demonstrated more complex code-switching patterns, often weaving academic registers into otherwise informal discourse; for example, mixing colloquial Indonesian with English technical jargon or sociocultural theory terms. Meanwhile, creators without higher education tended to favor more monolingual or simplified bilingual forms, prioritizing accessibility over complexity.

From a coding perspective, these variations were identified through instances where creators explicitly framed their language choices in relation to age identity ("As Gen Z, we like to mix languages") or educational positioning ("I explain this with scientific terms so that it's clear"). Such moments demonstrate how generational and educational positioning serve not only as background demographics but also as active resources in linguistic identity negotiation.

Table 3. The Summary of Variations

Creator Demographic	Dominant Linguistic Strategies	Key Characteristics
Younger (18-25 years old)	Extensive hybridization and English integration	Higher digital vernacular density and rapid trend adoption
Older (26+ years old)	Regional language preservation and standardized Indonesian	More metalinguistic commentary and cultural explanation
University-educated	Complex register-switching and academic vocabulary	Greater linguistic metacognition and explicit strategy
Non-university educated	Innovative vernacular creation and dialectal performance	Stronger regional language markers and implicit strategy

These variations suggest that linguistic identity negotiation intersects with broader social positioning related to education, generation, and class. As Bourdieu (1991) theorized in *Language and Symbolic Power*, linguistic practices serve as forms of cultural capital that signal social belonging and distinction. For Indonesian TikTok creators, different linguistic strategies represented distinct forms of capital that could be leveraged to establish credibility within specific audience segments.

Class distinctions surfaced implicitly through access to educational registers and digital literacy, positioning linguistic repertoires as markers of both cultural and economic capital. These demographic variations complement earlier findings on audience adaptation, platform affordances, and linguistic resistance, highlighting that identity negotiation in digital spaces is not merely linguistic but deeply entangled with social stratification.

### **Implications for the Indonesian Sociolinguistic Landscape**

The linguistic negotiation practices observed on TikTok have broader implications for Indonesia's evolving sociolinguistic landscape. Three significant patterns that suggest TikTok may be influencing offline language attitudes and practices emerged: (a) dialect revival, as regional features once declining in urban areas appeared prominently in trending content and sparked renewed interest among young Indonesians; (b) prestige reconfiguration, where non-standard varieties gained symbolic capital through their association with popular creators and viral trends; and (c) translingual normalization, as hybrid practices became increasingly accepted and extended into everyday offline interaction.

These findings build on Tamtomo's (2012) observations of social media as a space for linguistic innovation, but they suggest TikTok may accelerate these dynamics due to its broad youth user base and emphasis on performative creativity. Interview data indicated that creators were consciously aware of their potential influence on language attitudes. Creator 3 reflected, "I know younger followers sometimes copy my way of speaking. That's why I make an effort to incorporate Batak phrases to show our regional languages are still valuable and cool in the digital age."

This comment illustrates creators' reflexive awareness of their role as linguistic influencers, deliberately leveraging TikTok's reach to revalorize regional languages. Taken together, these patterns suggest that TikTok is not merely reflecting existing sociolinguistic hierarchies but actively reshaping them, a development that invites deeper theoretical discussion in the following section.

### **The Emergence of "TikTok Indonesian"**

A particularly notable finding was the emergence of what the authors term "TikTok Indonesian", a recognizable platform-specific vernacular that blended multiple linguistic resources into a relatively coherent and widely recognizable speech style. While not a formalized variety, its recurring features marked it as a distinctive mode of expression associated with TikTok. These included: (a) rapid code-switching between Indonesian and English that indexed cosmopolitan identities; (b) distinctive intonation patterns shaped by viral audio templates; (c) specialized lexical items tied to platform-specific concepts; (d) compressed expressions tailored to TikTok's temporal constraints; and (e) performative emphasis patterns optimized for algorithmic visibility.

Several of these features have begun migrating into other digital media and even face-to-face youth interactions, suggesting TikTok's linguistic practices are influencing broader Indonesian language use. This development resonates with Androutsopoulos's (2013) notion of digital communication as a driver of linguistic change and with scholarship on platform vernaculars. Thus, "TikTok Indonesian" exemplifies the entanglement of platform affordances, algorithmic logics, and user creativity in shaping emergent sociolinguistic forms.

### **Cross-Cultural Digital Literacy Development**

The analysis further revealed that linguistic negotiation on TikTok simultaneously required and cultivated sophisticated forms of cross-cultural digital literacy among Indonesian creators. To succeed in global digital spaces while retaining local resonance, creators developed competencies, such as: (a) awareness of multiple cultural reference systems; (b) sensitivity to diverse linguistic expectations; (c) familiarity with platform-specific communication norms; and (d) the ability to translate meanings across cultural contexts.

These competencies correspond to what Leppänen et al. (2016) conceptualize as digital linguistic citizenship, the capacity to participate effectively in global digital culture through strategic language use. Importantly, for Indonesian creators, these skills were not only tacit but consciously pursued through studying international influencers, experimenting with linguistic styles, and reflecting on audience responses. As one creator explained: "The skills I've developed figuring out

how to communicate effectively across language barriers on TikTok have helped me in my offline work too, especially in international business contexts." This illustrates how platform-based linguistic practices can generate transferable professional capital, extending the significance of TikTok beyond entertainment into domains such as education, career, and intercultural engagement.

### Digital Glocalization and Linguistic Identity

The findings of this study articulate a framework of *Digital Linguistic Glocalization* that captures how content creators negotiate linguistic identities within globally connected yet locally situated digital spaces. This framework identifies four interrelated dimensions of linguistic identity negotiation. First, positional, i.e., how creators locate themselves within multiple linguistic communities. For example, a creator might alternate between Indonesian and Javanese to mark solidarity with both national and local audiences. Second, representational, i.e., how creators depict cultural-linguistic realities to diverse audiences. One creator, for instance, used Sundanese proverbs in humorous skits to highlight regional wisdom in a globally-comprehensible format. Third, interactional, i.e., how creators establish connections across linguistic boundaries. Instances of mixing English slang with Indonesian youth slang demonstrated efforts to connect with both domestic peers and international viewers. Fourth, aspirational, namely how creators project desired future linguistic identities. A Batak creator intentionally incorporated Batak expressions to showcase pride and encourage younger audiences to view regional languages as modern and "cool."

Such framework This model extends existing theories of glocalization (Robertson, 1995; Roudometof, 2016) by specifically addressing linguistic dimensions of global-local negotiation in digital contexts. Unlike earlier approaches that treat language as a backdrop to globalization, this framework emphasizes how linguistic resources are actively mobilized by agents who strategically manage multiple semiotic repertoires. In doing so, Indonesian TikTok creators emerge not merely as passive subjects of globalizing forces but as active cultural brokers shaping new forms of linguistic modernity.

### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Indonesian TikTok creators do not merely participate in global digital culture but actively reshape it through strategic and creative linguistic practices. By negotiating between Indonesian, regional languages, English, and emerging digital vernaculars, they construct identities that are simultaneously local, national, and transnational, revealing linguistic identity as a dynamic process shaped by platform affordances, audience expectations, and sociocultural positioning. These negotiations operate through four interrelated framework, positional, representational, interactional, and aspirational, forming what this study conceptualizes as Digital Linguistic Glocalization that extends existing theories of glocalization by foregrounding language as a central site of agency in global-local interaction. Beyond the Indonesian context, the findings challenge deterministic narratives of linguistic homogenization and instead highlight digital platforms as spaces of innovation, negotiation, and sociolinguistic change, offering broader insight into how multilingual communities of the Global South engage with transnational media environments and how new forms of linguistic modernity continue to emerge in today's era.

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the focus on creators with large followings (100,000+) may overlook the practices of average users whose linguistic strategies may differ. Second, the rapid evolution of TikTok's affordances means that some observations may become outdated as new features emerge. Third, the qualitative approach offers rich detail but cannot measure the prevalence of specific patterns across the broader platform. Future research should address these limitations through: (a) comparative analysis of users across follower-size categories to capture a fuller spectrum of linguistic practices; (b) longitudinal studies tracing how creators adapt to new platform features and shifting audience expectations; (c) mixed-methods designs that integrate qualitative insights with computational linguistics to analyze large-scale datasets; and (d) comparative cross-national studies that examine whether similar forms of digital linguistic glocalization occur in other multilingual societies with different sociolinguistic histories. Additionally, future work should address ethical considerations, including privacy and consent, when analyzing creators' digital traces. There is also potential for

more digital ethnography that captures how online linguistic innovations circulate into offline interactions in schools, families, and peer networks. Taken together, these directions point toward a growing field of inquiry, where Indonesian youth's creative engagements with language on TikTok provide not only entertainment but also important insights into the evolving dynamics of language, culture, and identity in the digital age.

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