JLIC Journal of Language Intelegence and Culture

ISSN: 2716-1277
E-ISSN: 2716-1269
OPEN ACCESS

Journal of Language Intelligence and Culture
Vol. 8 No. 1 (2026): 1-14
Available online at: jlic.uinkhas.ac.id/index/jlic

House of Journal for Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching Training
State Islamic University of Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember
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Code-Switching among Teen Characters in the Film *Eiffel... I'm in Love*

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Keywords:

Bilingualism, code-switching, film analysis, multilingualism, sociolinguistics

DOI: 10.35719/jlic.v8i1.657

Journal History
Submitted: March 2026
Revised: April 2026
Published: May 2026

Abstract

This study looks at how the teenage characters in the Indonesian film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003) switch between Indonesian, English, and French in their daily conversations. Code-switching is a well-known occurrence in bilingual communication, especially among young people who are constantly exposed to global media and multilingual settings. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method, analyzing and categorizing all instances of language switching found into each type of the three main types of code-switching, *viz.* inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. The findings revealed that Intra-sentential switching was the most predominant type of CS found in the dialogues, confirming how smoothly foreign words are incorporated into Indonesian sentences. The CSs served various distinct functions, including expressing emotions, adding emphasis, building social identity, and keeping conversations flowing naturally. The results further indicated that the code-switching was not randomly selected or arbitrary; rather, it reflected the characters' relationships and the cultural milieu of Indonesian youth in the early 2000s. Multilingual dialogue in the film, as highlighted in this study, mirrors authentic bilingual behavior driven by the impact of youth identity within global culture.

How to cite: Nuranaffi, D., & Ardianto, A. (2026). Code-Switching among Teen Characters in the Film Eiffel... I'm in Love. (n.d.). *Journal of Language Intelligence and Culture*, *8*(1). https://doi.org/10.35719/jlic.v8i1.657

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INTRODUCTION

The film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003), directed by Nasri Cheppy, portrays the lives of Indonesian teenagers in the early 2000s, a period notably influenced by Western culture, particularly through language use. The teenage characters in this film frequently engage in linguistic alternation, using Indonesian as the primary language while incorporating English and French expressions, such as *"Je suis amoureuse de toi"* or *"I'm in love"* to articulate emotions, express social attitudes, and construct their modern identities. The repeated alternation between languages displayed by the characters constitutes a linguistic practice commonly identified as code-switching, hereinafter abbreviated as CS. In her seminal work, Poplack (1980) defines CS as the deliberate movement between two languages within a single utterance or conversational sequence. Such shifts often mirror the social relations, emotional nuances, and cultural influences that shape the communicative behavior of adolescents in Indonesia's contemporary multilingual environment.

In Indonesia, a nation characterized by linguistic diversity, CS has become a regular part of everyday conversation, particularly among teenagers speaking different languages shaped by educational institutions, media, and social groups. Studies on bilingualism and sociolinguistics indicate that switching languages encompasses more than just replacing words. In some way, it is frequently utilized to convey identity, transmit social significance, and indicate an individual's role within their community (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Code-switching, or CS, refers to the practice of switching between two or more languages or dialects during a conversation. Poplack (1980) characterizes CS as the blending of linguistic elements from different languages within a single utterance or conversation. This blending can transpire at various levels, including complete phrases or singular words. Poplack emphasizes that CS follows specific rules and is not an arbitrary or haphazard process. Myers-Scotton's (1993) Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model further elucidates that bilingual speakers typically construct their sentences using a dominant language, while the secondary language provides content. This model explains how bilinguals allocate grammatical roles across languages. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, Gumperz (1982) views CS as a mechanism speakers use to manage interactions, shift tone or meaning, and signal changes in their stance or intent. It facilitates conveying emotions or social messages that may not be readily articulated in a single language. Wardhaugh (2015) also suggests that CS serves to express social identity and group affiliation, placing it as an essential tool for communication and social categorization.

Studies on bilingualism suggest that CS embodies cognitive and grammatical patterns. Cacoullos and Travis (2018) contend that bilinguals tend to follow distinct patterns in CS due to their proficiency in both languages. A psycholinguistic study (Yim & Clément, 2021) shows that bilinguals' attitudes toward CS are linked to their identity and integration into different cultures. Further, a neurolinguistic study conducted by Xu *et al.* (2021) shows that bilinguals activate both language systems simultaneously, demonstrating the flexibility of their cognitive processes during language transitions. Interest in CS has also increased in media studies. Androutsopoulos (2012) contends that CS in films is intentional, serving to reflect cultural fusion and evolving identities. Musyken (2000) observes that multilingual dialogue in films often mirrors real-life bilingual communication. This is particularly pertinent in youth-centric films, such as *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003), which employs multilingual dialogue to portray how contemporary teenagers communicate in a globalized world and express their cultural identities.

CS serves numerous functions in communication. Holmes (2013) points out that CS is used to mark social distance, clarify meaning, or express solidarity. Gumperz (1982) adds that CS can also be used to quote, clarify, or separate personal feelings from objective commentary. These functions mentioned in films area are contributed to the narrative by revealing characters' backgrounds emotions, and relationships (Corrius & Zabalbeascoa, 2019). Multilingual characters use CS to navigate their emotions and relationships, as elucidated through the theory proposed by Chen and Liu in their study of the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2023). It proved that CS plays a key role in expressing identity, importantly in multilingual societies such as Indonesia, where it represents as symbols of prestige and cosmopolitanism. Further, Yim and Clément (2021) examined that adolescents use CS to assist bilinguals in balancing local and global influences, while van Hell (2022) noted that CS is a creative means for young Indonesians to express their identity, particularly through the use of foreign language in their social interactions reflecting an urban, global, and expressive identity.

In the film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003), the teenage characters play roles that use CS by means of blending language between Indonesian and foreign language, specifically English and France, to construct the emotional depth and cultural context of Indonesian youth in the early 2000s. García (2024) observed that in Hong Kong films, subtitling frequently masks linguistic diversity, while Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2019) argue that translation can either preserve or obscure the social meaning of CS. All these indicate that film dialogues not only mirror real-world behaviors but also shape viewers' perceptions of multilingual identities.

Muysken (2000) posited that code-mixing (CM) refers to the insertion of lexical items or phrases from one language into another without a complete alteration in syntactic structure, whereas CS involves a transition between languages at the clause or sentence boundaries. Thus, CM and CS exhibit a closely related relationship, frequently displaying overlap in their functions and forms. The overlapping between the two phenomena is not always readily observable, despite their theoretical distinction.

The study conducted by Mulyajati (2023) using digital media on the YouTube Podcast, namely on Deddy Corbuzier's channel, shows the evidence of this overlapping between CM and CS. She elucidated that certain utterances arise from mere incorporation of English lexical items, e.g., "content", "set up", "challenge". On the other time, the conversational segments distinctly reflect CS as speakers shift from one language to another one within a single turn so as to highlight stance, clarify an argument, or build rapport with the audience. This syntactic shift and the social function of the utterance widely delineate the distinction between CM and CS.

In cinematic terms, particularly in *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003), the overlap is notably evident when a character shifts into English or French to convey feelings, express intimacy, or mark a change in interpersonal dynamics. For instance, *"Je suis amoureuse de toi"*, the phenomenon is closer to identify as CS as it occurs at a clause boundary and carries specific pragmatic functions. Additionally, it also occurs as a character inserts single terms, such as *"sorry"*, *"please"*, or short emotional expressions; such utterance can be classified as CM.

Numerous prior studies have explored and discussed the application of CS in film. Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2019) argue that the manner in which film subtitling is translated can either preserve or diminish the social significance of CS. Moreover, Chen and Liu (2023) analyzed the film *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, reporting that both inter-sentential and intra-sentential switches are prevalent. Garcia (2024) found that subtitles often obscure linguistic diversity associate with multilingual identity in Hong Kong cinema.

Androutsopoulos (2012) asserts that in youth films, CS serves as a stylistic device for identity construction, whilst Lee (2019) demonstrated that multilingual dialogues in Korean-American films reflect bicultural identity and generational tensions. In Indonesian film studies, noted by Nugraha and Sari (2020), English in local films often symbolizes modernity and urban youth identity, whilst CS between English and Indonesian in teen romance films expresses intimacy and group solidarity, as mentioned in a study conducted by Wardhani (2021).

Among the numerous studies on CS in films aforementioned herein, only a handful have addressed the use of European languages in Indonesian teen films. Nevertheless, the discourse surrounding trilingual CS involving Indonesian, English, and French in Indonesian youth films remains scarce. This study holds significant academic value as it explores how English and French phrases, such as *"Je suis amoureuse de toi"* in the film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003), can improve and impact the emotional tone and social interactions in the film. This study seeks to fill in a gap in prior existing studies that rarely discuss CS involved in multilingual contexts or consider the presence of French in Indonesian youth films, whilst also identifying the types of CS that occur and exploring the underlying motivations of their use. Ultimately, it aims to demonstrate how multilingual speakers may articulate their youth identity, social relationships, and personal views. By addressing this gap, this study provides insights into how multilingual dialogue fosters character development and shapes relationships in Indonesian cinema.

The film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003) was elected for its depiction of Indonesian teenagers' social behavior during the period as English and other foreign languages are increasingly prevalent in global music, television, and youth culture, rendering it a compelling case for analysis in this study. The teenage characters in the film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003) is notably intriguing due to the incorporation of multiple languages, including Indonesian, English, and French, particularly when contrasted with other teen films from that era. The data enable the analysis on how language switching contributes to the characters' identities, emotions, and social relationships. The characters in *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003) frequently shifts between languages, illustrating the social and cultural influences shaping how young Indonesians communicate today and underscoring its relevance to understanding identity.

This study aims to examine the specific forms of CS occurring in the discourse of teenage characters in the film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003). Accordingly, it addresses several key inquiries, *viz.* the types of CS employed in the film, the linguistic and social functions underlying these switching practices, and the ways in which CS contributes to the construction and portrayal of character identity and interpersonal dynamics within the narrative. Through these inquiries, the study seeks to provide a detailed account of how language alternation operates simultaneously as a communicative strategy and as a symbolic device in the film. It expectedly assists bilinguals and media scholars in understanding the impact of language switching on communication, hence fostering confidence in navigating multilingual contexts.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, which is suitable for understanding the complex forms and meanings of CS in real-world contexts. The primary data were derived from *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003), directed by Nasri Cheppy, starring Shandy Aulia and Samuel Rizal. The film is set in Jakarta, highlighting teenage interactions through characters' dialogue that use Indonesia, English, and French as multilingual expressions. This serves as the main data basis for the analysis, supplemented by secondary sources on bilingualism, multilingualism, and CS. The CS patterns were interpreted using frameworks established by Poplack (1980), Myers-Scotton (1993), Gumperz (1982), and Holmes (2013). The data were collected through several stages, *viz.* watching the film multiple times, transcribing the relevant dialogues, and identifying and categorizing them into types of CS as per Poplack's CS typology: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. These processes also encompassed noting the setting, speakers, topics, and goals of the conversations, followed by a qualitative analysis for their structural and social functions, drawing on Gumperz (1982) and Holmes (2013), with an emphasis on the CS's expressive, referential, and social dimensions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings captured three main types of CS as expressed by Poplack (1980), *viz.* inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. As indicated in Table 1, inter-sentential switching appeared the least dominant by 11.76% in the film spoken by the teenage characters, aiming to emphasize emotional shifts or to signal a change in tone, whilst intra-sentential switching occurred in the second dominant one by 41.18%, indicating that the teenager speakers in the film demonstrate a high level of bilingual fluency between Indonesian, English, and French. Lastly, tag-switching that appeared as much as 47.06%, being the most dominant one, functioning as an expressive and identity marking feature.

Table 1. Code-Switching among Teen Characters in the Film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003)

Types of code-switching	Data (Dialogue)	Percentage (%)
Inter-sentential switching	2	11.76%
Intra-sentential switching	7	41.18%
Tag-switching	8	47.06%
Total	**17**	**100%**

CS in the film reflects the characters' social identities and their connection to global culture. English and French act as markers of cosmopolitanism and sophistication, contributing to the characters' modern and global appeal. The findings suggest that CS transcends mere linguistic tool; it serves as a strategic mechanism for conveying emotions, constructing identities, and establishing social positionality.

Inter-sentential switching

Inter-sentential switching occurs between two different sentences or clauses. For instance, a speaker may produce a sentence in one language and thereafter shift to another language in the following sentence. This type of code-switching displays a clearly visible switching pattern within discourse, rendering the boundary between the languages readily identifiable. The shift typically follows a pattern, such as: Language A → Language B or Language A → Language B → back to Language A.

Uni : "Aku ke kamar mandi dulu ya. ***Don't miss me***."
(Cheppy, 2003, 25:45-25:47)
Tita : "***Valentine's Day in Paris***. Kayak apa ya rasanya?"
(Cheppy, 2003, 95:17-95:22)

A speaker who performs inter-sentential switching is typically regarded as possessing strong bilingual competence, as they must have complete mastery of the grammatical structures of both languages. Moreover, speakers employing this type of code-switching usually have their own motivations. For instance, they may switch languages to underscore a meaning or emotion, signal a topic shift, or adjust their language as per their interlocutor. Additionally, citing other people's words in their original language may also serve as a rationale for this linguistic switching.

Inter-sentential switching, as regards communicative and social purposes, fulfills various objectives serving as aids in organizing thoughts, marking narrative transitions, and highlighting contrasts between ideas. Socially, it contributes to shaping or reinforcing social identity, particularly in youth cultures. Furthermore, inter-sentential switching is frequently used to also achieve pragmatic effects, including softening commands, infusing humor, expressing sarcasm, or mitigating the impact of face-threatening statements by choosing a language perceived as more polite or indirect manners.

Intra-sentential switching

Intra-sentential switching is a type of CS that necessitates speakers to understand the grammatical structures of both Language A and Language B, as well as to identify the appropriate junctures at which a language switch can occur within the uttered sentence. As previously mentioned by Poplack, it requires bilingual proficiency and a substantial degree of linguistic competence among speakers so that they can incorporate foreign language elements into Indonesian sentence structures, exemplified by the use of English lexical items or expressions, e.g., "*fine*," "*stupid*," and "*happy*".

Tita : "Ah, engga kok, gue ***fine-fine*** aja sama Ergi." (Cheppy, 2003, 23:59-24:01)
Uni : "Lu itu bego atau ***stupid*** sih ta?" (Cheppy, 2003, 28:06-28:09)
Tita : "Kok lo ***happy*** sih gue putus?" (Cheppy, 2003, 59:45-59:46)
Adit : "Cheeseburger, french fries, samaaa.." (Cheppy, 2003, 82:36-82:38)
Tita : "Itukan makanan ***favorite*** gue." (Cheppy, 2003, 82:41-82:43)
Adit : "Gimana ***flight*** nya?" (Cheppy, 2003, 97:11-97:12)
Tita : "Tarik nafas dalam-dalam, gue mesti ***cool***." (Cheppy, 2003, 1:28:31-1:28:35)

Intra-sentential switching requires a high level of linguistic proficiency, as speakers need to uphold coherent grammatical structures across both languages. In Indonesian linguistic studies, this type of language shift from one to another is often referred to as "code-mixing" (CM), which frequently overlaps with the notion of CS. Nevertheless, Poplack favors the term "intra-sentential switching", as she rejects the idea that this type of CS indicates a lack of linguistic competence; rather, she argues that it demonstrates advanced grammatical skills, showing that bilingual speakers can systematically and consistently integrate two language systems.

Intra-sentential switching predominantly occurs for several reasons; in this film, the teenage characters used foreign languages, particularly English, to express their identity, signaling their modern, fashionable, and globally conscious personas. At times, nevertheless, speakers decided to use this code-switching to augment meaning, express attitudes, or convey emotional intensity; occasionally, words that exist in another language may be even more precise, expressive, or better suited for conveying specific meaning, such as "*fine*", "*happy*", or "*flight*", which are commonly used in the film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003) or in urban youth contexts.

Tag-switching

Some of the tag-switching that can be found from the movie are as follow:

Ergi : "***Sorry,*** say." (Cheppy, 2003, 05:32-05:33)
Adit : "**HELLOOO**." (Cheppy, 2003, 44:57-44:58)
Tita : "***Sorry***, gua masuk sendiri." (Cheppy, 2003, 45:02-45:04)
Adit : "***Nevermind***, gue kesini butuh bantuan lo." (Cheppy, 2003, 45:54-45:56)
Tita : "***Sorry***, kemarin minjem gabilang." (Cheppy, 2003, 85:07-85:09)
Tita : "Hellooo, ***this is my first date.***" (Cheppy, 2003, 48:07-48:09)
Adit : "***Je suis amoureuse de toi***." (Cheppy, 2003, 1:25:45-1:25:48)
Adit : "***Je veux te rendre heureuse***." (Cheppy, 2003, 1:26:29-1:26:32)

Tag-switching is a variant of code-switching that entails inserting tags, short phrases, idioms, or interjections. These elements are independent, can be readily repositioned within a sentence, and generally do not alter the syntactic structure of the main clause. Due to its lack of adherence to grammatical structure, tag-switching is considered the simplest form of code-switching. Poplack explains that tag-switching serves specific communicative functions, *viz.* expressing emotion, confirming information, softening statements, or maintaining social relationships. It is also driven by social and psychological factors, including identity signaling, wherein foreign-language tags denote modernity or group affiliation. Moreover, tag-switching can signify emotional states, e.g., excitement, hesitation, and flirtation; it is often used to regulate discourse, mark topic shifts, or underscore points without disrupting the conversational flow.

Code-switching Functions

The findings suggest that code-switching in the film serves multiple functions. Firstly, it has an expressive role, with characters switching between English and French to communicate feelings, such as affection, embarrassment, and emotional intensity. For instance, the phrase "*Je suis amoureuse de toi"* conveys romantic feelings more poetically than its Indonesian equivalent. Code-switching also serves a social function, helping characters bond with peers and express shared cultural understanding, especially with peers familiar with English or global slang. Furthermore, it plays a clarifying role, where a phrase from another language reiterates or underscores an idea, as seen in the word *"Lu itu bego atau* stupid *sih ta?"*. CS also reflects of how Indonesian youth associate the multilingualism with intelligence and global engagement, viewing the use of foreign language as a marker of modernity and cosmopolitanism influenced by CS.

Gumperz's (1982) study indicates that CS functions as a contextualization cue, guiding the listener's interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning. This theory aligns with certain expressions found in the film that facilitate conversation flow, such as marking topic changes or alleviating tension, exemplified by phrases like *"Never mind"* or *"sorry"* used to ease the tension in the dialogue of the film *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003). Another function of CS is that it is used for stylistic or humorous purposes, wherein foreign words or phrases are frequently employed to create a lighter or more expressive tone. This is supported by Myers-Scotton's (1993) argument that language serves as a tool for constructing identity and negotiating social status, with foreign languages, in this case is English and French, are often regarded as symbols of modernity and global knowledge.

Discussion

This study shows that CS among the characters in *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003) carries specific social meanings and does not occur randomly. Gumperz (1982) and Myers-Scotton (1993) ever mentioned that language alternation serves both as a communicative strategy and as a marker of social belonging, with the phrases such as "*Je suis amoureuse de toi*" or "*This is my first date*," shown of how the teenage characters blending local and global identities with equalizing between their Indonesian culture with Western ideal of romance along with self-expression. The reflection of the characters' aspirations using the foreign languages in the film can be symbolize as their desire to connect with the worldwide and mark their modern lifestyles, this theory aligned with Lee's (2017) argument that in youth media, code-switching often serves as a marker of aspirational identity. The film demonstrates a rich ladder of code-switching that operates at multiple linguistic and narrative levels, aligning with established frameworks that treat repertoire, characterization, and scene dynamics as analytic lenses for audiovisual texts. Across scenes, characters deploy diverse repertoires that index social distance, generation, gender, and group affiliation, with bilingual dialogue signaling shifting power relations and alliances. This aligns with Androutsopoulos' repertoire–character–scene framework, i.e., repertoire choice structures character meaning, while scene-level switches modulate dramatic tensions and narrative progression (Androutsopoulos, 2012).

Beyond character-level effects, the functions of code-switching in this film appear to encompass expressive, referential, and identity-work dimensions, corroborating typologies from cross-cultural sociolinguistics. Insertions and inter-sentential switches frequently function to foreground cultural identity and group belonging, while intra-sentential and tag switching often serve as affective or humorous cues that ease audience access to characters' social worlds. This mirrors

the functional range reported in multi-language film studies, where code-switching expresses solidarity, marks in-group vs. out-group stance, or quotes cultural references to enhance authenticity and humor within the narrative (Su, 2015; Mekheimr, 2022; Kamariah & Ambalegin, 2019). Some studies emphasize topical reasons for switching, while others highlight identity construction or humor as predominant functions; in this film, the balance appears to be a blend, with narrative progression and character development taking precedence over any single function (Haq, 2026; Meliani, 2022; Zhang, 2022).

Last on this discussion, Chen and Liu (2023) and Corrius and Zabalbeascoa (2019) was once suggests that multilingual dialogue in films often symbolizes hybrid identity and emotional complexity, this theory aligned with the reflection of CS in the film that appear as cultural hybridity among urban youth that emerged in early 2000s Indonesia. The teenage characters in the film do not abandon Indonesian; instead, they combine it with English and French to create flexible and transnational identities that symbolize both an openness to modernity and a continued connection to their local culture. This study also confirms that the CS occurs in the film is a narrative act choice by the director to indicate an era when modernity and globalization were influencing the language of Indonesian youth and not just a reflection of the everyday teenage speech.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that CS in *Eiffel... I'm in Love* (2003) plays a significant role in shaping the teenage protagonists and reflecting the broader sociocultural dynamics of early-2000s Indonesia and to express their identity, emotions, and social equality with confirmation that the use of CS is as a tool to how foreign languages like English and French in this film is shaping the youth identities and navigating the modern life that it's intentionally use in the film dialogue by the teenage characters.

As the data results shown, inter-sentential switching appeared 11.76% as the data showed in the films spoken by the teenage characters use to emphasize emotional shifts or to signal a change in tone, while intra-sentential switching appeared 41.18% meaning that the teenager speakers in the film demonstrate a high level of bilingual fluency between Indonesian, English and French, and lastly tag-switching that appeared 47.06% being the most frequent one that use by the teenage characters as functioned as an expressive and identity marking feature (such as the insertion of *"This is my first date"* or the word *"Je suis amoureuse de toi"*).

The study concludes that the use of CS, in both linguistic and social functions, has multiple purpose, e.g., providing variety, emphasis, and even stylistic rhythm to the dialogue as well as a means of clarification or reiteration, especially when a phrase in English or French adds precision or emotional nuance in the linguistic terms. Other than that, in social functions CS is use as a tool for self-expression to sound modern, educated, and even emotionally sophisticated aligned with group solidarity, and social positioning described as the symbolic use of language for identity construction. Due to the limited data considered in this study, future research may potentially consider other popular Indonesian films to broaden the scope of CS analysis, thereby contributing to a deeper and comprehensive understanding of the use of CS in film industries.

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