Austronesian: Journal of Language Science & Literature
P-ISSN: 2963-1548 E-ISSN 2961-9947
Journal Homepage:
https://www.ojs.wahanapublikasi.com/index.php/austronesian



A Sociolinguistic Study of English Code-Switching in Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Debates

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ARTICLE INFO

Received:
30 July 2026

Accepted:
06 November 2026

Published:
01 December 2026

Keywords:

Sociolinguistics, Code-Switching, Political Discourse, Identity Construction, Indonesian Presidential Debate

ABSTRACT

This study examines English code-switching in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate from a sociolinguistic perspective, focusing on its structural types, communicative functions, and meanings related to identity construction, power representation, and social positioning. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study analyzed utterances produced by Anies Baswedan, Prabowo Subianto, and Ganjar Pranowo using the official debate recording published by the Komisi Pemilihan Umum Republik Indonesia (KPU RI) on YouTube. The data were analyzed using Poplack's (1980) classification of code-switching and Appel and Muysken's (2005) framework of sociolinguistic functions. The findings identified 51 instances of English code-switching, comprising 15 instances from Anies Baswedan, 15 from Prabowo Subianto, and 21 from Ganjar Pranowo. Three major sociolinguistic meanings were identified: power representation (22 instances), social positioning (16 instances), and identity construction (13 instances). Intra-sentential code-switching was the dominant type, whereas inter-sentential code-switching occurred only once and tag-switching was absent. Four communicative functions were identified: referential, expressive, metalinguistic, and poetic or rhetorical, with the referential function being the most prominent. These findings demonstrate that English code-switching serves as a context-dependent linguistic resource for communicating specialized knowledge and constructing political self-representation in formal political discourse.

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.59011/austronesian.5.3.2026.811-821

1. Introduction

Language plays an important role in political communication, functioning not only as a medium for conveying information but also as a resource for constructing identity, negotiating power, and establishing public legitimacy. In multilingual societies such as Indonesia, language choices carry social and symbolic meanings, particularly when English expressions are incorporated into Indonesian political discourse. English is frequently associated with globalization, professional competence, international engagement, and specialized knowledge. Consequently, presidential debates provide an important context for examining how political candidates use language to communicate political ideas, demonstrate expertise, and construct public identities.

One linguistic phenomenon reflecting this relationship between language and social meaning is code-switching, defined as the alternation between two or more languages within communication. Poplack (1980) identifies three types of code-switching: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching. Beyond its structural characteristics, code-switching also serves various communicative and sociolinguistic functions. Appel and Muysken (2005) classify these functions into referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic functions. Recent studies demonstrate that code-switching contributes to identity construction, social affiliation, and interpersonal negotiation (Chau & Lee, 2021; Yim & Clément, 2021). In Indonesia, Fadlilah et al. (2023) also highlight how linguistic choices in political figures' statements reflect group identity and contextual social relationships.

Recent research further emphasizes the relationship between linguistic practices and political identity. Sierra (2023) demonstrates how political identities are constructed through knowledge claims and group positioning, while Liu (2024) highlights how linguistic choices establish institutional identity and authority in political communication. Similarly, Lim and Ng (2025) reveal that language variation in Singaporean political leaders' speeches influences public perceptions of trustworthiness, reliability, and social status. These findings indicate that language is not merely a communicative instrument but also a resource for negotiating political identities, projecting authority, and influencing public perceptions.

In Indonesian political discourse, English expressions may function as symbolic resources for demonstrating international awareness, professionalism, and specialized knowledge, particularly when discussing technology, economics, diplomacy, and governance. However, their sociolinguistic meanings depend on the communicative context and the identities political actors seek to construct. Despite increasing research on code-switching and political discourse, limited attention has been given to how English code-switching operates in Indonesian presidential debates, particularly in relation to identity construction, power representation, and social positioning. Previous studies have examined code-switching in educational and social media contexts (Chau & Lee, 2021; Yim & Clément, 2021), language and identity in Indonesian political communication (Fadlilah et al., 2023), and political identity and institutional discourse (Liu, 2024; Sierra, 2023). Nevertheless, the relationship between the structural types, sociolinguistic functions, and broader meanings of English code-switching in the 2024 Indonesian presidential debates remains insufficiently explored.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates English code-switching employed by Anies Baswedan, Prabowo Subianto, and Ganjar Pranowo in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate. Specifically, it aims to (1) identify and classify the types of English code-switching based on Poplack's (1980) framework; (2) examine their sociolinguistic functions using Appel and Muysken's (2005) framework; and (3) interpret their meanings in relation to identity construction, power representation, and social positioning. By integrating structural,

functional, and sociolinguistic perspectives, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how multilingual language practices operate as strategic resources in contemporary Indonesian political communication.

2. Literature Review

Code-switching refers to the alternation between two or more languages for communicative and social purposes. Poplack (1980) identifies three structural types: inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching, while Appel and Muysken (2005) classify its functions into referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic. Language choices also reflect social relationships, group membership, and contextual factors (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and Holmes (2013) further associate linguistic practices with identity construction and social positioning. Empirical studies by Chau and Lee (2021) and Yim and Clément (2021) demonstrate the role of code-switching in interpersonal negotiation, social affiliation, and cultural orientation, while Chatpunnarangsee and Osatananda (2023) highlight its significance in political speeches and self-presentation.

Language also serves as a resource for negotiating power, ideology, and institutional authority. Fairclough (2015) views language as social practice through which power relations are reproduced, while Chilton (2004) emphasizes the strategic role of political discourse. In Indonesian political communication, Foster and Welsh (2017) examine audience-, topic-, and domain-related factors influencing presidential code-switching. Sravani et al. (2021) investigate code-mixing and code-switching in political speeches, while Hidayat (2025) and Joseph (2025) explore multilingual practices in political podcasts and news discourse. Similarly, Mulyono et al. (2025), Saragih et al. (2025), and Anjari and Prayitno (2025) highlight how politeness and pragmatic strategies contribute to candidates' self-presentation and political communication in Indonesian presidential debates.

Political linguistic practices also contribute to the construction of social identities and institutional authority. Liu (2023) demonstrates how first-person plural pronouns construct institutional identity in Chinese political press conferences, whereas Sierra (2023) examines political identity through knowledge claims, ideological positioning, and group solidarity. These findings reinforce Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) and Fairclough's (2015) perspectives on language, identity, and power. In presidential debates, English expressions may consequently function as symbolic resources for projecting professionalism, international orientation, and specialized knowledge, depending on discussion topics and communicative contexts.

Despite these contributions, the relationship between the structural types, communicative functions, and sociolinguistic meanings of English code-switching in Indonesian presidential debates remains insufficiently explored. Therefore, this study applies Poplack's (1980) structural classification and Appel and Muysken's (2005) functional framework to examine English code-switching in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate, particularly its meanings in identity construction, power representation, and social positioning.

3. Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a sociolinguistic approach to examine English code-switching in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate, focusing on utterances produced by Anies Baswedan, Prabowo Subianto, and Ganjar Pranowo. The data comprised English words, phrases, abbreviations, and clauses embedded in Indonesian utterances, collected from the official debate recording published on the Komisi Pemilihan

Umum Republik Indonesia (KPU RI) YouTube channel on January 7, 2024. The researcher served as the primary instrument, assisted by observation and transcription sheets.

Data were collected through repeated viewing of the recording, identification and documentation of English expressions, transcription of relevant utterances, and verification against the original audiovisual source. The data were analyzed in three stages: (1) classifying structural types of code-switching (inter-sentential, intra-sentential, and tag-switching) based on Poplack (1980); (2) identifying communicative functions (referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic) using Appel and Muysken (2005); and (3) interpreting their sociolinguistic meanings in relation to identity construction, power representation, and social positioning by considering linguistic forms, discussion topics, and communicative contexts. The findings were presented descriptively through tables and analytical explanations. Research trustworthiness was supported through procedural triangulation, involving repeated observation and transcript verification, and theoretical triangulation, integrating perspectives on code-switching, sociolinguistic functions, identity construction, and language and power.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis identified 51 instances of English code-switching produced by the three presidential candidates in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate. As presented in Table 1, Ganjar Pranowo produced the highest number of English code-switching instances (21), followed by Anies Baswedan and Prabowo Subianto, who each produced 15 instances. These findings indicate variations in the frequency of English code-switching among the candidates, suggesting differences in their linguistic choices during political communication.

Table 1. Distribution of English Code-Switching Instances by Candidate

Candidate	Number of Instances
Anies Baswedan	15
Prabowo Subianto	15
Ganjar Pranowo	21
Total	51

The findings further reveal that English expressions were predominantly associated with topics concerning governance, diplomacy, economics, technology, national defense, and international cooperation. The expressions appeared in different linguistic forms, including individual words, phrases, abbreviations, and clauses embedded within predominantly Indonesian utterances. Their occurrence demonstrates that English was incorporated into the candidates' political discourse when discussing specialized concepts and contemporary policy issues. Overall, the distribution illustrates that English code-switching constituted a linguistic feature of the debate, providing a basis for further examination of its structural types, communicative functions, and sociolinguistic meanings.

4.1 Sociolinguistic Meanings of English Code-Switching

The analysis revealed three major sociolinguistic meanings of English code-switching in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate: identity construction, power representation, and social positioning. As presented in Table 2, power representation accounted for the highest number of occurrences (22), followed by social positioning (16) and identity construction (13). These findings suggest that English expressions served various

sociolinguistic purposes within the candidates' political discourse, particularly in communicating specialized knowledge, projecting political identities, and positioning themselves within professional and international contexts.

Table 2. Sociolinguistic Meanings Reflected in English Code-Switching

Sociolinguistic Meaning	Number of Data	Examples	Interpretation
Identity Construction	13	Leadership, Team Player, Climate Crisis	Construction of political identity
Power Representation	22	Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Attack	Representation of authority and expertise
Social Positioning	16	Summit, Platform, Ease of Doing Business	Projection of prestige and professionalism

The expressions presented in Table 2 are representative examples selected from the complete dataset.

Power representation emerged as the most frequent sociolinguistic meaning, accounting for 22 occurrences. Expressions such as Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Attack were associated with specialized knowledge in technology, security, and governance. Their incorporation into Indonesian utterances allowed candidates to communicate technical concepts using internationally recognized terminology. In this context, such expressions may contribute to the projection of expertise and institutional competence, particularly when discussing complex policy issues. This interpretation is consistent with Fairclough's (2015) perspective that language functions as a social practice through which power and institutional authority are represented. Similarly, Sravani et al. (2021), in their investigation of code-switching in political speeches, demonstrate the relevance of linguistic choices to the construction of relationships and power in political discourse. However, the presence of English terminology should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of actual political power. Rather, the findings indicate how linguistic resources may contribute to the discursive representation of knowledge and authority within a particular communicative context.

Identity construction accounted for 13 occurrences, represented by expressions such as Leadership, Team Player, and Climate Crisis. These expressions reflected different aspects of political self-representation, including leadership qualities, collaborative orientations, and awareness of global issues. Their use provided linguistic resources through which candidates could communicate particular characteristics and political orientations. This finding supports Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) argument that identity is continuously constructed and negotiated through interaction. It also corresponds with Sierra's (2023) findings that political identities are discursively constructed through knowledge claims, ideological positioning, and group solidarity. Furthermore, Chatpunnarangsee and Osatananda (2023) found that Thai politicians employed English expressions in their speeches partly to accommodate and appeal to audiences from different backgrounds. Although their research examined a different national and linguistic context, it provides a useful comparison for understanding how code-switching may contribute to political self-presentation. Nevertheless, the present findings indicate potential identity meanings rather than establishing the candidates' actual intentions or audience perceptions.

Social positioning represented 16 occurrences, with expressions such as Summit, Platform, and Ease of Doing Business. These expressions were associated with international diplomacy, institutional activities, and economic development. Their use may position candidates within professional and internationally oriented discourse, particularly when addressing issues involving global cooperation and governance. This interpretation is consistent with Holmes' (2013) explanation that language choices reflect social relationships and status. Further empirical support is provided by Lim and Ng (2025), who found that different varieties of English used in Singaporean political speeches generated different public evaluations of politicians' trustworthiness, reliability, and social status. Although their study focused on language variation rather than code-switching, it demonstrates that linguistic choices in political communication can carry social meanings and influence perceptions of political figures. Therefore, the English expressions identified in the present study may be understood as resources for establishing professional and international positioning, although their actual effects on Indonesian audiences were not directly examined.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that English code-switching in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate involved interconnected sociolinguistic meanings. Power representation was the most frequently identified category, suggesting that English expressions were particularly prominent in discussions involving specialized knowledge and institutional issues. Meanwhile, identity construction and social positioning reflected how linguistic choices could contribute to political self-presentation and professional orientation. These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating the sociolinguistic significance of code-switching in political communication (Sravani et al., 2021; Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023). However, the three categories should not be considered entirely separate because a single English expression may simultaneously communicate technical knowledge, project a particular identity, and establish a professional position. Thus, English code-switching can be understood as a context-dependent linguistic resource through which political actors communicate meanings extending beyond the immediate informational content of their utterances.

4.2 Types and Sociolinguistic Functions of English Code-Switching

The analysis identified different structural types and sociolinguistic functions of English code-switching employed by the presidential candidates in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate. Regarding structural types, intra-sentential code-switching was the most dominant, followed by inter-sentential code-switching, while tag-switching was not identified. In terms of sociolinguistic functions, four categories were observed: referential, expressive, metalinguistic, and poetic or rhetorical functions, with the referential function emerging as the most prominent. Table 3 summarizes these findings.

Table 3. Types and Sociolinguistic Functions of English Code-Switching

Aspect	Findings
Dominant Type	Intra-sentential Code-Switching
Secondary Type	Inter-sentential Code-Switching
Absent Type	Tag-switching
Dominant Function	Referential Function
Other Function	Expressive, Metalinguistic, and Poetic/Rhetorical Functions

The dominance of intra-sentential code-switching indicates that English expressions were predominantly incorporated into Indonesian sentence structures rather than used in separate sentences. Examples included Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Attack, Leadership, and Transfer of Technology. These expressions appeared as individual words or phrases embedded within Indonesian utterances, particularly when candidates discussed technological developments, governance, and national policy issues. Only one instance of inter-sentential code-switching was identified, while no instances of tag-switching were found. This pattern suggests that English was primarily incorporated as a lexical and phrasal resource within predominantly Indonesian political discourse. Poplack's (1980) classification provides a useful framework for understanding these structural patterns. The findings also correspond with Foster and Welsh's (2017) discussion of English code-switching in Indonesian presidential communication, which demonstrates the relevance of examining language alternation within its political and sociocultural context.

The predominance of intra-sentential code-switching may also be associated with the use of internationally recognized technical and institutional terminology. Expressions such as Artificial Intelligence and Transfer of Technology represent concepts frequently encountered in contemporary discussions of technology and governance. Retaining these expressions in English may provide a concise way of referring to specialized concepts within Indonesian sentences. This interpretation is consistent with Appel and Muysken's (2005) explanation that code-switching may serve communicative purposes depending on the linguistic and situational context. Nevertheless, the structural dominance of intra-sentential code-switching does not necessarily indicate that candidates preferred English over Indonesian; rather, it reflects how English expressions were incorporated into their predominantly Indonesian political discourse.

Regarding sociolinguistic functions, the referential function emerged as the most prominent category. Expressions such as Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Attack, Climate Crisis, and Transfer of Technology were used primarily to refer to specific technical, environmental, and institutional concepts. Their use helped communicate subject-specific information in discussions involving contemporary political issues. This finding supports Appel and Muysken's (2005) argument that the referential function occurs when speakers employ another language to convey particular information or concepts. It also corresponds with Sravani et al. (2021), whose research highlights the relevance of code-switching analysis in understanding linguistic practices within political speeches. In this study, the referential function suggests that English terminology served an informational purpose by providing recognizable expressions for discussing specialized subjects.

The expressive function was identified in expressions such as Leadership, Team Player, and Zero Tolerance. These expressions contributed to the emphasis of particular messages and the communication of attitudes or evaluations. Their use illustrates how English expressions may add emphasis to political statements, particularly when candidates discuss leadership qualities, collective responsibility, and policy commitments. This finding is consistent with Appel and Muysken's (2005) conceptualization of the expressive function, which concerns the communication of speakers' feelings, attitudes, and identities. It also relates to Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) perspective that linguistic practices contribute to the construction and negotiation of social identities. However, the interpretation of these expressions as expressive resources should remain contextual, since their meanings may also depend on the surrounding utterances and discussion topics.

The metalinguistic function was observed through abbreviations such as AI and G2G (Government to Government). These expressions demonstrated the use of condensed linguistic forms associated with technological and institutional terminology. Their incorporation into political discourse may facilitate references to concepts that are commonly expressed through English abbreviations in professional and international communication. This finding is consistent with Appel and Muysken's (2005) explanation that the metalinguistic function involves using language to comment on or emphasize linguistic forms themselves. In the present context, the use of abbreviations also reflects candidates' engagement with terminology commonly employed in specialized discourse. Nevertheless, familiarity with such abbreviations should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of greater linguistic or professional competence.

Meanwhile, the poetic or rhetorical function was identified in Anies Baswedan's English closing statement, which was used to create emphasis and strengthen the rhetorical delivery of his concluding message. Unlike the referential function, which primarily communicates information, this function concerns the stylistic and rhetorical organization of language to produce particular communicative effects. Appel and Muysken (2005) associate the poetic function with the aesthetic and stylistic dimensions of language. In political communication, such language choices may contribute to the presentation and emphasis of a concluding statement. However, the present analysis identifies its rhetorical potential rather than establishing its actual persuasive effect on the audience.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that English code-switching in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate exhibited both structural and functional variation. Intra-sentential code-switching dominated the structural classification, while the referential function was the most prominent communicative category. These patterns indicate that English was frequently incorporated into Indonesian utterances to communicate specialized concepts, while other functions contributed to message emphasis, linguistic representation, and rhetorical expression. The findings reinforce the view that code-switching is a context-dependent linguistic practice serving multiple communicative and sociolinguistic purposes (Appel & Muysken, 2005; Poplack, 1980). They also complement previous research on multilingual practices in political communication (Foster & Welsh, 2017; Chatpunnarangsee & Osatananda, 2023; Sravani et al., 2021). Thus, English code-switching in the presidential debate can be understood as a linguistic resource that supports the communication of specialized information while contributing to political self-presentation and rhetorical expression.

5. Conclusion

This study examined English code-switching in the Third 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate from a sociolinguistic perspective, focusing on its structural types, communicative functions, and meanings related to identity construction, power representation, and social positioning. The findings identified 51 instances of English code-switching produced by the three presidential candidates, with Ganjar Pranowo contributing 21 instances, while Anies Baswedan and Prabowo Subianto each produced 15 instances.

The analysis revealed three major sociolinguistic meanings: power representation (22 instances), social positioning (16 instances), and identity construction (13 instances). These findings indicate that English expressions served as linguistic resources for communicating specialized knowledge, projecting political identities, and establishing professional and internationally oriented positions. However, these interpretations reflect the potential

sociolinguistic meanings of language choices rather than definitive evidence of candidates' intentions or audience perceptions.

Regarding linguistic types, intra-sentential code-switching was dominant, while inter-sentential code-switching appeared only once and tag-switching was not identified. Four communicative functions were also observed: referential, expressive, metalinguistic, and poetic or rhetorical, with the referential function being the most prominent. These patterns demonstrate that English expressions were primarily incorporated into Indonesian utterances to communicate specialized concepts, while also serving expressive, metalinguistic, and rhetorical purposes.

This study contributes to sociolinguistic research by demonstrating how English code-switching operates as a context-dependent linguistic resource in formal political discourse. Nevertheless, the research is limited to a single presidential debate and relies on qualitative interpretation without examining candidates' intentions or audience responses directly. Future research could investigate English code-switching across different political communication contexts, including campaign speeches, interviews, political debates, and social media, as well as employ comparative approaches to explore how multilingual practices vary across political actors and sociocultural settings.

Acknowledgements
The authors would like to express their gratitude to the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Persatuan Guru 1945 NTT, for its support throughout the research process. The author also extend their sincere appreciation to the supervisors, Deby Marisa Malelak and Oce Antipas Langkameng, for their guidance, feedback, and valuable suggestions.

Funding
This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research article.

Authors' Contribution
Margaretha Theodora To: Investigation, data curation, formal analysis, and writing—original draft.
Deby Marisa Malelak: Supervision, validation, and writing—review and editing.
Oce Antipas Langkameng: Supervision, validation, and writing—review and editing.

Statement of the Use of AI
Artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to assist with language refinement, grammar checking, and manuscript editing. The research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and conclusions were conducted by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the content, integrity, and accuracy of this manuscript.

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