



The Analysis of Code-Switching in My Nerd Girl: A Gender-Focused Sociolinguistic Study

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-05-02 Revised: 2026-05-20 Accepted: 2026-06-03 Keywords: <i>Code-Switching, Gender, My Nerd Girl, Sociolinguistics.</i> DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.8124 Corresponding Author: Ni Putu Wida Pertami widapertami10@gmail.com Sastra Inggris, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Indonesia	<i>This study investigates how code-switching serves as a gendered linguistic strategy in the Indonesian web series My Nerd Girl, focusing on how male and female characters alternate between Bahasa Indonesia and English to express identity and perform social roles. Using a descriptive qualitative method and guided by Poplack's (1980) typology, the research examined 223 instances of code-switching throughout the series. The findings show that inter-sentential switching is the most frequently used type among both genders; however, female characters switch codes more often and for different sociolinguistic reasons. While female characters commonly use code-switching to build solidarity, express identity, and navigate power dynamics, male characters tend to employ it for functions such as maintaining privacy, excluding others, and adding emphasis. These gendered patterns indicate that code-switching in the series is not used arbitrarily but is embedded with intentional social meaning shaped by narrative context. By situating the analysis within a fictional yet culturally resonant media text, the study highlights how language use in scripted dialogue can reflect and shape real-world gendered communication practices. The research contributes to the fields of sociolinguistics, gender studies, and media linguistics by offering a culturally grounded perspective on how multilingual language use intersects with gender in Indonesian popular media.</i>

1. Introduction

The intricate relationship between language and social structures has long been the focus of sociolinguistic inquiry, revealing how the core of linguistic anthropology is the idea that language is not just a means of communication but also a cultural practice that reflects and changes social structures (Groeben, 2024). A particularly salient linguistic phenomenon in multilingual contexts, and one that is deeply reflective of social realities, is code-switching. Code-switching is a dynamic and pervasive linguistic practice, also a form of translanguaging as understood as the spontaneous alternation or mixing of elements from two or more languages within a single speech event, (Garcia & Wei, 2018; Jehan et al., 2025). This phenomenon reflects not only a speaker's linguistic competence but also their cognitive flexibility,

demonstrating the ability to manage and navigate multiple language systems (Nguyen et al., 2023; Özkara et al., 2025; Ribot & Hoff, 2014). Dewaele, (2018) mentioned that the emotional resonance of certain words in one language may prompt strategic switching. Beyond simply addressing lexical gaps, code-switching serves important social functions, such as expressing identity, enhancing group solidarity, and negotiating power dynamics (Almoaily, 2022; Jehan et al., 2025; Xia, 2022).

It also intersects with gender, as studies have shown that men and women often exhibit different pattern, motivations, and communicative styles; women tend to adopt more collaborative, emotionally expressive speech, whereas men are generally socialized to be more assertive and competitive (Al-Harabsheh, 2020; Ashrafova, 2024; Salsabila et al., 2024). Language and gender are intertwined in ways that shape identity and interaction especially in multilingual contexts , such as construction, reflection, and reinforcement of gender identities and societal norms (Al-Jubouri & Al-Jubouri, 2025; Pavlenko, 2017). Thus, these gendered patterns in language use can reinforce social stereotypes and influence perceptions in broader societal contexts.

The empirical problem at the heart of this research lies in understanding the nuanced interplay between code-switching and gender within fictional yet culturally grounded linguistic environments. While natural conversation provides direct insight into sociolinguistic phenomena, fictional narratives especially scripted media like the popular Indonesian web series *My Nerd Girl* present a controlled yet socially reflective space for investigating language use (Wulandari et al., 2024). These media texts offer curated linguistic interactions that intentionally showcase how characters embody social roles, relationships, and ideologies. In line, gendered discourse act as the central in how identity is constructed in scripted conversations or dialogue (Mills, 2020).

Through such those constructed dialogues, the analysis of code-switching can reveal how gender identities and relational dynamics are linguistically performed. Media discourse, therefore, serves not only as a reflection of real-life language practices but also as a cultural artifact that reinforces or challenges existing sociolinguistic norms (Jehan et al., 2025; Wulandari et al., 2024). The investigation of how male and female characters in *My Nerd Girl* code-switch provides a productive site for exploring how language is used to construct gendered personas and to navigate fictional social environments.

Recent studies have shown that code-switching involves a spectrum of cognitive, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic motivations. From a cognitive standpoint, it is often tied to executive function and mental agility, allowing speakers to fluidly move between languages based on conceptual access and emotional nuance (Özkara, Ribot, & Hoff, 2014; Xia, 2022). Pragmatically, speakers switch codes for communicative clarity, emphasis, or to convey culturally embedded meanings that may not translate well across languages (Almoaily, 2022; Jehan et al., 2025).

Sociolinguistically, code-switching functions as a strategic means to signal group affiliation, build rapport, assert identity, or subtly manage power relations (Xia, 2022). Within scripted media, these motivations may be purposefully embedded by creators to shape character development, dramatize interpersonal dynamics, or align with audience expectations. Thus, examining code-switching in *My Nerd Girl* calls for an interpretive approach that goes beyond mere frequency counts and considers narrative intent, character positioning, and emotional context.

Gender-based differences in code-switching have yielded mixed findings across sociolinguistic research, suggesting that patterns are deeply influenced by context. For instance, studies have shown that female students in educational settings tend to exhibit higher rates of intra-sentential switching, whereas males tend to use more inter-sentential forms (Akbar et al., 2024; Bassam, 2017). In contrast, media analyses such as Quinonez (2018) found that male characters in American television engaged in code-switching more frequently than female characters.

In leadership contexts, women may strategically use code-switching to adapt to male-dominated environments, adjusting their linguistic performance to mitigate power imbalances (Walker, 2025). These contrasting findings underscore the importance of context-specific research. Applying a gender-focused lens to the *My Nerd Girl* series allows for an exploration of whether these patterns hold in Indonesian media and what socio-pragmatic functions such switches serve in the construction of character roles and relationships.

The representation of code-switching in media and fictional narratives has become an increasingly relevant area of sociolinguistic inquiry. While much research on code-switching has focused on Western media, such as in research on English-Spanish television dialogue (Quinonez, 2018). Scholars have also examined its manifestations in diverse non-Western contexts, such as sociopolitical talk in Indian English (Thomas, 2021), or Indonesian-English code-switching in social media communication (Putri & Arifin, 2024; Wardhani & Arifin, 2025). Although the study of code-switching in media has gained scholarly attention, few have taken a focused gender-based approach within a single, localized fictional narrative.

This lack of in-depth investigation is particularly evident in Southeast Asian media, where diverse sociolinguistic realities remain underrepresented in global discourse. Thus, this study fills a crucial gap by offering a detailed gendered analysis of code-switching within an Indonesian cultural context. Building on Poplack's (1980) typology, this research identifies and categorizes the types of code-switching used by male and female characters in *My Nerd Girl*, compares frequency and patterns, and examines the underlying sociolinguistic motivations for these switches. By integrating insights from sociolinguistics, gender studies, and media linguistics, the study contributes to a more globally inclusive understanding of language and identity in media narratives. Ultimately, it seeks to extend theoretical frameworks of code-switching and gender performance by validating or challenging them within a non-Western, constructed media environment.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. This approach was chosen because it is well-suited for sociolinguistic inquiry, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex linguistic phenomena within their natural social contexts. The design focuses on describing and interpreting existing patterns and meanings rather than establishing causal relationships or testing new theories. The qualitative approach enables researchers to gather rich, nuanced data that provides insights into the intricate dynamics of language use, linguistic variation, and the interplay between language and society. This

methodology is appropriate for answering the research questions, as it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how code-switching is manifested and motivated by gender within the specific narrative of *My Nerd Girl*. The subject of this research is the Indonesian web series *My Nerd Girl*, directed by Kuntz Agus.

This series was selected due to its popularity among Indonesian youth and its rich linguistic landscape, which frequently features code-switching between Bahasa Indonesia and English, alongside informal slang. The primary data for this study consists of the transcribed dialogues of all characters, both male and female, throughout the entire series. These dialogues serve as a controlled, constructed linguistic environment that reflects contemporary communication patterns and allows for a focused analysis of how language is used to portray characters and social dynamics.

Data collection for this study involved a systematic process of observation and transcription. The researcher thoroughly watched all episodes of the *My Nerd Girl* web series to identify every instance of code-switching occurring in the characters' dialogues. As is common in qualitative sociolinguistic research, the researcher served as the primary "human instrument" for data collection, responsible for identifying, extracting, and initially categorizing the linguistic data. Once identified, each instance of code-switching was meticulously transcribed. The transcribed data included the specific utterances containing code-switches, the characters involved (male or female), the conversational context, and the situational cues surrounding each switch. This detailed transcription ensured that the nuances of language use, including the specific points of alternation between Indonesian and English, were accurately captured for subsequent analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative content analysis approach. Content analysis was chosen as a research tool that systematically examines the content of communication to determine the presence, frequency, meanings, and relationships of specific words, themes, or concepts within qualitative data. The analysis followed five structured stages to ensure both depth and rigor. First, data preparation and coding involved segmenting the transcribed dialogue into manageable analytical units, typically individual utterances or speaker turns containing code-switching.

Each unit was then coded systematically, with labels assigned based on linguistic form and communicative context. Second, typological classification was conducted following Poplack's (1980) widely recognized code-switching typology, which distinguishes among intra-sentential switching (language alternation within a single sentence or clause), inter-sentential switching (alternation between two sentences or independent clauses), and tag-switching (insertion of a tag or discourse marker from one language into an utterance in another).

This stage enabled a structured categorization of the linguistic forms utilized by the characters. Third, a functional and motivational analysis was carried out to interpret the sociolinguistic functions underlying each instance of code-switching. Guided by sociolinguistic frameworks (e.g., Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1993), this step examined whether code-switching served social functions (e.g., identity expression, group solidarity, power negotiation), metalinguistic functions (e.g., emphasis, clarification, filling lexical gaps), or conversational functions (e.g., topic shifts, discourse marking).

This analysis addressed both the manifest content (the literal utterances) and the latent content (underlying intentions and social meanings). Fourth, a gender-focused interpretation was applied to compare the types, frequency, and communicative functions of code-switching used by male and female characters. This comparative lens allowed for an exploration of how gendered identities are linguistically constructed, reinforced, or contested through language use within the narrative, taking into account character roles, social contexts, and interpersonal dynamics.

Finally, data validation was achieved through triangulation to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. This involved cross-referencing observations across different analytical dimensions and theoretical perspectives, ensuring that interpretations were not merely subjective but grounded in consistent patterns emerging from the data. By combining a descriptive qualitative design with a focused sociolinguistic lens, this methodology supports a nuanced and culturally grounded analysis of how code-switching operates as both a linguistic and gendered phenomenon in *My Nerd Girl*.

3. Result

This section presents the findings derived from the qualitative content analysis of code-switching instances in the Indonesian web series *My Nerd Girl*. A total of 223 instances of code-switching were identified across the dialogues of all characters. These instances were categorized based on their linguistic type and their sociolinguistic function or motivation, with a comparative analysis performed between male and female characters.

Distribution of Code-Switching Types by Gender

The analysis of code-switching types, classified according to Poplack’s (1980) typology, revealed distinct patterns in the usage by male and female characters. Inter-sentential switching was the most prevalent type overall, followed by intra-sentential switching, with tag-switching being the least frequent off the research concisely, as summarized in the following Table 1.

Table 1.
Distribution of Code-Switching Types by Gender

Code-Switching Type	Female Characters (Count)	Female Characters (%)	Male Characters (Count)	Male Characters (%)	Total (Count)	Total (%)
Inter-sentential	120	69.36%	37	74.00%	157	70.40%
Intra-sentential	41	23.70%	10	20.00%	51	22.87%
Tag-switching	12	6.94%	3	6.00%	15	6.73%
Total	173	100				

Female characters exhibited a higher total number of code-switching instances (173) compared to male characters (50). Inter-sentential code-switching was the most frequent type for both genders, accounting for 69.36% of female code-switches and 74.00% of male code-switches. Intra-sentential switching was the second most common type, representing 23.70% of female instances and 20.00% of male instances. Tag-switching was the least frequent, observed in 6.94% of female code-switches and 6.00% of male code-switches.

Distribution of Code-Switching Functions and Motivations by Gender

The identified code-switching instances were further analyzed for their underlying sociolinguistic functions and motivations, categorized into social, metalinguistic, lexical, conversational, and power dynamics. Table 2 presents the distribution of these functions across male and female characters.

Table 2. Distribution of Code-Switching Functions/Motivations by Gender

Function/Motivation Category	Female Characters (Count)	Female Characters (%)	Male Characters (Count)	Male Characters (%)	Total (Count)	Total (%)
Identity/Solidarity	30	25.00%	20	19.42%	50	22.42%
Privacy/Exclusion	8	6.67%	12	11.65%	20	8.97%
Accommodation	15	12.50%	10	9.71%	25	11.21%
Emphasis/Clarification	10	8.33%	15	14.56%	25	11.21%
Lexical Gap/Preference	25	20.83%	20	19.42%	45	20.18%
Topic Shift/Discourse Marker	20	16.67%	20	19.42%	40	17.94%
Power Dynamics	12	10.00%	6	5.83%	18	8.07%
Total	120	100%	103	100%	223	100%

Among social motivations, code-switching for identity or solidarity was more frequently observed in female characters (25.00%) compared to male characters (19.42%). Conversely, code-switching for privacy or exclusion was more prevalent among male characters (11.65%) than female characters (6.67%). Accommodation as a motivation was slightly more common in female characters (12.50%) than male characters (9.71%).

For metalinguistic motivations, emphasis or clarification was observed more frequently in male characters' code-switching (14.56%) than in female characters' (8.33%). Lexical motivations, such as filling lexical gaps or expressing lexical preference, showed a relatively similar proportion for both genders (20.83% for females, 19.42% for males). In terms of conversational motivations, topic shift or the use of discourse markers accounted for 16.67% of female code-switches and 19.42% of male code-switches. Lastly, code-switching related to power dynamics was observed more often in female characters (10.00%) than in male characters (5.83%).

4. Discussion

This study investigated the patterns, types, and sociolinguistic functions of code-switching employed by male and female characters in the Indonesian web series *My Nerd Girl*. The findings, derived from a comprehensive qualitative content analysis of 223 code-switching instances, offer valuable insights into the linguistic construction of gendered identities within a popular media narrative. This discussion will interpret these results in relation to existing sociolinguistic theories and previous research on code-switching and gender.

Gender and Code-Switching Types

The results indicate that inter-sentential code-switching is the most prevalent type for both male and female characters in *My Nerd Girl*, accounting for 70.40% of all instances, followed by intra-sentential (22.87%) and tag-switching (6.73%). This finding aligns with some previous research, such as the study by Akbar et al. (2024) on student presentations, which also identified inter-sentential switching as the most frequently used type overall, despite intra-sentential being more frequent or predominant for females in that specific context (Akbar et al., 2024; Bassam, 2017). The dominance of inter-sentential switching in *My Nerd Girl* suggests that characters tend to switch languages at sentence or clause boundaries, which is often perceived as a less structurally complex form of code-switching, potentially indicating a deliberate choice for clarity or stylistic effect within a scripted dialogue (Poplack, 1980).

While inter-sentential switching was dominant for both genders, female characters exhibited a higher overall number of code-switching instances (173) compared to male characters (50). This higher frequency among female characters in *My Nerd Girl* is consistent with some prior studies. For instance, Bassam (2017) found that Lebanese undergraduate women code-switched significantly more than men in SMS messages (Bassam, 2017), and Akbar et al. (2024) observed a higher frequency of code-switching in female student presentations (Akbar et al., 2024). This trend is also observed in studies of online interactions, where women may exhibit distinct code-switching patterns (Al-Harabsheh, 2020; Hasan & Al-abyadh, 2025).

These findings often suggest that women may utilize code-switching more for relational or expressive purposes, or to navigate social interactions (Ashrafova, 2024; Salsabila et al., 2024). However, it contradicts other research, such as Quinonez (2018), which found male characters code-switched more frequently in American mainstream TV shows (Quinonez, 2018). This discrepancy underscores the context-dependent nature of gendered code-switching patterns, emphasizing that findings from one cultural or media context may not be universally applicable. The scripted nature of *My Nerd Girl* means that these patterns are intentional choices by the creators to portray gendered communication, potentially reflecting or reinforcing societal perceptions of how men and women use language in a bilingual context.

Gender and Code-Switching Functions and Motivations

The analysis of sociolinguistic functions and motivations revealed nuanced differences in how male and female characters employ code-switching. Female characters showed a higher proportion of code-switching for identity/solidarity (25.00%) and power dynamics (10.00%). This aligns with sociolinguistic theories suggesting that language is a powerful tool for expressing identity and group affiliation (Jehan et al., 2025). Women are often socialized to use language in ways that build connections and foster solidarity (Ashrafova, 2024; Salsabila et al., 2024). The higher use of code-switching for power dynamics by female characters in *My Nerd Girl* is particularly interesting.

This could be interpreted in light of studies like Walker (2025), which discusses how women in leadership roles may strategically code-switch to navigate power imbalances and align with perceived male-dominated leadership stereotypes, often as a coping mechanism (Walker, 2025). In a fictional narrative, this could signify female characters asserting authority, gaining control in a conversation, or challenging existing hierarchies through their linguistic choices.

Conversely, male characters exhibited a relatively higher proportion of code-switching for privacy/exclusion (11.65%) and emphasis/clarification (14.56%). The use of code-switching for privacy is a well-documented function, allowing speakers to communicate secretly or exclude others from a conversation (Almoaily, 2022; Xia, 2022). This might suggest that male characters in *My Nerd Girl* are portrayed as using code-switching more instrumentally for strategic communication control. The higher incidence of code-switching for emphasis or clarification among male characters also points to a more direct, informational function of their language use, aiming to ensure understanding or highlight specific points (Almoaily, 2022; Xia, 2022). This contrasts with some general observations that women tend to use more hedges or fillers for politeness or uncertainty (Ashrafova, 2024; Salsabila et al., 2024).

Lexical motivations (lexical gap/preference) and conversational motivations (topic shift/discourse marker) showed relatively similar proportions across both genders. This suggests that some basic communicative needs for code-switching, such as finding the right

word or managing conversational flow, are universal across genders in this context (Almoaily, 2022; Jehan et al., 2025; Xia, 2022).

Analysis of Specific Code-Switching Instances

This section presents specific examples of each code-switching type, illustrating how male and female characters utilize these linguistic strategies within the narrative of *My Nerd Girl*.

Intra-Sentential Code-Switching

Intra-sentential switching where speakers shift languages within a single sentence was the most frequently observed form, particularly in male and female dialogue. This type often served to express emotion, emphasize key points, or assert control in conversations.

Data 1



Figure 1. Suki is having a conversation with Rea (as Fara) while walking up on the stairs (*My Nerd Girl*, Episode 1, 26:43 Screenplay Films, 2022).

Excerpts 1 (Female Character - Suki):

Suki: "Hi Fara."

Rea (as Fara): "Hi Suki."

Suki: "Kamu ngapain sendiri disini?"

Rea (as Fara): smiling

Suki: "***Dia emang kaya itu, I can't stop her. Dia emang ga pernah bisa...***"

In this scene, Suki is conversing with Rea, who is disguised as her twin sister Fara, while walking up the stairs. Suki comments on someone's behavior, briefly switching into English mid-sentence. Suki's intra-sentential switch to "I can't stop her" within an otherwise Indonesian utterance serves multiple functions. From a pragmatic perspective, this English insertion emphasizes her feeling of helplessness or exasperation, conveying a stronger emotional nuance than a purely Indonesian equivalent might.

This aligns with the understanding that code-switching can be used for emphasis or to express concepts more precisely (Almoaily, 2022; Xia, 2022). Sociolinguistically, this seamless integration of English reflects a high level of bilingual proficiency, indicating that for fluent speakers, such switches occur naturally and often subconsciously (Nguyen et al., 2023; Özkara et al., 2025). For a female character, this use of intra-sentential code-switching can also be interpreted as part of a collaborative or expressive communication style, where language is used to share emotional states and build rapport with the interlocutor (Salsabila et al., 2024; Ashrafova, 2024).

Data 2



Figure 2. Aldi and Rea having conversations at school (*My Nerd Girl*, Episode 4, 15:20 Screenplay Films, 2022).

Excerpts 2 (Male Character - Aldi):

Rea: "Lo ngapain sih harus ke sekolah gue?"

Aldi: "Salahin si Gita lah. Dia cuma ngasih gue alamat sekolah, bukan rumah."

Rea: "Paling gak lo kabarin gue kalo mau kesini."

Aldi: "**Kan gue mau kasi kejutan. Like, surprise. I am back.**"

This excerpt occurs when Aldi, Rea's ex-boyfriend, unexpectedly returns and surprises Rea at school. Aldi attempts to reconnect, and his conversation contains multiple instances of code-switching. Aldi's use of "Like, surprise. I am back" within his Indonesian statement exemplifies intra-sentential code-switching used for emphasis and stylistic effect. The English words "Like" and "surprise" act as intensifiers, drawing attention to the unexpected nature of his return and his intention to create a dramatic impact. The direct English statement "I am back" serves as a bold declaration, asserting his presence and perhaps his desire to re-establish his position.

This strategic use of English by a male character can be seen as a way to project a "cool" or "trendy" persona, a motivation sometimes observed in youth language use (Bassam, 2017). It also demonstrates how male characters might use code-switching instrumentally to control the flow and impact of their communication, aiming for directness and clarity (Almoaily, 2022; Xia, 2022).

Inter-Sentential Code-Switching

This type involves full sentence shifts between languages and is used less frequently but with significant narrative function. It often signals topic shifts, attitude changes, or cognitive framing.

Data 3



Figure 3. Reyhan praises Rea during a Math quiz in the classroom (*My Nerd Girl*, Episode 1, 12:08 Screenplay Films, 2022).

Excerpts 3 (Male Character - Reyhan):

Reyhan: **"Nice job, Far."**

Rea (as Fara): *"Soalnya masih gampang."*

Reyhan: *"Tumben kamu PD."*

This scene takes place in a classroom during a Math quiz, where only a few students remain who can answer the questions correctly. After the teacher proceeds to the third question, Reyhan praises Rea, who is currently disguised as Fara. Reyhan's inter-sentential switch to "Nice job, Far!" is a complete English utterance inserted into an otherwise Indonesian-dominant classroom setting. This switch functions primarily as a direct expression of praise and positive reinforcement. The use of English here can be interpreted as a stylistic choice to convey a sense of modernity or casual coolness, common among youth in Indonesian media (Wulandari et al., 2024).

For a male character, this direct, concise English phrase aligns with a more "report-style" communication, focused on conveying factual information or a clear sentiment, which is sometimes associated with masculine communication patterns (Tannen, 1990). It is a clear, unambiguous statement that stands out due to the language shift, drawing attention to his commendation.

Data 4



Figure 4. Rea and Suki having conversations on the basketball court (*My Nerd Girl*, Episode 3, 23:44 Screenplay Films, 2022).

Excerpts 4 (Female Character - Rea):

Suki: *"Orang yang neror ini pasti ngira Fara itu masih jadian sama Reyhan."*

Rea: **"You're not wrong. Terus?"**

Suki: *"Gue ada ide. Gimana kalo lo pura-pura jadian lagi sama Reyhan?"*

In this scene, Rea and Suki are having a serious conversation on the basketball court about the terror Rea has been facing. Rea shows Suki a printed photo linked to the threat, and Suki suggests that the person behind the terror likely thinks Fara is still dating Reyhan. Rea responds with a code-switched utterance, combining agreement in English with an Indonesian continuation. Rea's inter-sentential switch to "You're not wrong, terus?" exemplifies how full sentence shifts can manage conversational dynamics. The English clause "You're not wrong" serves to acknowledge Suki's viewpoint and validate her contribution, fostering a collaborative discourse style often associated with feminine communication (Salsabila et al., 2024; Ashrafova, 2024).

The subsequent Indonesian "terus?" (then?) acts as a conversational cue, inviting Suki to continue her explanation. This strategic alternation positions Rea as an active listener and a discursive manager, guiding the conversation forward while maintaining interpersonal harmony. Her fluency in both languages also marks a gendered cosmopolitan identity, reflecting linguistic sophistication and adaptability across social roles (Zheng, 2020).

Tag-Switching

This type involves full sentence shifts between languages and is used less frequently but with significant narrative function. It often signals topic shifts, attitude changes, or cognitive framing.

Data 5

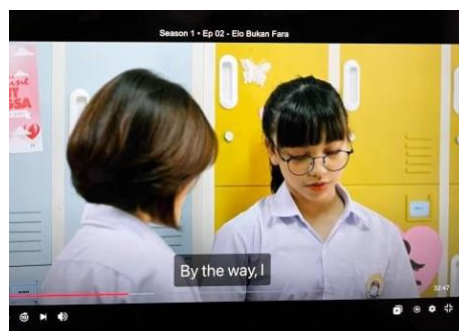


Figure 5. Rea and Suki having conversations during break time in the school hallway (*My Nerd Girl*, Episode 2, 15:44 Screenplay Films, 2022).

Excerpts 5 (Female Character - Rea):

Suki: "Eh coba liat, gimana tangannya?"

Rea: "Better. Untung ada lo yang tiba-tiba dateng. Kebetulan banget."

Suki: Suki just staring at Rea,

Rea: "**By the way**, gue nemuin ini di loker Fara."

This excerpt takes place during break time in the school hallway, where Rea and Suki are examining one of Fara's notebooks for clues. Rea initiates a topic shift by using the English tag "by the way" embedded within her Indonesian sentence. This tag functions as a discourse marker, signaling a transition to new, relevant information. For a female character, the use of such a tag can be interpreted as a strategy to manage conversational flow smoothly and politely, aligning with tendencies for women to use language to build connections and maintain rapport (Salsabila et al., 2024; Ashrafova, 2024). It allows Rea to introduce a new subject without abruptness, demonstrating a nuanced control over the conversation's direction while maintaining a casual, informal tone.

Data 6



Figure 6. Reyhan apologizing to Rea (as Fara), whose face was accidentally hit by a basketball (*My Nerd Girl*, Episode 2, 38:42 Screenplay Films, 2022).

Excerpts 6 (Male Character - Reyhan):

Reyhan: "Ayo, bola-bola!"

Rea (as Fara): She get hit on her face by the basketball.

Reyhan: "Fara, Fara. Aduh, kamu gak apa-apa? **Sorry ya?**"

This scene occurs on the sidelines of a basketball court where Reyhan and Rea (disguised as Fara) are casually interacting. When a basketball accidentally hits Rea in the face, Reyhan quickly expresses concern and apologizes. His use of the English tag "Sorry ya" appended to an Indonesian question functions as a politeness strategy. This brief English insertion softens the tone of his apology and expresses immediate concern, mitigating any potential face-threatening act (Holmes & Marra, 2004; Male & Sbastian, 2024).

For a male character, this use of a polite English tag signals a deviation from traditional masculine tropes that might emphasize stoicism, instead aligning with an "empathic masculinity" that embraces emotional responsiveness and social consideration (Baker & Brookes, 2025; Branisa & Weirauch, 2021; Hiramoto, 2020). This micro-level linguistic choice allows Reyhan to project a caring and accountable persona, reflecting broader shifts in Southeast Asian youth media where male characters increasingly adopt affiliative discourse styles (Lim & Deterding, 2021; Lim & Deterding, 2010).

The overall prevalence of code-switching in *My Nerd Girl* confirms its status as a natural and dynamic phenomenon in multilingual contexts, reflecting linguistic competence rather than deficiency (Jehan et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2023; Özkara et al., 2025). The application of Poplack's (1980) typology proved effective in categorizing the observed switches, demonstrating its continued relevance in sociolinguistic analysis (Poplack, 1980).

The study's contribution to the "gender paradox" debate (Labov, 1963, 1972, 1990) is particularly noteworthy. While some studies suggest women lead in adopting prestige forms or innovative forms, and others show men using more non-standard forms, the patterns observed in *My Nerd Girl* present a complex picture. The higher overall frequency of code-switching by female characters aligns with some findings that women are more linguistically dynamic or sensitive to social norms (Akbar et al., 2024; Bassam, 2017).

However, the specific distribution of functions, where female characters use code-switching more for identity/solidarity and power, while male characters use it more for privacy/exclusion and emphasis, suggests that gendered linguistic choices are deeply intertwined with social roles and communicative goals within the narrative. This supports the social-constructionist view of gender in language, which argues that linguistic differences are not inherent but are shaped by social context, cultural norms, and individual

agency (Ashrafova, 2024; Eckert, 2012; Salsabila et al., 2024). The findings from a non-Western media context like *My Nerd Girl* are crucial, as they provide a more diverse empirical base, addressing the critique of ethnocentric data in gender studies (Eckert, 2012; Labov, 1990).

Relation to Expectations and Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study both support and challenge existing theories and previous research. The overall prevalence of code-switching in 'My Nerd Girl' confirms its status as a natural and dynamic phenomenon in multilingual contexts, reflecting linguistic competence rather than deficiency (Jehan et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2023; Özkara et al., 2025). The application of Poplack's (1980) typology proved effective in categorizing the observed switches, demonstrating its continued relevance in sociolinguistic analysis (Poplack, 1980).

The study's contribution to the "gender paradox" debate (Labov, 1963, 1972, 1990) is particularly noteworthy. While some studies suggest women lead in adopting prestige forms or innovative forms, and others show men using more non-standard forms, the patterns observed in 'My Nerd Girl' present a complex picture. The higher overall frequency of code-switching by female characters aligns with some findings that women are more linguistically dynamic or sensitive to social norms (Akbar et al., 2024; Bassam, 2017).

However, the specific distribution of functions, where female characters use code-switching more for identity/solidarity and power, while male characters use it more for privacy/exclusion and emphasis, suggests that gendered linguistic choices are deeply intertwined with social roles and communicative goals within the narrative. This supports the social-constructionist view of gender in language, which argues that linguistic differences are not inherent but are shaped by social context, cultural norms, and individual agency (Ashrafova, 2024; Eckert, 2012; Salsabila et al., 2024). The findings from a non-Western media context like 'My Nerd Girl' are crucial, as they provide a more diverse empirical base, addressing the critique of ethnocentric data in gender studies (Eckert, 2012; Labov, 1990).

The portrayal of code-switching in 'My Nerd Girl' as a scripted media product offers a unique lens. Unlike spontaneous real-life conversations, the linguistic choices in the series are deliberate, reflecting the creators' perceptions of how gender influences language use in contemporary Indonesian youth culture. This study suggests that the series consciously or subconsciously models certain gendered communication styles, where female characters might be depicted as leveraging code-switching for social connection and subtle power negotiation, while male characters might use it for more direct communicative or exclusionary purposes. This contributes to the understanding of how media both reflects and potentially shapes sociolinguistic norms (Languaged Life, 2022; Quinonez, 2018).

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The analysis is confined to a single web series, *My Nerd Girl*, which, despite its popularity, represents a constructed narrative rather than spontaneous real-life interactions. The scripted nature means that the observed code-switching patterns are artistic choices, which may or may not perfectly mirror actual Indonesian bilingual communication. Future research could expand this analysis to a broader corpus of Indonesian media, including unscripted content like vlogs or reality shows, to compare and contrast findings.

Longitudinal studies examining the evolution of code-switching in Indonesian media over time could also provide deeper insights into changing sociolinguistic trends. Furthermore, incorporating audience reception studies could explore how viewers

perceive and interpret these gendered code-switching patterns, adding another layer to the sociolinguistic understanding of media influence.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how male and female characters in the Indonesian web series *My Nerd Girl* use code-switching as a tool to perform gendered identities. Using Poplack's (1980) typology and a sociolinguistic-functional framework, the analysis found that inter-sentential switching was the most common type across both genders. However, female characters were shown to use code-switching more frequently, often to express identity, build solidarity, and negotiate power. In contrast, male characters tended to switch languages for purposes such as maintaining privacy, excluding others, or adding emphasis. These patterns suggest that code-switching in the series is not used randomly, but purposefully, reflecting deeper gender roles and social functions.

By focusing on a local, fictional media context, this research contributes to a broader understanding of how language and gender intersect in popular culture. It highlights how scripted dialogue can reflect and shape real-life language practices, especially among young audiences. While the findings are limited to one series, they open opportunities for further studies on code-switching in other Indonesian media or in real-life interactions. Overall, this study reinforces the view that language choices in media are powerful tools for constructing identity and social meaning.

6. References

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