

Negotiating Languages: The Sociolinguistic Dynamics of Balinese, Indonesian, and English in Penglipuran Village

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates multilingual practices in Penglipuran Village, Bali, focusing on how Balinese, Indonesian, and English are used in daily tourism-related interactions. Over three months, participatory observation captured natural communication between villagers and tourists. Findings reveal that Balinese is primarily used for internal communication, Indonesian for domestic tourists, and English for foreign visitors, with flexible code-switching depending on context. These results highlight the community's linguistic adaptability and cultural awareness, emphasising the role of local tour guides as cultural mediators. The study contributes to sociolinguistics in tourism by illustrating how multilingualism supports cultural preservation and enhances sustainable tourism experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the key sectors in Bali's economic and social development. As the number of foreign tourists visiting Bali increases, the ability of the community to communicate in various languages is key to maintaining smooth interactions and supporting the sustainability of the tourism sector (Cuic Tankovic et al., 2023). Bali, known as the Island of the Gods, is one of Indonesia's main tourist destinations, attracting visitors with its natural beauty, unique culture, and strong traditions. One of them is Penglipuran Village, located in Bangli Regency. This village is known for its cleanliness, well-preserved traditional architecture, and strong commitment to environmental conservation. Penglipuran not only attracts domestic visitors but also visitors from around the world. The era of globalisation has had a significant impact on Bali's tourism sector. Bali, as an international tourist destination visited by many visitors from various countries (Arismayanti et al., 2019). According to the latest data from *Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali* (2024), 625.665 foreign visitors visited Bali in July 2024, representing a significant increase compared to previous years. This increase in tourist arrivals requires not only physical infrastructure. It also requires adaptive communication skills among local communities.

The development of tourism has also influenced communication patterns among the community, both in interactions among villagers and when interacting with visitors. This is also reflected in Penglipuran Village, where language usage practices exhibit unique linguistic characteristics. As explained by Suhaimi and Abdullah (2017), communication skills and language proficiency play a crucial role in creating comfort and satisfaction for visitors. The concept of linguistic landscape in tourism is often related to the visual and auditory representation of language in public spaces, such as information boards or directional signs (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). However, this study does not focus on these visual aspects but rather on spoken communication practices in everyday interactions. This approach allows for a closer and

more human understanding of language use in the life of a tourism village community. The villagers of Penglipuran are not only bilingual but have developed into a multilingual community capable of adapting language use according to needs (Ayu & Yogan, 2024)

Multilingualism is defined as the ability of individuals or groups to use more than one language in their daily lives (Khan & Khan, 2024). In practice, these multilingual interactions are often accompanied by the phenomenon of code-switching, which is the transition from one language to another within a single communication context. This phenomenon is common in bilingual and multilingual societies (Ariffin & Rafik-Galea, 2009). In the context of tourism, code-switching serves as an effective communication strategy and a means of preserving cultural heritage (Suhaimi & Abdullah, 2017). In Penglipuran Village, language is not only a tool for conveying information but also a bridge for building intercultural relations. Villagers, especially tour guides, often adapt their speaking style according to the visitors' background. The ability to explain traditions, answer questions, and create a friendly atmosphere is an important part of a memorable tourist experience.

Previous studies have discussed the dynamics of language use in Bali, including Penglipuran Village. For example, Putu et al. (2024) examined the linguistic landscape in Penglipuran with a focus on language use in information boards, directional signs, and other visual media. However, little attention has been paid to everyday verbal interactions involving Balinese, Indonesian, and English. Yet, these communication practices reflect the living aspects of language use in the social and cultural life of the tourism village community. Other studies have also shown similar trends but with different focuses. Setyawan, Wijana, and Hendrokumoro (2025) explored how the use of politeness strategies plays an important role in maintaining harmonious communication between tourists and tour guides. However, this research is still limited to the pragmatic dimension of politeness.

Meanwhile, Khazanah and Kusumaningputri (2021) analysed multilingual practices in Bali's tourist areas and found that the dominance of English in public signage reflects language ideology and culture. Although this research provides an important picture of language visibility in public spaces, it does not directly observe how verbal interactions between guides and tourists take place. In addition, Shella Gherina Saptiany and Tiara Sanika Langsa Putriningsih (2023) emphasise that English language proficiency plays a significant role in improving the quality of communication and tourist satisfaction. However, the research focuses more on formal aspects of language competence and perception. Based on these studies, it can be seen that most previous studies still focus on formal contexts and language perception. There have not been many studies that highlight the practice of multilingualism in communication that occurs naturally in the social space of tourism villages. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by examining how local tour guides in Penglipuran Village use language between Balinese, Indonesian, and English to share about the cultural meaning, present the authenticity of the tourist experience, and strengthen the image of local culture.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of language use practices within the social context of Penglipuran Village, a prominent cultural tourism destination in Bali. Conducted over three months (December 2023 to February 2024), the research focused on the village's multilingual community. Data collection relied on participatory observation and documentation, allowing researchers—who were integrated into the village—to observe natural language interactions without disrupting daily activities. Observations took place at key public interaction points, such as the main village area and souvenir shops, and were recorded in field notes detailing situations, participants, and languages used. No questionnaires or interviews were used, as the study prioritised capturing authentic communication over structured responses.

The analysis followed three main stages: data reduction, categorisation, and interpretation. First, relevant observation data were selected and simplified, with source and time triangulation ensuring consistency across locations and periods. Next, data were categorised by marking language types (Balinese, Indonesian, or English) and their social contexts (e.g., greetings, transactions, cultural explanations). Finally, the interpretation stage explored how multilingual practices

reflect the community's cultural values and adaptation in tourism interactions. Validation was achieved by comparing analytical findings with field notes and documentation to ensure alignment with actual field conditions.

RESULTS

Based on the field observations, the villager of Penglipuran Village shows a unique multilingual communication practice, using Balinese, Indonesian, and English. These three languages are not only tools of communication, but also represent cultural values, social norms, and a form of hospitality offered to tourists.

The Use of Balinese

Balinese is used in interactions between villagers and with local tourists from Bali. In addition to being a medium of communication, Balinese also represents cultural identity and traditional values that are highly respected.

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|-------------|---|
| 1. Visitor | : “ <i>Gek sajaan dini sing dadi memadu?</i> ”
“Is it true that polygamy is not allowed here?” |
| 2. Villager | : “ <i>Nggih, Pak. Driki wenten Awig – Awig sane ten ngedadosan medue istri langkung ring asiki. Yen Awig - Awig e punike kelanggar, sane ngelanggar ditempatkan ring Karang Memadu sane bedelod. Bapak sampun polih drike?</i> ”
“Yes, Sir, there's a regulation that prohibits polygamy; if it is violated, they will be placed in Karang Memadu. Have you been there, Sir?” |
| 3. Visitor | : “ <i>Nggih wawu san tiang merike. Berarti sing ade ane bani memadu gek?</i> ”
“Yes, I just went there, no one dares to do that?” |
| 4. Villager | : “ <i>Durung pak, sangsine lumayan nika Pak, dikucilkan, ten dados maturan, ten dados mentasin desa.</i> ”
“Yes, Sir, because if someone violates it, they will receive sanctions such as not being allowed to pray, and pass through the village.” |

Extract 1: Balinese Conversation
Data [source]

The use of the Balinese language not only preserves traditions but also creates a warm and respectful atmosphere.

The Use of Indonesian

Indonesian is used mainly when communicating with domestic tourists from outside Bali or in more formal situations. Indonesian serves as a bridge that allows local values to be conveyed to a wider audience.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1. Visitor | : “ <i>Bli, saya lihat semua rumah punya gerbang yang sama ya? Itu bagaimana ceritanya? Memang peraturannya?</i> ”
“Bli, I saw all of the houses have the same gate. Why? Is that the rule?” |
| 2. Villager | : “ <i>Iya, betul bapak, jadi gerbang ini disebut dengan Angkul – Angkul. Kenapa bangunan ini sama dari utara sampai selatan dan berdekatan, konon katanya supaya mereka bisa saling membantu warga sekitar jika ada bencana. Dan uniknya ukuran dari angkul – angkul, menggunakan ukuran lengan orang yang tertua di sini. Disisi lain kami juga mempunyai 2 bangunan tradisional Bali. Mari saya tunjukkan.</i> ”
“So, this gate is called Angkul–Angkul. Why are these buildings the same from the north to the south and close to each other? It is said that they can help each other if there is a disaster. The unique one is that the size of this building is the size of the oldest person's arm. On the other hand, we also have 2 traditional Balinese buildings. Let me show you.” |
| 4. Visitor | : “ <i>Itu apa Bli?</i> ”
“What is that, Bli?” |
| 6. Villager | : “ <i>Ini merupakan Umah Paon atau dapur Bali. Bangunan ini juga memiliki filosofi kenapa pintunya pendek, karena itu mencerminkan kita hormat dengan orang yang ada di dalam. Karena orang yang tinggal di sini adalah orang yang paling tua seperti nenek dan kakek.</i> ” |

		“This is umah Paon or Balinese kitchen. This building also has a philosophy that the door is short, because it reflects our respect for the other people inside. Because the people who live here are the oldest.”
7.	Visitor	“ <i>Wahh unik sekali ya, terus yang di depan Umah Paon apa namanya, Bli?</i> ” “Wow, so unique, what’s the name of the building in front of Umah Paon?”
8.	Villager	“ <i>Ini Namanya Bale Saka Enam, Bapak. Bale ini biasanya digunakan untuk upacara pernikahan orang Bali.</i> ” “This is called Bale Saka Enam, Sir. This building is usually used for Balinese ceremonies such as Wedding ceremonies, etc.”
9.	Visitor	“ <i>Semua terbuat dari bambu ini ya?</i> ” “All of the buildings made from bamboo?”
	Villager	“ <i>Iya bapak, 3 bangunan tradisional Angkul – Angkul, Umah Paon, Bale Saka Enam terbuat dari bambu dan bangunan lainya tidak harus.</i> ” “Not all of the buildings are made from bamboo, Sir. Here, 3 traditional buildings made from bamboo, those are Angkul–Angkul, Umah Paon, and Bale Saka Enam.”
10.	Visitor	“ <i>Terima kasih Bli, informasinya sangat luar biasa.</i> ” “Thank you, Bli, for the information.”
11.	Villager	“ <i>Sama – sama Bapak.</i> ” “My pleasure, Sir.”

Extract 2: Indonesia Conversation
Data [source]

This reflects the community’s ability to adapt their communication style to the characteristics of visitors without losing the essence of the culture they want to convey.

The Use of English

The use of English occurs in interactions with foreign tourists, especially for local tour guides. The use of English here is not only informative, but also shows the ability of villagers to build emotional and cultural closeness with foreign tourists.

1.	Villager	“Excuse me, how can I help you?”
2.	Visitor	“Oh, I’m just looking around. It’s such a peaceful village.”
3.	Villager	“Thank you. Feel free to ask anything, I’m happy to explain.”
4.	Visitor	“Thank you, everyone. Here seems so friendly. I heard people calling each other with names like “ <i>Bli</i> ” or “ <i>Mbok</i> .” What do they mean?”
5.	Villager	“Yes, that’s part of our local. Here in Bali, we often use the word “ <i>Mbok</i> ” to address a woman politely. It’s like saying “Sister”
6.	Visitor	“Oh, that’s lovely! So, I can call you <i>Mbok</i> ?”
	Villager	Yes, of course! It makes the conversation feel warmer. And for man, we say “ <i>Bli</i> ”, which means “Brother”
7.	Visitor	“That’s helpful. I’ll try using it when I talk to people.”
8.	Villager	“Absolutely! Locals will appreciate it when you try.”
9.	Visitor	“By the way, how do you keep the village so clean? It’s honestly impressive. I haven’t seen a single piece of trash.”
10.	Villager	“Thank you very much! Cleanliness is part of our tradition here. It has become a daily habit and awareness among the villagers. Every family is sweeping their area before 7 a.m. every day. We believe that keeping our space clean is a form of respect for our environment.”
11.	Visitor	“That’s amazing. So, it’s not just a rule, but something deeper?”
		“Yes, exactly, because here we highly uphold the Balinese philosophy called “ <i>Tri Hita Karana</i> ”, which the third part of <i>Tri Hita Karana</i> is <i>Palemahan</i> , which teaches us the harmony between human and environment

12. Visitor : “Wow, unique! Thank you for your insight!”

Extract 3: English Conversation

Data [source]

These conversations show that the community not only conveys information but also cultural values in an inclusive and friendly manner.



Picture 1: Multilingual Interactions in Penglipuran Village: Examples of Balinese, Indonesian, and English Usage between Villagers and Visitors

Author's documentation [source]

Based on field observation, there are approximately 19 local tour guides who actively serve domestic and foreign visitors in Penglipuran Village. 13 of them are proficient in English, enabling them to communicate directly with foreign visitors and explain the village's history and cultural values. Meanwhile, the other 6 guides tend to use Indonesian and focus on serving domestic tourists.

Guide Information	Number
Total active local guides	19
Guides proficient in English	13
Guides using Indonesian Only	6

Table 1: Language Proficiency of Local Tour Guides in Penglipuran Village

Author's observation [source]

The use of Code-Switching in Penglipuran Village

In everyday interactions, the phenomenon of code-switching is an interesting part of the communication dynamics of the Penglipuran community. Villagers speak Balinese within their families or with other villagers, switch to Indonesian when communicating with domestic tourists, and use English when interacting with foreign tourists. This language switching is done flexibly, reflecting a high level of linguistic adaptation. Such code-switching has become very common, especially among local tour guides. The use of three languages in a single conversation indicates both language proficiency and a strong understanding of social context.

1.	Visitor A	: “Dik, saya pesan kopi 1 jangan terlalu manis.” (Indonesia)
2.	Villager	: “Baik Bapak.” (Indonesia) . “Me gaenang kopi sik, do bes manis!” (Balinese) “Good afternoon, Ma’am, how are you? How can I help you?” (English)
3.	Visitor	: “Fine, I’m just looking around.” (English) “What is this?”
4.	Villager	: “This is a Balinese cake, Ma’am, called <i>Klepon</i> . This cake is made from sweet potato. Inside this cake, there’s brown sugar. If you want to eat, you must mix with coconut spread.”
5.	Visitor	“Wow, I want to buy 1. How much is this?”
6.	Villager	“Five Thousand Rupiah.” Thank You or <i>Suksma</i> in Bali
7.	Visitor	“ <i>Suksma</i> ? What is the meaning of <i>Suksma</i> ?”
8.	Villager	“ <i>Suksma</i> means thank you. So, you can use the word <i>Suksma</i> when you want to say thank you.

Extract 4: The form of code-switching in Penglipuran village
Data [source]

Based on field observations, Balinese is the most frequently used language, particularly in family interactions and communication with local visitors. Indonesian is used in interactions with domestic visitors from outside Bali. English is used for communication with foreign visitors, especially by local tour guides and sellers. The estimated proportion of language use is as follows.

Languages	Function	Example
Balinese	Used in communication among villagers and with Balinese visitors. It helps maintain cultural identity and creates a more personal atmosphere.	“ <i>Awig</i> - <i>Awig</i> ” (Regulation)
Indonesian	Used for communication with domestic visitors from outside Bali. It plays a role in conveying information and formal interactions.	“ <i>Bli</i> ” (Brother) <i>Angkul</i> – <i>Angkul</i> (Traditional Gate) <i>Umah Paon</i> (Traditional Kitchen) <i>Bale Saka Enam</i> (Building with Six Pillars)
English	Used for communication with foreign visitors, especially by tour guides and sellers.	“ <i>Bli</i> ” (Brother) “ <i>Mbok</i> ” (Sister)

Table 2: Linguistic Functions and Usage Patterns in Penglipuran Village
Author’s observation [source]

The results of this study show that multilingualism practices in Penglipuran village are not just a communication strategy, but a deeply rooted cultural practice. Local guides show hospitality not only through words, but also through adaptability and respect. Every interaction is an opportunity to convey values, tradition, and harmony. Language is more than a tool that can express culture, and every moment of code-switching reflects the visitor’s experience. These findings make a unique contribution to the study of tourism linguistics.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the observations show that tour guides in Penglipuran Village play a very important role in maintaining the authenticity and sustainability of cultural values through multilingual communication practices. The use of the Balinese language in daily interactions between villagers and tourists in Penglipuran village shows the function of language as a cultural symbol and a tool for preserving moral values. For example, when the local guide explains *Awig-Awig* or says “*Suksma*,” it shows that language functions as a symbol of respect and an expression of moral values. Balinese language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a form of respect and representation of local identity. This finding is in line with Piller's (2017) view that language in the context of tourism serves not only as a

communication tool but also as a means to foster cross-cultural relationships and build identity. Li et al (2025) also emphasise that multilingual practices in cultural tourism create authenticity and emotional closeness between local communities and tourists. These findings confirm that the uniqueness of Penglipuran Village lies not only in its cleanliness and traditional architecture, but also in the way the community communicates cultural values through a living and meaningful language.

Furthermore, Indonesian is the main language when local tour guides interact with domestic tourists. In this context, Indonesian serves not only as a means of communication between regions, but also as a medium to bridge between local and national values. For example, when the tour guides explain the philosophical meaning of *Angkul-Angkul*, *Umah Paon*, and *Bale Saka Enam*. In these interactions, local tour guides not only convey information but also introduce the Balinese people's philosophy of life, such as the importance of balance and respect for ancestors. This is in line with the views of Pratiwi & Wikantiyoso (2022), who state that cultural and linguistic adaptation strengthens local identity and creates meaningful tourism experiences. Therefore, Indonesian plays a dual role: as a national communication tool and as a bridge for the sharing of regional cultural values.

Meanwhile, English is used to bridge interactions with foreign tourists. Based on observations, local tour guides in Penglipuran not only used English to explain basic information, but also to introduce Balinese cultural values such as the *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy. For example, local tour guides often teach the term "*Suksma*" to foreign tourists as a form of participation in local culture. This is in line with Lerch's (2022) findings, which emphasise that intercultural communication in tourism plays an important role in creating cultural empathy and cross-cultural understanding. Similarly, Priharjuna, Aryasih, & Puja (2025) found that tour guides' communication competence, both verbal and non-verbal, significantly increased foreign tourist satisfaction, indicating that adaptation in language use and cross-cultural communication skills play an important role in strengthening intercultural relations.

One of the most significant findings is the phenomenon of code-switching, which is done by Penglipuran villagers, especially local tour guides. Villagers often switch between Balinese, Indonesian, and English depending on the conversation partner and context. For example, when the local tour guide greets domestic tourists with the phrase "*Baik, Bapak*", then gives instructions with the partner in Balinese "*Me ganeang kopi sik, do bes manis!*" and then serves foreign tourists by saying "This is Balinese cake called *Klepon*." This communication pattern indicates a high level of linguistic flexibility and social awareness. Myers-Scotton (1993) explains that code-switching is a communication strategy to adapt to the social context, a creative practice of using multiple languages to construct shared meaning. In line with this, Gumperz (1982) adds that contextual elements such as intonation and word choice help listeners understand the social meaning and emotions in a conversation.

The above findings support Jaworski and Thurlow's (2010) view that language in tourism is a performative act that is rich in emotional and symbolic meaning. Through language, local tour guides act as cultural bridges that not only convey information but also provide meaningful experiences for tourists. Widiastuti et al (2021) also show that good English skills influence the effectiveness of tourism services, while Nengah Laba et al (2025) emphasise the importance of pragmatic awareness in explaining cultural meanings to tourists from different backgrounds. Similarly, Edwards (2009) states that language is closely related to identity in the context of tourism; local tour guides act as a bridge between local culture and global understanding. This study shows that Penglipuran's uniqueness lies in the role of four guides as cultural mediators. They use language to negotiate meaning, preserve identity between tourists and local communities. The participatory approach used in this study also provides a different perspective from previous studies, which focus on the visual aspects of the linguistic landscape.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion presented, it can be concluded that the use of these three languages is not only of the linguistic diversity of the local community but also of the significant role of tourism in promoting linguistic adaptation. Code-switching, a common communication strategy used by the villagers to communicate between local and foreign visitors, facilitates interactions and enhances the visitors' experience. This study contributes to

sociolinguistics studies by providing insight into how traditional villages, such as Penglipuran, are able to maintain their cultural identity while adapting to global communication needs. These findings are relevant in understanding the dynamics of languages in tourism places, particularly how tourism can influence changes in language patterns without eliminating local cultural roots. As a recommendation for future research, the author suggests exploring the impact of these linguistic shifts on the cultural identity of the local community and the long-term influence of tourism on the sustainability of the Balinese language in Penglipuran.

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