

INVESTIGATING REGIONAL VARIATION AND DIGITAL DIALECT IN ONLINE GAME IDENTITY

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| Article Info | Abstract |
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| Article History Received: April 2024 Revised: June 2024 Published: July 2024 | <i>Online gaming communities are crucial for social interaction and communication among diverse groups worldwide. Language variation plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' identities and social relationships within these communities. Based on those initial thoughts, this research is conducted with aims at examining the involvement of regional variations and digital dialects in the formation of identity within PUBG player groups. The approach used in this research is a qualitative anthropological approach. This approach was chosen because it focuses on human behavior and cultural phenomena which needs in-depth exploration of reallanguage analysis used in everyday communication in communities. Data collection techniques include observation, in-depth interview, and field notes and data analysis conducted using theme development, pattern recognition, and theme naming aided by Nvivo software in the coding process analysis. The finding of this research identified the formulation of digital dialects, influenced by repeated linguistic habits such as found in the way they use and form slang lnguage and the adaptation of newcomers to community-specific language norms. Moreover, the research highlighted the role of language variation in fostering community bonding, enhancing in-group communication, and reflecting shared experiences among players. Overall, this research offers valuable understanding of the complex interplay among language, identity and community dynamic within online gaming realms which have never been explored by previous related research.</i> |
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INTRODUCTION

Online gaming communities have emerged as significant spaces for social interaction and communication among diverse groups of individuals worldwide (Jawhar et al., 2024). These communities serve not only as platforms for entertainment but also as arenas for the formation and negotiation of identities through language use. Within the dynamic realm of online gaming, language variation plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' identities and social relationships (Fedotova & Cherkasova, 2023; Mungo et al., 2024). The phenomenon of language variation in online gaming communities has garnered increasing attention from linguists and sociolinguists alike. Online gaming environments provide unique linguistic landscapes where participants from diverse linguistic backgrounds converge, resulting in the emergence of distinct linguistic styles, registers, and norms (Sun, 2023). These linguistic variations often reflect the socio-cultural identities and affiliations of the gamers, contributing to the construction of individual and collective identities within these virtual spaces.

The interactive nature of online gaming necessitates constant communication and collaboration among players, leading to the development of specialized jargon, slang, and discourse patterns specific to each gaming community (Zakaria et al., 2022). These linguistic features not only serve as markers of belonging but also facilitate efficient communication and

coordination during gameplay (Tazik & Aliakbari, 2023). Understanding the intricate relationship between language variation and identity construction in online gaming communities holds significant implications for both theoretical linguistics and practical applications in digital communication. Identity itself relates to who individuals are and the groups they belong to, encompassing factors such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender, generation, sexual orientation, social class, and several other possibilities (Fekete, n.d., 2022).

Online gamers use language variation to express their identity within the gaming community (Sirola et al., 2021). For instance, the selection of specific slang or jargon may reflect affiliation with particular groups or demonstrate proficiency in certain games, forming part of their identity as gamers. The use of language variation accepted by the community can influence how they feel recognized and accepted by fellow community members (Alice Evangeline Jebaseli et al., 2023), fostering a sense of connection and social acceptance. Furthermore, some language variations can serve as an identity marker between player groups within the gaming community. The choice of a specific language or the use of particular slang can distinguish players, and consistent use of language variation within the gaming community can strengthen the collective identity of the community, creating strong bonds and reinforcing solidarity.

Strong bonds formed among online gamers within communities shape their identities (Monthonwit, 2023). Identity is behavior inherent in individuals based on the groups they belong to and has consequences and continuity. A person's awareness of their identity may remain latent until particular interactions create tension (Hu & Cheung, 2024; Wang & Dai, 2024). The social identity theory of intergroup relations, developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, posits that individuals' self-concept is influenced by their membership in social groups, which in turn affects their attitudes and behaviors towards members of other groups (Birdsong et al., 2024; Jong, 2024). According to this theory, individuals strive to maintain positive social identities by enhancing the status and reputation of their in-group while simultaneously derogating out-groups, a process known as social categorization (Pérez-Torres, 2024).

Social identity theory suggests that individuals engage in social comparison between in-groups and out-groups, especially when their group identity is threatened (Forsyth, 2000; Blanton et al., 2000; Forsyth et al., n.d.). This comparison serves to bolster self-esteem by highlighting the superiority of the in-group over the out-group. The theory provides insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying intergroup dynamics, including prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict, and underscores the importance of understanding how group membership influences individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward others. This understanding has implications for promoting social cohesion and reducing intergroup tensions. In the process of recognition in individual life, there are two aspects: the physically visual (normative, social, behavioral) and the cognitive (abstract, mental) (Sun et al., 2022). While these aspects are not entirely separate, the former can be directly observed, whereas the latter can only be inferred from behaviors and actions. This distinction reflects the difference between the objective reality known from convention and the imagined or perceived reality described. This theoretical framework is adopted from Saussure's semiotic model, which he described as highly elegant in its structure.

Understanding identity includes both naming and description as dimensions of identity, especially when culture is considered. Tabouret-Keller (1997) states that language acts are acts of identity, encompassing four main areas of identity research: self-identity, collective identity, institutional identity, and global identity. It is also recognized that individuals and organizations have multiple identities based on the multiple roles they perform or represent in socio-cultural relationships (Kutlu, 2022). The use of language varieties and identities within online gaming communities is a complex phenomenon involving various aspects including identity formation and social dynamics. Players come from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds, resulting in a variety of dialects and accents in their communication. Online gaming

communities often shape their language by adopting a mix of familiar languages, commonly English, thus creating an interactive environment that becomes an identity for their community.

Digital dialect refers to language variation within online gaming communities, including unique words, phrases, or speaking styles (Jeszenszky et al., 2024). This variation results from interactions among players from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds, bringing different language and dialect influences. In the context of online gaming, digital dialect may encompass specific terms or phrases unique to certain games, abbreviations, slang, or even new vocabulary specific to the community. Meanwhile, regional variation refers to differences in language or dialect usage related to specific geographical or cultural regions (Etikan, 2023; Huang et al., 2016a). For example, players from the United States may have different accents or vocabulary than players from other countries. Identity construction in online gaming communities occurs through the use of unique language and dialect, social interaction, and participation in in-game activities. Digital dialect and regional variation contribute to strong and unique identities within these communities, encompassing in-game identities such as selected characters or avatars and identities outside the game, such as cultural preferences, nationality, or beliefs (Mansfield et al., 2023).

Recent studies have examined various aspects of language variation and identity in online gaming communities. Thomas (2024) investigated the manifestation and portrayal of hybristophilia on the internet, focusing on online personas and dual identity on TikTok using a grounded theory approach. Furianto (2023) analyzed slang words used by Valorant players, categorizing them into acronym, clipping, creative and fresh, and imitative categories. Brona (2018) explored sexism in online gaming through network analysis and grounded theory. Kamdin (2023) studied digital communities' influence on identity formation and motivation among fandom members, employing a qualitative research design. Li y (2023) proposed a research framework for digital technology to reveal regional heterogeneity in digital villages in China, while Lam (2022) examined online trolling culture's impact on identity and narrative negotiation. These studies differ from this research, which focuses on language variation among PUBG players, using a qualitative anthropology approach for data collection and domain analysis.

This research aims to answer two questions: 1) How do regional variation and digital dialect contribute to the construction of identity within online gaming communities? and 2) How does the formation of language variations lead to the emergence of digital dialects in online gaming communities? The data is analyzed based on an anthropological qualitative approach, focusing on an in-depth analysis of the culture of language variation in the PUBG online gaming community through observation. This research prioritizes the meaning, context, and complexity of human experiences in language usage rather than merely measuring or generalizing linguistic phenomena, constituting the state-of-the-art novelty of this research.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative anthropologic approach (Coleman, 2010). This method emphasizes understanding of human behavior and cultural phenomena through in-depth exploration and interpretation of lived experiences. Since this research is dealing with human behavior and cultural phenomena, in order to explore the phenomena investigated in this research this research is using participant observation, in-depth interviews, and field notes in the process of data collection. The researchers in this research are directly involved in online communities. They interact with players in their everyday online gaming activities. Four Player Unknown Battlegrounds (PUBG) online gaming communities became the subject of this research and this data collection procedure was done intensively over 2 months.

Research Participants

In this study there are four PUBG online gaming groups involved, each group consisting of 15 members from various different regions. The criteria for selecting participants in this study were based on several factors. Firstly, the study involved three PUBG online gaming groups, each comprising 15 members from diverse regions. These groups were formed based on the players' ranks in the game, indicating varying levels of expertise and experience. The selection of participants from different regions ensures a diverse sample, allowing for the exploration of regional variations in language use and identity construction within the online gaming community. Additionally, participants were required to be active players of the online game over the three-month research period, ensuring their engagement and contribution to the gaming community during the study duration. Furthermore, beyond the online gaming groups, participants also created WhatsApp groups to facilitate communication among group members. This additional criterion suggests a level of interconnectedness and communication within the gaming community, which may influence language use and identity formation. Overall, the selection criteria prioritize diversity in regional representation, active participation in the gaming community, and the establishment of communication channels among group members, providing a comprehensive sample for studying language variation and identity construction in online gaming communities.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire is composed in two sections. The first section aims to answer research question number 1 (How do regional variation and digital dialect contribute to the construction of identity within online gaming communities) by using domain analysis. Domain analysis in this case is carried out to achieve a broad and thorough understanding of the research subject and the social context of the PUBG online gaming players under study. In this investigation, 15 specific questions are posed to gather the necessary answers. The second section intends to investigate the formation of language variations lead to the emergence of digital dialects in online gaming communities. In order to get the result this research employed five Likert scale statement with a scale of 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) unsure, 4) agree, 5) strongly agree.

Data Analysis

The procedures in analyzing data conducted in this research involve theme development, pattern recognition and theme naming to identify language variation used in the online gaming community under investigation, followed by an analysis to explore how these variations influence the construction of identity within the communities using domain analysis. After data collection procedure conducted, initial coding involves reviewing interviews transcripts and assigning codes to segments of text that indicate language variations, regional influences and identity markers. Qualitative data analysis software as Nvivo was utilized to manage and organize the coding process efficiently. During theme development, pattern recognition is used to identify common language features and regional dialects by looking for recurring words, phrases and linguistic structures across participants. These patterns are then grouped into broader themes that capture the essence of language variations and their role in identity construction with each theme given a clear and concise name such as “regional slang” and so on. Subsequently, domain analysis is employed to examine how different language patterns from various regions influence how gaming online players identify themselves and others within the gaming community. This includes digital dialect mapping which identifies distinctive signs and symbols used in online communication and explores how these contribute to the formation of digital dialects. The analysis investigated the influences of specific language variations on identity construction within online gaming communities. Each theme is compared to identity contrast and commonalities in language use and identity formation across different participants.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Based on the data analysis it was found that regional variation and digital dialect contribute significantly to the construction of identity within online gaming communities in several ways: Regional language variation allows players to express their regional identities within the online gaming communities; they use some specific language features for their region such as:

The Variation of Dialect Used

Table 1

| The Variation of Dialect Used | | |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Group | Discourse on segment | Kinds of dialect used |
| 1 | “Ji.. The enemy is approaching, shoot quickly” “go lah I first, don’t you go ahead, keep stay” | Sasaknese dialect |
| 2 | “Bro, aim sabun terus anak ini” “Bro, why do you keep doing aim sabun” | Balinese dialect |
| 3 | “Repipe dah saya ini sekarang” “I am Reviving right now” | Sasaknese dialect |

In the online gaming community, various cultures are naturally involved, including the use of language and its dialect. From the data collected, it was found that each community consists of more than three language users. Among them are users of the Sasak Language, English, Javanese, and Balinese Language. Therefore, in their conversations, they often end up experiencing a mixture of dialects from these languages. The mixture of dialect usage forms its dialect within the online gaming community. Generally, dialects are categorized into several categories, including social and ethnic categories. The term “digital dialect” is newly discovered in conjunction with the development of digital communities. from the above image, speakers of Javanese and Sundanese are marked in blue, while Sasak and Sumbawa are marked in green so is the location of Balinese speakers. The image displayed above illustrates the distribution of dialects based on ethnic and social factors.

Domain analysis is conducted to obtain a general and comprehensive overview of the research object and the social situation of PUBG online gaming players being investigated. In this research, there are 15 detailed questions provided to find the answers, and the displayed data above shows that members of the online gaming community use a community dialect that is inadvertently agreed upon and understood together. This digital dialect is outside of the social and ethnic dialect they possess. concerning regional variation and digital dialect this research analyzed data to find the answer to research question number 2 and it was found that linguistic innovation and adaptation led to the emergence of digital dialect in the online community. This proof can be seen from the following result of data analysis.

Table 2
Slang Terms Used

| No | Linguistic features | example |
|----|----------------------------|---|
| 1 | Slang terms and expression | Nade, Ngerush, pelakor, ngendok, aim sabun, ngesandwich |
| 2 | Abbreviation and acronyms | AFK, GB, LDR |
| 3 | Lexical borrowing | Loot,respawn, spray, knock, revive |
| 4 | Phonetic modification | Noob |
| 5 | Grammar and syntax | Out of ammo |

Apart from the data above, there are some slang terms used by the PUBG community that are not displayed in this article. As the example of slang language above, this language is used by players of native speakers of Indonesia. The use of English in the slang language displayed above is because the PUBG game being played, its basic application uses English, resulting in a mixture of English and Indonesian languages in their conversation. As additional information, the data analyzed in this research are the conclusions drawn from collected data sources. The member of the online gaming community, which is the source of data in this research, varies in number and change every day depending on the online availability at that time. However, generally, the variety of languages remains more or less the same every day. From the displayed data, it can be seen that some linguistic features used in the gaming online community of PUBG can be concluded as the innovation and adaptation of language used in society.

Lexical borrowing in the language used by online gamers is evident in the incorporation of words and phrases from other languages or contexts into the gaming lexicon. For instance, the term “loot” borrowed from English, which means plunder or stolen goods, is extensively used in online gaming communities of PUBG. Loot refers to the items or weapons found and collected by players from the game environment, including weapons found and collected by players from the game environment, including weapons, medical supplies, and other equipment. Similarly, another example of lexical borrowing is the term “respawn”, this term is also originating from English which means to come back to life. In a gaming context, “respawn” refers to the process wherein characters or players who have been eliminated in the game are regenerated or appear at a specific location after a certain period.

The next data shows phonetic modification, which is another linguistic phenomenon commonly observed in the language used by online gamers. For instance, the term “noob”, derived from “newbie” or “newcomer”, originally referred to inexperienced players. However, in online gaming contexts, “noob” has evolved into a term used to derogate or mock players perceived as unskilled or incompetent. Furthermore. Phonetic modifications such as “nub” are often employed to intensify the negative connotation associated with the term. Additionally, abbreviations are prevalent in the language of online gaming. For example, “nade” is derived from grenade. It is used to refer to grenades or explosive devices used in the game. meanwhile “AFK” abbreviated from ‘away from keyboard’ is utilized to indicate that a player is temporarily inactive or absent from the game. Furthermore, phrases like “out of ammo” serve as shortened versions of longer expressions, such as “I am out of ammunition” or “I need more ammo”. This phonetic shorthand allows players to communicate essential information quickly and efficiently during gameplay.

In summary, lexical borrowing, phonetic modification, and abbreviation usage are prominent features of the language employed by online gamers. These linguistic adaptations reflect the unique communication needs and cultural dynamics within online gaming communities, facilitating efficient communication and communication needs and cultural dynamics within online gaming communities, facilitating efficient communication, and fostering a sense of belonging among player.

Community Bonding

Community bonding is measured using 6 items. The concept of community bonding is captured with the following statement. “after participating in the PUBG community, I always communicate with fellow members involved in the community in daily life outside the game”. “I fully trust my teammates in the community in gaming matters because we are a team.” “After participating in the online gaming community, we collaborate a lot as a team.” “After joining the community, I always share responsibility and interests with fellow community members.” This data was collected using structured interview questions with a scale of 1) strongly disagree, 2) disagree, 3) unsure, 4) agree, 5) strongly agree.

There were 30 community members interviewed, and after obtaining the results, all answers to the above questions showed agreement and disagreement”. In gaming communities, players often come together to form bonds and friendships through their shared passion for gaming. These bonds are strengthened as players collaborate, strategies, and overcome challenges together in virtual worlds. Community bonding fosters a sense of belonging, support, and camaraderie among players, leading to lasting friendships and a vibrant gaming community. Based on data, in a massively multiplayer online role-playing game like PUBG, players join guilds or clans to team up with like-minded individuals. They embark on quests, defeat powerful enemies, and conquer dungeons as a group. Through these shared experiences, players develop strong bonds with the members of communities.

The central idea explored in this article revolves around the ethnography of communication as introduced by Hymes (1972). According to Hymes (1972), in his work model of interaction of language and social life, speech events are structured around eight key components, which he encapsulated using the acronym SPEAKING. In communication within gaming communities, the setting and scene of the communities include both physical settings such as the virtual world of the game as well as the social context such as PUBG as the game being played. Setting and scene provide the backdrop against which communication unfolds, shaping the tone, dynamic, and expectation of interaction among players.

Table 3
In-Group communication

| Types | |
|-------------------|--|
| Setting and scene | Online gaming PUBG |
| Participants | 30 members of each communities |
| End | The conversation begins with the gaming preparation until victory |
| Action | The conversation involves discussing strategies for resisting the enemies |
| Key | The communication is sometimes full of joke but sometime full of anger depends of the game situation |
| Instrument | Virtual conversation |
| Norms | No norm is found in this communication |
| Genre | hardcore |

In addition, the formation of language variations leads to the emergence of digital dialects in online gaming communities in two aspects, evaluation of language and adaptation (Bucura, 2023). As gamers interact and communicate with each other, they often develop unique linguistic styles, slang, and terminology specific to their gaming experiences. Over time, these language variations become entrenched within the community, shaping its identity and communication norms. This process of linguistic innovation and adaptation results in the formation of digital dialects, which reflect the distinct culture and shared experiences of the online gaming community.

As found in data analysis, the evaluation of language used in gaming online communities can be seen in the following explanation, this research defines the usage of slang language in gaming online leads the member of communities to build their identity and evolve the language in digital dialect. The players of gaming online convey the meaning of symbols, such as single words in the sense of cognitive linguistics (Pangestu, 2023). They interacted faster and were more frequently useable. As data analysis, it was found that this interaction can occur because the speakers understand each other's language. The term “ngendok” or “hiding till die” is only understood and used by the online gaming community for PUBG therefore the conversation in the above interaction cannot take place if the players do not have the same understanding of the language used. Through their participation in these interactions, both individuals contribute additional information to the shared understanding they have.

Consequently, non-verbal pragmatics progresses towards semantics characterized by single words of constructions. In the pre-linguistic phase, recognizing the significance of a word within shared understanding can be expedited by aligning the word's meaning with a relevant aspect of that shared understanding. During the one-word stage, digital dialect utilizes the alignment of word features with shared understanding to deduce word significance. Words draw upon shared understanding, thereby, enriching their meaning through alignment. In this manner, people can trace the origins of language to the one-word stage, experienced by all members of gaming online communities attributing it to the imperative of communities' selection to demonstrate their understanding through excelling in the digital dialect information exchange. Furthermore, the formation of language variations leads to the emergence of digital dialects in online gaming communities by Online gaming communities are characterized by shared experiences that contribute to the development of language variations.

Table 4
Shared Experiences

| No | Items | Interview answers |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Collaborative gameplay | Working together towards common goals |
| 2 | Shared challenges | Build trust and enriching gaming experiences |
| 3 | Communication and interaction | By leveraging various communication tools and methods and adapt to changing situations and overcome challenges |
| 4 | Competition and rivalry | Players strive to climb the rankings and earn recognition for their achievement, driving them to compete and surpass their rivals. |
| 5 | Community events and activities | Fostering engagement, social interaction and collaboration. |
| 6 | Shared culture and identity | The community exemplifies how shared culture and identity can emerge within online gaming communities |
| 7 | Supportive network | Through acts of kindness, generosity and mutual assistance, players demonstrate the power of cooperation and solidarity in creating a welcoming and inclusive gaming environment |

Discussion

Based on the data analysis provided, several key points can be drawn regarding the questions of the research; The contribution of regional variation and digital dialect in the construction of identity in the gaming online community;

Regional Identity Expression

The study showed that online gaming players use various slang expressions, indicating their linguistic diversity. Players utilize regional language features, including slang, to express their regional identities in online gaming communities (Z. Sun et al., 2022). For example, the use of slang terms such as “ngesandwich” and “aim sabun” incorporates a blend of English and

Indonesian languages, reflecting the linguistic diversity among players. Despite variations in the number of community members, the language diversity in the online gaming community remains significant (Shandilya, 2023).

There is a notable novelty in this research compared to the previous study by Furianto (2023). The difference lies in the findings related to the types of slang used. This research found the existence of lexical borrowing, phonetic modification, and grammatical or syntactical slang. Examples include the word “noob” and abbreviations such as “AFK” (Away From Keyboard) and “out of ammo.” From the explanations above, it can be concluded that the usage of slang in online gaming communities demonstrates how individuals communicate and manifest their sense of belonging to a particular group. Through this communication, players share a common identity regardless of their ethnicity, as they have an unspoken agreement to use the same slang language.

Variation of Dialect Used

Online gaming communities encompass a range of cultures and languages, leading to the usage of various dialects such as Sasaknese, Javanese, Balinese, and English (Rahman et al., 2024). The interaction among players often results in a unique digital dialect that combines elements from different languages and dialects. This hybrid dialect requires new players entering these communities to adapt to the established digital dialect, indicating its significance in communication dynamics.

From the provided data, it is evident that the fusion of the Sasak-Balinese dialect within the framework of Bahasa Indonesia is characterized by the utilization of the consonant letter (P) to articulate (V). Following domain analysis, a thorough examination was conducted to discern specific attributes within each internal structure by comparing elements. These elements, as delineated in this study, pertain to contrast in the questioning process, revealing the following findings: Players unconsciously reach a consensus on the amalgamated dialect they employ. The genesis of this digital dialect stems from repetitive habits. New entrants to the community must acclimatize to the prevailing dialect and language. There is no formal agreement among players concerning this issue. Players exhibit a greater comfort level when utilizing their digital dialect as opposed to their native language. Combining diverse dialects has the potential to create new dialects within the community. This phenomenon occurs as players from different linguistic backgrounds interact regularly, blending their native dialects and creating a new, shared mode of communication. This newly formed dialect evolves over time, influenced by the unique linguistic inputs from various players, ultimately leading to a distinct digital dialect that enhances group identity and cohesion within the online gaming community.

Community Bonding

Participation in online gaming communities fosters strong bonds and friendships among players, facilitated by shared experiences and collaboration in virtual worlds (Rai & Gaire, 2020). Players form guilds or clans, teaming up with like-minded individuals to collaborate on quests and overcome challenges together. This community bonding enhances a sense of belonging and camaraderie among players, contributing to vibrant gaming communities. Community bonding in the gaming community involves building and strengthening connections, relationships, and a sense of belonging among members. It entails mutual respect, cooperation, and solidarity among individuals who share similar interests, values, and goals (Agboada, 2022; Lin et al., 2023; Gómez-Franco, 2024). Analyzing data through Hymes’ model of interaction, reflected in the acronym SPEAKING, reveals that communication within gaming communities fulfills the model's components: setting, participants, and actions (Setyawati, 2022). The virtual setting of games like PUBG shapes communication dynamics, influencing the tone and expectations of interaction among players. Conversations often

involve discussing strategies, sharing jokes, and expressing emotions based on the game's context, reflecting the intense and varied nature of in-group communications (Congratulation-Strategies, 2020; Ebbinkhuijsen et al., 2021; Bestvater & Loyle, 2023; Jangsher et al., 2023).

The formation of language variations in online gaming communities leads to the emergence of digital dialects through linguistic innovation and adaptation. Data analysis discovered five kinds of linguistic innovations in online gaming communities: slang terms and expressions, abbreviations and acronyms, lexical borrowing, phonetic modification, and grammar and syntax (Warsidi & Adnan, 2024; Mo, n.d. 2023). Shared experiences in online gaming also contribute to language variations, encompassing collaborative gameplay, shared challenges, communication and interaction, competition and rivalry, community events and activities, shared culture and identity, and a supportive network (Cook et al., 2023). These shared experiences often form bonds among community members and contribute to an overall sense of belonging.

Technology plays a central role in shaping the dynamics of gaming communities, as features like online connectivity, social networking platforms, voice chat, messaging services, and user-generated content enable players from around the world to connect, communicate, and collaborate (Shandilya, 2023). These technological advancements facilitate the exchange of experiences, discussions, and creative endeavors, strengthening community bonds and contributing to the development of digital dialect. Overall, the findings align with the existing body of knowledge regarding regional variation and community bonding in online gaming communities. However, this research introduces novel insights into the specific types of slang used and the lack of consensus on digital dialects, expanding the understanding of linguistic dynamics in these virtual spaces. Additionally, the unexpected comfort with digital dialect highlights the unique identity construction within online gaming communities.

CONCLUSION

This research employed a qualitative anthropological approach, delving into four PUBG online gaming communities over two months. Through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and field notes. Researchers directly engaged with players, uncovering significant insights into language variation and its impact on identity construction within these communities. the analysis revealed the emergence of regional identity expressions through slang language usage and the variation of dialect among players from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The study identified the formulation of digital dialects, influenced by repeated linguistic habits and the adaptation of newcomers to community-specific language norms. Moreover, the research highlighted the role of language variation in fostering community bonding, enhancing in-group communication, and reflecting shared experiences among players. Additionally, technology was found to play a pivotal role in shaping the dynamic of gaming communities, facilitating connectivity, communication, and the exchange of user-generated content. Overall, this research provides valuable insight into the intricate relationship between language, identity, and community dynamics within online gaming environments which have never been conducted and found by any other previous related research in these past 5 years.

Based on the conclusion drawn above, several recommendations for future researchers in this field can be proposed; 1) longitudinal studies, the future researchers are expected to conduct longitudinal studies to observe language variation and the evolution of digital dialect over a more extended period. 2) cross-cultural studies, future researchers are expected to explore language variation and community dynamics in online gaming communities across different cultural contexts. 3) Interdisciplinary approaches, this interdisciplinary approach could uncover additional factors influencing language use and identity formation within gaming communities.

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