**INVESTIGATING REGIONAL VARIATION AND DIGITAL DIALECT IN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF ONLINE GAMING COMMUNITIES**

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| ***Article Info*** | **Abstract** |
| ***Article History*** *Received:* *Revised:* *Published:*  | *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 the objective of this research to examine how regional variation and digital dialect contribute to the formation of identity in digital gaming communities and how the formation of language variation leads to the emergence of digital dialect in online gaming communities. the use of a qualitative anthropological approach and domain analysis in the data collection and analysis process is essential in this research, distinguishing it from previous studies. This research employs participant observation, in-depth interviews, and field notes to explore the phenomena being asked in this research. to address the research questions, interviews are conducted and subsequently analyzed to identify how the formation of language variation can create digital dialects within these communities. The findings of this research indicate that regional variation and digital dialect contribute to identity formation through the use of slang language and dialect variations, fostering community bonding and in-group communication. Furthermore, the formation of language variations leading to the emergence of digital dialects in online gaming communities is facilitated by linguistic innovation and adaptation, shared experiences, and technological influences.* |
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**INTRODUCTION**

Online gaming communities have emerged as significant spaces for social interaction and communication among diverse groups of individuals worldwide. These communities serve as platforms for entertainment and facilitate 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. 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 (X. Sun, 2023), resulting in the emergence of distinct linguistic styles, registers, and norms. 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.

Furthermore, 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). Thus, 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. In addition, identity itself relates to who individuals are, and the groups they belong to including 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 with the gaming community (Sirola et al., 2021). For example, 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 Jebaselvi et al., 2023)and they feel more connected and socially accepted. Furthermore, some language variations can serve as an identity 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. The use of specific slang or jargon creates strong bonds among community members and reinforces a sense of solidarity.

Strong bonds formed among online gamers unintentionally within communities shape the identity of online gamers themselves (Monthonwit, 2023). Identity is behavior that is inherent in individuals based on the groups they belong to and has consequences and continuity. A person’s awareness of their identity may lie until a particular contact creates tension (Hu & Cheung, 2024), (Wang & Dai, 2024)that is conceptualized as the individual’s property (Birdsong et al., 2024). The social identity theory (Jong, 2024)of intergroup relations is a psychological theory that seeks to explain how individuals’ self-concept is influenced by their membership in social groups and how this, in turn, affects their attitudes and behaviors towards members of other groups. Developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s, this theory posits that people categorize themselves and others into various social groups and derive a sense of identity and self-esteem from their membership in these groups (Chua et al., 2023).

According to this theory, individuals strive to maintain many positive social identities by enhancing the status and reputation of their in-group (the group they belong to) while simultaneously derogating out-group (the group they do not belong to). this process, known as social categorization (Pérez-Torres, 2024), involves perceiving members of an in-group as more similar to oneself and as possessing more desirable characteristics while viewing members of out-groups as more homogeneous and as possessing fewer desirable traits.

Furthermore, social identity suggests that individuals tend to engage in social comparison between in-groups and out-groups (Forsyth, 2000),(Blanton et al., 2000; Forsyth, 2000; Forsyth et al., n.d.) especially in situations where their group identity is saliently threatened. This comparison serves to bolster the self-esteem of individuals by highlighting the superiority of their in-group over out-group derogation as a means of preserving their group’s status and securing valuable resources.

Overall, the social identity theory provides insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying intergroup dynamics, including prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict. It highlights the importance of understanding how group membership influences individuals’ perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward others and offers implications for promoting social cohesion and reducing intergroup tensions.

In the process of recognition in individual life, there are two aspects; those that are physically visual (normative, social, behavioral) and those are cognitive (abstract, mental). Although these two aspects are not entirely separate (Sun et al., 2022),. In this case, the former can be directly observed while the other can only be inferred from other phenomena such as behavior and actions. This difference reflects the distinction between the objective reality that we know from convention and the imagined or perceived reality that is described. This theory was adopted from Saussure’s semiotic model which he described as highly elegant in its structure.

The challenge in understanding identity includes both naming and description as dimensions of identity, especially when culture is taken into account. Tabouret-Keller (1997) states that language acts are acts of identity, it has four main areas of identity research; self-identity, collective identity, institutional identity, and global identity. It is also known that individuals and organizations have multiple identities (Kutlu, 2022) based on the multiple roles people perform or represent in the socio-cultural relationship they participate in. The use of language varieties and identities within online gaming communities is a complex phenomenon (Vaz, n.d, 2023) involving various aspects including identity formation and social dynamics. Online game 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 languages they are familiar with. Commonly English, thus creating an environment in which to interact. This then becomes an identity for their community.

Digital dialect refers to language or dialect variation that forms within online gaming communities which may include the use of words, phrases, or speaking styles unique to that community (Jeszenszky et al., 2024). This often results from interactions among players from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds, bringing with them different language and dialect influences. In the context of online gaming, digital dialect may encompass the use of specific terms or phrases unique to certain games, the use of abbreviations or slang, or even the formation of new vocabulary specific to the community. Meanwhile, regional variation (Etikan, 2023; Huang et al., 2016a) in online gaming communities refers to differences in language or dialect usage related to specific geographical or cultural regions. This may include differences in pronunciation, and vocabulary that are specific to players from certain regions. 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 various means, including the use of unique language and dialect, social interaction, and participation in in-game activities. Digital dialect and regional variation can be important aspects of identity formation in online gaming communities as players often identify themselves by how they communicate and interact in the game. Identity in online gaming communities may include in-game identities such as selected characters or avatars as identities outside of the game, such as cultural preferences, nationality, or, beliefs(Mansfield et al., 2023). Thus, digital dialect and regional variation can contribute to the formation of strong and unique identities within online gaming communities.

In this regard, this article focuses on investigating how regional variation and digital dialects are formed and used by the gaming communities of free fire. In the preliminary data, it was found that there are several language variations used by online gamers, including slang, jargon, and the formation of new vocabulary which is formed from a combination of English with Bahasa Indonesia. The term “aim ghoib” is used to refer to cheater enemies, in this word originates from the Indonesian language. Interestingly, this word is used by players who are not native speakers of Bahasa Indonesia. Another uniqueness is that each community in one game has and uses a different language from another game. The emergence of this research is driven by the desire to examine the process of word formation in the digital dialect used by language users in online gaming communities.

A recent relevant study that examined language variation and identity in online gaming communities was conducted by Thomas (2024), this study was aimed at investigating the manifestation and portrayal of Hybristophillia on the internet, specifically emphasizing the formation of online personas and the concept of dual identity. His study was conducted with Tiktok as its object. This study involves a grounded theory approach by incorporating the matrix analysis method with three elements including; a contextual descriptive component, a statistical information component, and an instrumental thematic component. Furianto (2023) conducted a study that investigated slang words used by game player Valorant. This study analyzed the usage of slang words using the grounded theory approach and it was found that there are four categories of slang words used; acronym category, clipping category, creative and fresh category, and imitative category. Brona (2018) conducted a study regarding sexism in online gaming, this study combined issues in network analysis and grounded theory to explore how sexism was understood in gaming communities. Kamdin (2023) conducted a study that aimed to explore the dynamic of how digital communities influence, patterns, identity formation, motivation, and issues faced by fandom members in online communities, the data was analyzed using qualitative research design. Li y (2023) conducted a study that proposed a research framework for digital technology to reveal the characteristics of regional heterogeneity and the main influencing factors on the construction level of digital villages in China. Lam (2022) this study demonstrated how the trolling culture online has been an effective tool to subvert and negotiate the mainstream narrative of identity. Furthermore. It is aimed to examine the level of digital rural construction in more detail and from multiple perspectives, the index system innovatively integrates the three influencing factors, this study argues that such in-group connection and identity building are often a decentralized and bottom-up process.

From the four previous relevant studies mentioned above, it was found that this research differs from those previous researches. This research focuses on how language variation is formed among online gaming communities, especially (PUBG) players, furthermore, the combination of qualitative anthropology approach is employed in the collection data procedure and domain analysis approach in analyzing data. There are two research questions in this research 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? To answer the research question, the data is analyzed based on the anthropological qualitative approach. The focus of this research is on an in-depth analysis of the culture of language variation in the PUBG online gaming community conducted through observation. This research prioritizes the meaning, context, and complexity of human experiences in language usage rather than merely measuring or generalizing linguistics phenomena. And this is what constitutes to be the state of the art 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 expeciences. 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.

**Subjects**

In this study there are three PUBG online gaming groups involved, each group constisting of 15 members from various different regions. These groups are formed based on their rank in the game. The group members actively played the online game over three-month research period. The grouping wa not only limited to the online gaming groups but they also created WhatsApp groups to facilitate communication among group members.

**Instruments**

The questionaire 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 reseach subject and the social context of the PUBG online gaming playes under study. In this investigation, 15 specific questions are posed to gather the necessary answers. The second section intend 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.The pattern recognition is used to look for the pattern within the data that suggest commonalities across participant or context being investigated in this research and theme naming to develop clear and consise names for each theme that capture the essence of the data. By undertaking this procedure, the research examines different language patterns from various regions and how players identify themselves and others based on these variations. Subsequently, an analysis of digital dialect mapping that emerges in online communication is carried out, such as identifying distinctive signs used and understanding how the use of language influences the formation of identity within the communities. To address the research questions of this research, interviews are conducted and subsequently analyzed to identify how the formation of language variations used can create digital dialects within their community.

**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:

1. **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.

Pict 1: dialect mapping



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.

1. **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.Top of Form 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.Bottom of Form

 The central idea explored in this article revolves around the ethnography of communication as introduced by Hymess (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

#  A: “Ngendok dulu”

#  B: “jangan dah ngendok, spray aja langsung”

#  A: “Mati saya nanti”

#  B: “Nanti saya GB kamu”

#  A: “I’ll be doing ngendok”

#  B: “No need to do it, just spray it thoroughly”

#  A: “I’ll die then”

#  B: “I’ll do GB for you”

#  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 |

# Table 4

**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;

1. **Regional identity expression**
2. **The usage of slang**
* Players utilize regional language features, including slang to express their regional identities in online gaming communities (Z. Sun et al., 2022)
* The use of slang 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 (Shandilya, 2023).

In this case, there is a novelty in this research with the previous research by Furianto (2023). The difference is in the findings of the kinds of slang used, in which, this research found the existence of lexical borrowing, phonetic modification, and grammar or syntax slang. Such as the word “noob” or abbreviations such as “AFK” and “out of ammo”. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the usage of slang in gaming online communities can be seen from the way how individuals communicate and manifest their sense of belonging to a particular sense. In this communication, the players share the same identity regardless of their ethnicity because they have an unspoken agreement to use the same slang language.

1. **Variation of dialect used**

 Online gaming communities encompass a range of cultures and languages (Rahman et al., 2024) resulting in the usage of various dialects such as Sasaknese, Javanese, Balinese, and English. The interaction among players often leads to a unique digital dialect, combining elements from different languages and dialects. So thus, the new players who are entering these communities must adapt to the established digital dialect, indicating its significance in communication dynamics.

 From the provided data, it is evident that the dialect employed as a fusion of the Sasak-Balinese dialect within the framework of Bahasa Indonesia is characterized by the utilization of 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: 1) Players unconsciously reach a consensus on the amalgamated dialect they employ, 2) The genesis of this digital dialect stems from repetitive habits. 3) New entrants to the community must acclimatize to the prevailing dialect and language, 4) There is no settlement agreement among players concerning this issue. 5) Players exhibit a greater comfort level when utilizing their digital dialect as opposed to their native language

1. **Community bonding**

Participation in online gaming communities being investigated in this research fosters strong bonds and friendships among players (Rai & Gaire, 2020), facilitated by shared experiences and collaboration in virtual worlds. Players from guilds or clans team up with like-minded individuals, collaborating on quests and overcoming challenges together. Community bonding enhances a sense of belonging and camaraderie among players, contributing to vibrant gaming communities.

Furthermore, community bonding in the gaming community is reflected in the process of building and strengthening connections, relationships, and a sense of belonging among members of a community. It involves mutual respect (Agboada, 2022; Lin et al., 2023), cooperation, and solidarity (Gómez-Franco, 2024) among individuals who share the same interests, values, and goals. The analysis of data in this part uses Hymes’ model of interaction which is reflected in the word SPEAKING (Setyawati, 2022). As the data displayed it is found that the communication within gaming communities fulfilled the model of Hymes in which there are setting, participant, and action. The virtual setting of games such as PUBG shapes communication dynamics, influencing the tone and expectations of interaction among players. Conversations involve discussing strategies, sharing jokes, and expressing emotions based on the games’ context (Congratulation-Strategies, n.d.;( Ebbinkhuijsen et al., 2021), reflecting the intense and varied nature of in-group communications (Bestvater & Loyle, 2023; Jangsher et al., 2023). Furthermore, the formation of language variations leads to the emergence of digital dialects in online gaming communities through; a) Linguistic innovation and adaptation

Through data analysis, it was discovered that linguistic innovation and adaptation contribute to the emergence of digital dialect in online communities (Warsidi & Adnan, 2024) There are 5 kinds of linguistics innovation found in terms of language features used in online gaming communities (Mo, n.d. 2023) being investigated in this research; 1) Slang terms and expression, 2) Abbreviation and acronyms, 3) Lexical borrowing, 4) Phonetic modification and 5) Grammar and sytax. b) Shared experiences Online gaming communities are characterized by shared experiences that contribute to the development of language variations (Cook et al., 2023): 1) Collaborative gameplay, 2) shared challenges, 3) communication and interaction, 4) competition and rivalry, 5) community events and activities, 6) shared culture and identity, 7) supportive network. Shared experiences as data analysis show evidence of how members of communities interact and share challenges, triumphs, and memories while participating. These shared experiences often form bonds among community members and contribute to the overall sense of belonging. C)Technology influence: Technology plays a central role in shaping the dynamics of gaming communities (Shandilya, 2023), as data analysis, it was found that features such as online connectivity, social networking platforms, voice chat and messaging services, and user-generated content enable players from around the world to connect, communicate and collaborate within online gaming communities. these technology advancements facilitate the exchange of experiences, discussions, and creative endeavors, strengthening community bonds and contributing to the development of digital dialect.

**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.

 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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