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LANGUAGE VARIATION IN FREE FIRE ONLINE GAME COMMUNICATION IN SARUDU DISTRICT: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas variasi bahasa dalam komunikasi pemain game online Free Fire di Kecamatan Sarudu, Kabupaten Pasangkayu, dari perspektif sosiolinguistik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan bentuk-bentuk variasi bahasa yang digunakan oleh pemain serta menjelaskan fungsi sosialnya dalam interaksi permainan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Data penelitian berupa tuturan lisan pemain Free Fire yang diperoleh melalui observasi, teknik simak bebas libat cakap, pencatatan, dan perekaman. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan transkripsi, identifikasi, klasifikasi, dan interpretasi berdasarkan jenis variasi bahasa serta konteks penggunaannya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat tiga bentuk variasi bahasa yang dominan, yaitu dialek, sosiolek, dan slang. Variasi dialek tampak melalui penggunaan unsur bahasa lokal seperti miki, manako, dan waitmi dulu yang menandai identitas kedaerahan dan kedekatan sosial antarpemain. Variasi sosiolek terlihat pada penggunaan istilah khas komunitas game seperti revive, headshot, knock, push, dan cover yang berfungsi untuk mempercepat koordinasi strategi permainan. Sementara itu, variasi slang muncul dalam bentuk ungkapan informal seperti bot, anjay, bum, dan ko mampus yang digunakan untuk mengekspresikan emosi, mengejek lawan, serta membangun keakraban. Penelitian ini juga menemukan adanya campur kode antara bahasa lokal, bahasa Indonesia, dan istilah game berbahasa Inggris. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa komunikasi dalam Free Fire tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai sarana teknis permainan, tetapi juga sebagai praktik sosiolinguistik yang merepresentasikan identitas lokal, solidaritas kelompok, dan adaptasi bahasa dalam budaya digital.

Kata Kunci: variasi bahasa, sosiolinguistik, Free Fire, komunikasi digital, Kecamatan Sarudu

Abstrak

This study examines language variation in the communication of Free Fire online game players in Sarudu District, Pasangkayu Regency, from a sociolinguistic perspective. It aims to describe the forms of language variation used by players and to explain their social functions in gameplay interaction. This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. The data consisted of oral utterances produced by Free Fire players, collected through observation, non-participant listening, note-taking, and recording techniques. The data were analyzed through transcription, identification, classification, and interpretation based on the types of language variation and their contexts of use. The findings reveal three dominant forms of language variation: dialect, sociolect, and slang. Dialectal variation appears in the use of local linguistic forms such as miki, manako, and waitmi dulu, which indicate regional identity and social closeness among players. Sociolectal variation is reflected in game-specific terms such as revive, headshot, knock, push, and cover, which function to support rapid strategic coordination during gameplay. Meanwhile, slang variation appears in informal expressions such as bot, anjay, bum, and ko mampus, which are used to express emotions, mock opponents, and build familiarity among players. The study also finds code-mixing between local language, Indonesian, and English gaming terms. These findings indicate that communication in Free Fire is not

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merely a technical tool for gameplay but also a sociolinguistic practice that represents local identity, group solidarity, and language adaptation in digital culture.

Keywords: language variation, sociolinguistics, Free Fire, digital communication, Sarudu District

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental medium of human social life because it enables individuals to express ideas, establish relationships, negotiate identities, and sustain social interaction. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language is not merely a system of signs, sounds, and meanings; it is also a social practice that is inseparable from the context in which it is (Calefato, 2009; Babel, 2025). In other words, language never operates in a neutral space. It is shaped by who the speakers are, to whom they speak, the situation in which communication takes place, the purposes of interaction, and the social and cultural norms surrounding the speech event (Schegloff, 2020). Therefore, language serves as an important indicator for understanding social dynamics, group identity, power relations, solidarity, and cultural change within society.

One of the central issues in sociolinguistic inquiry is language variation. Language variation demonstrates that language use is dynamic and diverse, depending on speakers' social backgrounds, communicative situations, and interactional needs (Ramendra, 2013; Setiawati, 2019; Zulfikar, 2019; Syam et al., 2023). Such variation may appear in the form of dialects, sociolects, registers, jargon, slang, colloquial expressions, code-mixing, code-switching, and varieties based on levels of formality (Bitenc, 2023; Sadigzade, 2025). The linguistic choices made by speakers are not determined solely by linguistic structures but are also influenced by social factors such as age, gender, social status, education, occupation, community membership, interpersonal relationships, and communicative purposes (Coulmas, 2013). Thus, language variation can be understood as a reflection of the relationship between linguistic structure and social structure.

The rapid development of digital technology has expanded the spaces of human interaction and transformed patterns of language use (Cladis, 2020; Salfin et al., 2024). Communication that previously occurred primarily in face-to-face settings has increasingly shifted to virtual spaces through social media, instant messaging applications, online forums, and online games. This transformation has generated new forms of communication that are fast, concise, multimodal, and highly contextual (Dosenko, 2022; Gwiazdowska, 2024). In digital spaces, language is not only used to transmit information but also to construct virtual identities, signal community membership, build solidarity, express emotions, and coordinate social action among users (Al Zidjaly, 2019; Cotoc, 2017). This phenomenon suggests that digital space has become a significant site for the emergence of contemporary language variation.

One digital space that deserves scholarly attention from a sociolinguistic perspective is the online gaming community (Thorne et al., 2009). Online games can no longer be understood merely as entertainment platforms; they also function as social spaces where players interact, collaborate, compete, develop strategies, and construct group identities (Taylor, 2009; Zervas & Maronitis, 2026). In online gaming contexts, communication plays a crucial role because success in the game often depends on players' ability to deliver information quickly, accurately, and effectively. This condition encourages the emergence of distinctive linguistic forms, including abbreviations, game-specific technical terms, community jargon, slang, code-mixing between Indonesian and foreign languages, and informal expressions that are often intelligible only to members of the gaming community.

Free Fire is one of the most popular online games played by various groups, particularly

adolescents and adults. As a strategy-based and team-oriented game, Free Fire provides an intensive communicative space for players. Players communicate not only to deliver technical instructions, such as attacking, defending, changing positions, or sharing in-game resources, but also to express emotions, build intimacy, joke, tease, motivate teammates, and display group identity (Vickery, 2019). Through these interactions, distinctive language variations emerge that differ from those used in everyday communication outside the gaming context.

In Sarudu District, the popularity of Free Fire among adolescents and adults indicates that online gaming has become part of local digital social and cultural practices. Communication among Free Fire players in this area cannot be separated from players' social backgrounds, language habits, local identities, and the influence of global digital culture (Imre, 2009; Mahiwal et al., 2026). Therefore, the language used by Free Fire players in Sarudu District may reveal an intersection of local linguistic elements, informal Indonesian, foreign gaming terms, and registers specific to the gaming world. This phenomenon is important to examine because it shows how local communities participate in global digital culture while maintaining particular linguistic and social characteristics.

Language variation in Free Fire player communication may arise due to several factors. First, the demand for speed during gameplay encourages players to use short, concise, and efficient linguistic forms. Second, interaction within the gaming community creates specific jargon and technical terms that distinguish insiders from outsiders. Third, social relationships among players influence levels of formality, lexical choices, and communicative styles. Fourth, the influence of foreign languages, particularly English, is evident in the use of gaming terms such as push, knock, revive, loot, rank, skin, and other technical expressions. Fifth,

players' local backgrounds may result in a mixture of Indonesian, regional languages, and youth slang in gaming communication.

Several previous studies have examined language variation in different social and digital contexts. Husa (2017), for instance, investigated the forms and use of slang on Line social media. Sartika (2017) examined sociolectal language variation in South Sulawesi society, particularly the use of the Kotu language in Enrekang Regency. Meanwhile, Zulfikar (2019) explored language variation among PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds online game players by focusing on vocabulary, foreign terms, and semantic shifts in the gaming context. These studies have contributed to the understanding that language variation may emerge within particular speech communities, both offline and online.

However, studies on language variation in Free Fire player communication, particularly in the local context of Sarudu District, remain limited. Previous studies have tended to focus on social media, specific speech communities, or other online games. In addition, research on language in online gaming has often emphasized technical gaming terminology, while the social dimensions of language use, such as group identity, solidarity, communicative functions, and the influence of local context, have not been sufficiently explored. This indicates an important research gap concerning how language variation is used, formed, and interpreted within Free Fire player communities in a specific local social setting.

This study is academically significant because it connects classical sociolinguistic inquiry with contemporary digital communication phenomena. By examining the communication of Free Fire players in Sarudu District, this study does not merely describe forms of language variation but also seeks to understand the social and situational factors underlying their use. This inquiry is important because language in online gaming communities reflects changing patterns

of communication among younger generations, particularly in how they build social relationships, express identity, and participate in digital culture.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to describe the forms of language variation used in Free Fire player communication in Sarudu District and to explain the social factors influencing their use. The study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of sociolinguistics, particularly digital sociolinguistics, and practical insights into the dynamics of language use within local online gaming communities. In this regard, the study enriches our understanding of how language develops, adapts, and functions in virtual communicative spaces that are increasingly influential in contemporary social life.

2. METODE

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method (Moleong, 2010). This approach was selected because the study focused on linguistic phenomena that naturally occur in the communication of Free Fire online game players in Sarudu District. The descriptive method was used to describe and explain the forms of language variation used by the players, particularly dialect, sociolect, and slang in the context of online game communication.

The study was conducted in Sarudu District, Pasangkayu Regency. This location was chosen because Free Fire is one of the online games widely played by adolescents and adults in the area. In addition, communication among players in this game shows diverse language use, including regional language, informal Indonesian, game-specific terms, and slang expressions used in particular gameplay situations.

The data in this study consisted of oral utterances produced by Free Fire players during gameplay. The utterances analyzed included words, phrases, clauses, sentences, game-related

terms, dialectal expressions, sociolectal forms, and slang used in player communication. The data sources were Free Fire online game players in Sarudu District, Pasangkayu Regency, consisting of adolescent and adult players. The participants were selected purposively by considering their active involvement in playing Free Fire and their ability to produce speech data relevant to the focus of the study.

The data were collected through observation, non-participant listening technique, note-taking, and recording. Observation was used to examine the communicative situations that occurred while the players were engaged in the game. The non-participant listening technique was applied because the researcher did not directly participate in the players' conversations but listened to naturally occurring utterances during gameplay. Note-taking was used to record speech forms containing language variation, while recording was used to document the speech data so that they could be analyzed more carefully.

In this study, the researcher served as the main instrument because the researcher directly conducted observation, data collection, data selection, and data analysis. Supporting instruments included recording devices, field notes, and an observation guide. The recording device was used to record the players' conversations during gameplay, field notes were used to document the context of the utterances, and the observation guide helped the researcher focus on the forms of language variation relevant to the study.

The data were analyzed through several stages. First, the recorded speech data were transcribed into written form. Second, the researcher identified utterances containing language variation. Third, the data were classified based on the types of language variation, namely dialect, sociolect, and slang. Fourth, each item of data was analyzed based on its meaning and context of use in the game, such as attacking, defending, asking for help, mocking opponents,

giving instructions, or responding to in-game events. Fifth, the researcher interpreted the social functions of these language variations in player communication.

Data trustworthiness was ensured through technique triangulation by comparing data obtained from observation, note-taking, and recording. In addition, the researcher rechecked the transcription and classification of the data to ensure that each utterance was categorized according to its type of language variation and context of use. Through these procedures, this study is expected to provide a systematic, contextual, and academically accountable description of language variation in Free Fire online game communication in Sarudu District.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that communication among Free Fire online game players in Sarudu District contains various forms of language variation. These variations emerge naturally during gameplay and are influenced by the social background of the players, the communicative situation, the need for rapid coordination, and the specific vocabulary used in the gaming community. Based on the data

analysis, three dominant types of language variation were identified: dialect, sociolect, and slang.

Dialect Variation

Dialect variation refers to language variation used by speakers from a particular geographical or regional background. In this study, dialectal forms appeared in the communication of *Free Fire* players through the use of regional linguistic elements, especially expressions and particles commonly used by speakers from Sulawesi. These dialectal forms were used in various gameplay situations, such as giving instructions, asking for help, warning teammates, or responding to opponents' actions.

The use of dialect in the players' communication indicates that regional identity remains present even in digital interaction. Although *Free Fire* is a global online game, the players still bring their local linguistic background into the virtual gaming space. This can be seen in expressions such as *miki*, *manako*, *waitmi dulu*, and other local forms that function as markers of regional identity and social closeness among players.

Table 1. Dialect variation in Free Fire player

Data	Speech	Meaning	context of use of meaning
1	Miki(Shake Miki, dude)	An invitation or command to move	Encourages players to move their characters; if they remain still, the enemy will take the opportunity to attack quickly.
2	You (You're dead, you're dead, you're bang, your bot is bang)	You	Used when emotional or annoyed with an opponent or teammate, commonly used by Sulawesinese speakers during tense match situations.
3	Wow, where are you?	Where are you?	More often used by Sulawesinese speakers during war.
4	Alas your medkit	Just get your medkit.	Pick up a medkit that a teammate has almost taken. This is more often used by South Sulawesi speakers when one team is in trouble or has low health.
5	Wait a minute	Waiting	Often used among Sulawesinese to ask for help from the team.
6	Did you choose your weapon?	Have you chosen your weapon?	Often used among fellow Sulawesinese players at the start of a match.

communication

The data above indicate that dialectal expressions are not merely regional speech forms, but also serve practical communicative functions in the game. They are used to coordinate actions, maintain team cooperation, and express emotional responses during gameplay.

Sociolect Variation

Sociolect variation refers to language variation associated with particular social groups. In the context of this study, sociolect appears in the language used by players as members of the

Free Fire gaming community. The use of specific gaming terms reflects the players' familiarity with the game system, their shared knowledge, and their identity as members of the gaming group.

The sociolect found in the data includes expressions such as *revive*, *headshot*, *knock*, *push*, and *cover*. These terms are commonly used in online gaming and are understood by players who are familiar with the mechanics of *Free Fire*. The use of such terms shows that the gaming community develops its own communicative code to support fast and effective interaction.

Table 2. Sociolect variation in Free Fire player communication

Data	Speech	Meaning	context of use of meaning
1	<i>You're doomed</i>	Victory curse or demeaning gesture	Usually expressed when killing or knocking out an opponent
2	<i>Bum</i>	Explosion or gunshot	Imitating game sound effects
3	<i>Bot</i>	A player considered bad or a beginner	Making fun of an opponent who is playing poorly
4	<i>Headshot</i>	A direct shot to the head	Game skill jargon
5	<i>Push</i>	Advancing attack in the game	Tactical communication between teams
6	<i>Anjay</i>	Expression of surprise or amazement	Spontaneous reaction to an in-game situation

The data show that sociolect functions as a marker of group membership. Players who understand these terms are considered part of the gaming community, while those unfamiliar with the terms may experience difficulty understanding the communication. Therefore, sociolect in this context functions not only as a communication tool but also as a symbol of shared knowledge and gaming identity.

Slang Variation

Slang variation refers to informal and non-standard language commonly used in casual communication, especially among young people

or specific communities. In this study, slang appeared as an expressive form used by players to show emotions, evaluate other players' abilities, celebrate success, or respond spontaneously to events during gameplay.

Slang expressions in *Free Fire* communication are often short, emotional, and context-dependent. They are used in informal situations and are closely related to the social atmosphere of the game. Some expressions are used to mock opponents, while others function as expressions of surprise, admiration, or excitement.

5

Table 3. Slang variation in Free Fire player communication

identity, build solidarity, and coordinate

Data	Speech	Meaning	context of use of meaning
1	<i>You're doomed</i>	Victory curse or demeaning gesture	Usually expressed when killing or knocking out an opponent
2	<i>Bum</i>	Explosion or gunshot	Imitating game sound effects
3	<i>Bot</i>	A player considered bad or a beginner	Making fun of an opponent who is playing poorly
4	<i>Headshot</i>	A direct shot to the head	Game skill jargon
5	<i>Push</i>	Advancing attack in the game	Tactical communication between teams
6	<i>Anjay</i>	Expression of surprise or amazement	Spontaneous reaction to an in-game situation

The findings indicate that slang plays an important role in creating an informal and expressive atmosphere among players. It strengthens social closeness, builds group solidarity, and allows players to express emotions quickly during gameplay.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that language variation in *Free Fire* player communication in Sarudu District is closely related to the social, cultural, and situational context of online gaming. The emergence of dialect, sociolect, and slang demonstrates that language use in digital gaming interaction is not random, but socially patterned and functionally motivated. In line with sociolinguistic perspectives, language variation is shaped by the identity of speakers, their social relationships, the communicative situation, and the purpose of interaction (Holmes & Wilson, 2017; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2020). Therefore, the linguistic practices found among *Free Fire* players in Sarudu District can be understood as part of a broader social process in which players negotiate

collective action through language.

The use of dialectal variation shows that local identity remains visible within global digital communication. Although *Free Fire* is an online game played across regions and countries, players in Sarudu District continue to use local linguistic forms in their interactions. Expressions such as *miki*, *manako*, *waitmi dulu*, and *Ala bawanni medkit-mu* indicate that regional language features are not displaced by digital communication. Instead, they are recontextualized within the gaming environment. This finding supports the view that dialect is not merely a geographical marker, but also a symbolic resource for expressing belonging and social identity (Chaer & Agustina, 2014; Kridalaksana, 2008). In this context, the use of dialect functions as a marker of local solidarity among players, especially when they communicate with teammates who share similar linguistic backgrounds.

This finding is also consistent with the notion that digital spaces do not erase local linguistic identities. Rather, digital communication provides new domains in which local identities can be performed and maintained.

Androustopoulos (2018) argues that mediatized communication contributes to sociolinguistic change by allowing language users to reshape linguistic practices across online and offline contexts. In the case of *Free Fire* players in Sarudu District, the digital gaming space becomes a site where local dialects interact with global gaming culture. Thus, the players' language reflects both their participation in a global digital community and their attachment to local speech practices.

The sociolectal variation found in this study reflects the role of the gaming community as a distinct social group. Terms such as *revive*, *headshot*, *knock*, *push*, and *cover* are not only technical terms related to gameplay, but also linguistic markers of membership in the *Free Fire* community. Players who understand and use these terms demonstrate familiarity with the game system, gaming strategies, and the communicative norms of the community. This supports Holmes' view that sociolect emerges because different social groups develop particular ways of speaking to signal group identity and social belonging (Holmes, 2013). In this study, sociolect functions as both a practical and symbolic resource: it enables efficient communication during gameplay while also distinguishing experienced players from outsiders or beginners.

The use of gaming sociolect is strongly influenced by the fast-paced nature of online games. In *Free Fire*, players are required to make quick decisions, respond to threats, and coordinate team strategies in real time. As a result, short and widely understood terms such as *push*, *revive*, and *cover* become communicatively effective. These terms reduce the time needed to explain complex actions and allow players to respond quickly during critical moments. This finding shows that language variation in online gaming is not only socially meaningful but also interactionally functional. It supports the argument that language in gaming communities

often develops as a specialized register shaped by the technical and collaborative demands of gameplay (Thorne, 2016).

Slang variation, meanwhile, reflects the informal, emotional, and expressive dimensions of player communication. Expressions such as *bot*, *anjay*, *ko mampus*, and *bum* are used to express surprise, mock opponents, imitate game sounds, or respond emotionally to in-game events. According to Chaer and Agustina (2014), slang is a non-standard language variety that is commonly used in informal contexts and is often associated with particular groups, especially young people. In the context of *Free Fire* communication, slang functions as a tool for emotional expression and social bonding. It allows players to release tension, celebrate success, express frustration, and create a relaxed atmosphere during gameplay.

The presence of slang also shows that communication in *Free Fire* is not limited to strategic coordination. It includes affective and interpersonal functions. Players do not only exchange information about enemy positions, weapons, or tactics; they also use language to maintain social relationships, build camaraderie, and display humor. This is consistent with sociolinguistic views that language functions not only as a medium of information transfer but also as a means of establishing social relationships and expressing identity (Sumarsono, 2004; Mesthrie et al., 2019). Therefore, slang in *Free Fire* communication can be interpreted as a social mechanism that strengthens intimacy among players and reinforces their identity as members of the gaming community.

Another important finding is the occurrence of code-mixing between local language, Indonesian, and English gaming terms. Expressions such as *Ai knock meka saya* show how players combine local linguistic elements with English-based technical vocabulary. This phenomenon indicates that players creatively adapt global gaming terminology into their local

speech patterns. Such code-mixing reflects the linguistic hybridity of digital communication, where local and global elements coexist within a single communicative event. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this demonstrates that language users are active agents who select and combine linguistic resources according to communicative needs, social relationships, and situational demands (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2020).

The use of English terms in the players' speech also reflects the influence of global gaming culture. Many technical terms in online games originate from English because the game interface, tutorials, and international gaming communities frequently use English vocabulary. However, when these terms are used by Sarudu players, they are not simply copied; they are adapted into local patterns of interaction. This linguistic adaptation shows that global vocabulary can be localized through everyday speech practices. In this sense, *Free Fire* communication in Sarudu District represents a form of "glocal" language practice, where global gaming terms are integrated into local linguistic structures and social meanings.

The findings further reveal that language variation in *Free Fire* is highly dependent on the gameplay situation. During critical moments, such as when a player is attacked, knocked down, running out of health, or preparing to attack an enemy, language is used as a tool for rapid coordination. Expressions such as *revive*, *bang*, *push*, *bang*, *waitmi dulu*, and *Ala bawanni medkit-mu* demonstrate how players use language to organize collective action. In this regard, language functions as a tactical instrument that supports teamwork, decision-making, and survival in the game. This finding is relevant to the view that online gaming communities require forms of communication that are immediate, collaborative, and context-sensitive (Thorne, 2016; Hamari & Sjöblom, 2017).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the

findings confirm that language variation is shaped by both social and situational factors. The players' choices of dialect, sociolect, slang, or mixed codes are influenced by their regional background, age, gaming experience, relationship with teammates, and the communicative pressure of the game. Dialect marks local belonging, sociolect marks membership in the gaming community, slang marks informality and emotional closeness, while code-mixing reflects adaptation to global digital culture. Each form of variation therefore has a specific social and communicative function.

The communication patterns found in this study also suggest that *Free Fire* players in Sarudu District form a speech community. A speech community is characterized by shared linguistic norms, communicative practices, and social meanings among its members (Holmes & Wilson, 2017; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2020). In this study, players share particular vocabulary, expressions, and interactional patterns that may not be fully understood by people outside the gaming community. Terms such as *push*, *knock*, *revive*, and *bot* are meaningful within the shared context of the game. This shared linguistic knowledge strengthens group identity and creates a sense of belonging among players.

Compared with previous studies, the findings of this research strengthen the argument that language variation occurs not only in conventional face-to-face communities but also in digital communities. Husa (2017) showed that slang develops actively in social media interaction, while Sartika (2017) demonstrated that sociolect is influenced by social background in local communities. Similarly, Zulfikar (2019) found that online game players use distinctive vocabulary and foreign terms in the gaming context. The present study extends these findings by showing that *Free Fire* players in Sarudu District combine dialect, sociolect, slang, and code-mixing in a single digital interactional space. Thus, this study contributes to the

development of digital sociolinguistic research, particularly in understanding how local communities produce new language practices through online gaming.

Overall, the results of this study show that communication in *Free Fire* is not merely a technical activity related to gameplay. It is a sociolinguistic practice through which players express local identity, construct group membership, manage emotions, and coordinate collective action. The combination of dialect, sociolect, slang, and code-mixing indicates that online gaming has become a productive space for the emergence of new language practices. In the case of Sarudu District, *Free Fire* communication demonstrates how local linguistic identity and global digital culture intersect, producing a distinctive speech pattern that reflects the creativity, adaptability, and social dynamics of contemporary language users.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that language variation in *Free Fire* online game communication in Sarudu District reflects the dynamic relationship between language, social identity, and digital interaction. The findings show that three dominant forms of language variation appear in player communication, namely dialect, sociolect, and slang. These variations are not used randomly; rather, they are shaped by the players' regional backgrounds, social relationships, gaming experience, and the situational demands of gameplay.

Dialectal variation appears through the use of local linguistic forms that mark the players' regional identity and social closeness. Expressions such as *miki*, *manako*, and *waitmi dulu* show that local language remains active even in virtual gaming interaction. This indicates that online gaming spaces do not eliminate local identity but provide a new communicative domain in which local speech practices can be maintained and adapted.

Sociolectal variation is reflected in the use of specific gaming terms such as *revive*, *headshot*, *knock*, *push*, and *cover*. These terms function as markers of membership in the *Free Fire* gaming community and help players coordinate strategies quickly and effectively. Their use shows that the gaming community has developed a specialized communicative code that supports teamwork and distinguishes experienced players from those outside the community.

Slang variation appears in informal and expressive utterances such as *bot*, *anjay*, *bum*, and *ko mampus*. These forms are used to express emotions, mock opponents, celebrate success, and build familiarity among players. Thus, slang does not only function as informal language but also as a social tool for strengthening solidarity and interpersonal relations within the gaming community.

The study demonstrates that communication in *Free Fire* is not merely a technical activity related to gameplay. It is also a sociolinguistic practice through which players express local identity, construct group membership, manage emotions, and coordinate collective action. The combination of dialect, sociolect, slang, and code-mixing between local language, Indonesian, and English gaming terms shows that online gaming has become a productive space for the emergence of new language practices. Therefore, this study contributes to digital sociolinguistic research by showing how local gaming communities adapt language to the demands of global digital culture while maintaining their own linguistic identities.

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