

LEXICAL ADOPTION FROM GAMER INFLUENCERS: A STUDY OF YOUTUBE COMMENT SECTIONS AMONG INDONESIAN TEENAGERS

Marta Friska Tindaon¹, Sriwi Anceli Naibaho², Sepania Handayani Sihite³, May Devi Triana⁴,
Claudia Lisy Lawolo⁵, Meisuri⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}Universitas Negeri Medan

Email: martafriska57@gmail.com

Abstrak: Meningkatnya popularitas budaya game dan munculnya influencer gamer telah membentuk pola komunikasi di kalangan remaja di Indonesia, khususnya di platform daring seperti YouTube yang telah menjadi salah satu platform paling berpengaruh di mana remaja mengonsumsi konten game dan berinteraksi aktif satu sama lain melalui bagian komentar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis item leksikal yang diadopsi dalam interaksi remaja di bagian komentar YouTube dan bagaimana adaptasi tersebut diwujudkan secara linguistik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari 30 komentar saluran game terpilih yang populer di kalangan remaja Indonesia. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada tiga jenis adopsi leksikal: (1) Kata serapan, (2) campuran pinjaman, dan (3) pergeseran pinjaman. Analisis juga menunjukkan bahwa adopsi leksikal diwujudkan secara linguistik melalui empat proses: (1) Adaptasi fonologis, (2) Adaptasi morfologis, (3) Adaptasi semantik, dan (4) Adaptasi ortografis. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa remaja Indonesia melokalisasi dan mengembangkan kosakata secara aktif, alih-alih hanya meminjamnya. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa influencer gamer merupakan agen distribusi leksikal dan media digital berkontribusi signifikan terhadap perubahan bahasa di kalangan remaja Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Adaptasi Leksikal, Influencer Gamer, YouTube, Remaja Indonesia.

Abstract: The increasing popularity of gaming culture and the rise of gamer influencers have shaped communication patterns among teenagers in Indonesia, particularly in online platforms such as YouTube that become one of the most influential platform where teenagers consume gaming content and actively interact with each other through comment section. This study aims to identify the kinds of lexical items are being adopted in teenagers interaction in the YouTube comment section and how those adaptations are linguistically realized. This study employs a qualitative method, the data were collected from 30 comments of selected gaming channels which are popular among Indonesian teenagers. The finding of the study shows that there are three kinds of lexical adoption: (1) Loanwords, (2) loanblends, and (3) loanshifts. The analysis also shows that the lexical adoption are linguistically realized through four processes: (1) Phonological adaption, (2) Morphological adaption, (3) Semantic adaption, and (4) Orthographic adaption. This findings reveal that Indonesian teenagers localize and develop vocabulary word actively, rather than only borrowing them. The study concludes that the gamer influencers is the lexical distribution agents and digital media contributes significantly to language change among Indonesian teenagers.

Keywords: Lexical Adaption, Gamer Influencers, YouTube, Indonesian Teenagers.

INTRODUCTION

The gaming industry has grown significantly beyond as a form of entertainment, and is now a core cultural element in communities of young people around the world (Kim et al., 2022). In Indonesia, teenagers spend most of their spare time playing digital games, not only playing the games themselves but also engaging in the dynamic communities surrounding them. Teenagers, as the most active group on social media, often act as the primary agents of adopting new vocabulary. In particular, gaming YouTube channels have emerged as influential cultural spaces, where gaming influencers attract large teenage audiences through gameplay, comments, and the typical use of language (Lozano-Blasco et al., 2021). These influencers are not just entertainers, they are cultural icons who increasingly shape or change the way young people use language in their communication both online and offline. This study focuses on lexical adoption influenced by gamer influencers in YouTube comment sections among Indonesian teenagers.

The linguistic impact of gaming culture is clearly reflected in the extensive adoption of specialized vocabulary, slang, and popular phrases originating from gamers' conversations. Terms such as “noob,” “GG”, or locally adapted phrases have transcended the game screen and entered the everyday vocabulary of teenagers. This kind of lexical adoption shows how the language practices of digital sub-cultures are transferring into teenage communication. Lexical change in online environments is often driven by influential figures. Putri et al. (2024) stated that YouTube gamer videos affect the acquisition of noun vocabulary among elementary school children, underscoring the potential of gaming content as a source of new lexicon. This shows that influencers' use of language is not only stylistic, but also serves as a channel for spreading new vocabulary that is imitated by their audience.

From a community perspective Immanuel et al. (2025) emphasize that the use of slang that has shifted in meaning serves as a communication accommodation strategy and a marker of group identity. Similarly, Sehar (2025) discusses how the language built by gamers evolves through the creation of acronyms, jargon, and specific terms within the group, which become indicators of community membership. For teenagers, lexical adoption is not only about following language trends, but also about signifying social identity within the digital community.

This emphasis on the form of identity provides a useful point for comprehending the process of lexical borrowing and adoption. When teenagers interact with the discourse of gaming

influencers, they are exposed to linguistic sources t, then borrowed, adapted, and recontextualized in their own communication practices. Borrowing often takes the form of direct lexical transfer, while adoption may involve semantic shifts, phonological modifications, or the local re-creation of the terms to fit the sociolinguistic norms of Indonesian youth discourse. Analyzing these processes is crucial to understanding how lexical items move from influencer discourse to the everyday interactions of youth, as well as how linguistic innovation is shaped by global gaming culture and local sociocultural contexts.

Types of Lexical Adoption

Previous research has shown that lexical adoption in Indonesian is not a single phenomenon but consists of several categories. Chojimah & Widodo (2021) emphasize that vocabulary borrowed during the Covid-19 discourse can be classified into loanwords, loanblends, and loanshifts, depending on the extent to which elements from the donor language are preserved or modified. This finding is reinforced by Indriani & Bram (2023), who identified the same three categories in social media terminology within Liputan6.com, highlighting the recurrence of these types in digital contexts. Similarly, Noviyani (2017) identified loanwords, loanblends, and loanshifts in the domain of cosmetics, demonstrating that lexical borrowing cuts across health, media, and commercial spheres. Taken together, these studies consistently illustrate that loanwords, loanblends, and loanshifts form the main categories of lexical adoption in Indonesia and that their application is not confined to a single register, but reappears across multiple areas of everyday life.

Adoption Processes

In classifying adoption processes, previous studies highlight the processes through which borrowed words adapt to the Indonesian linguistic system. Putri (2025) found that adoption often occurs through phonological adjustments, such as sound substitution or vowel insertion to match Indonesian syllable patterns, as well as semantic shifts, including narrowing or broadening of meaning. Imamah & Himmawati (2016) added that morphological adoption, such as affixation or changes in word class, frequently occurs in print media borrowings. In addition, Chojimah & Widodo (2021) note orthographic adjustments, including spelling modification or deletion of letters, making borrowed forms more recognizable to Indonesian speakers. Collectively, these

studies show that lexical adoption is not a matter of simply transferring forms but involves creative strategies to harmonize foreign vocabulary with Indonesian phonology, morphology, semantics, and orthography. Such processes ensure that borrowed terms not only enter but also integrate and function within everyday communication.

Gamer Communities and Lexical Innovation

Digital communities, particularly gaming communities, have increasingly been recognized as fertile grounds for lexical innovation and adoption. Unlike traditional face-to-face settings, online platforms provide sustained, large-scale, and transnational interactions that accelerate the spread of linguistic features. Sehar (2025) stated that gamer-constructed languages emerge through acronyms, jargon, and slang that function as identity markers and group solidarity tools. This observation highlights that the linguistic creativity of gamer communities goes beyond playful language use, it becomes an essential mechanism for boundary-making, where in-group members distinguish themselves from outsiders through shared linguistic codes. Such practices underscore how language not only reflects but actively constructs community membership.

Furthermore, the dynamics of slang innovation within these digital spaces illustrate how community interaction is a core to linguistic change. Immanuel et al. (2025) discussed that online communities such as those surrounding the game OMORI actively create and reproduce slang with semantic shifts, reinforcing the idea that community interaction accelerates the spread of lexical items. The semantic shifts mentioned are particularly significant, as they demonstrate how existing vocabulary is recontextualized, gaining new meanings within the community's cultural and emotional frameworks. Such processes align with broader sociolinguistic theories of language change, where peer interaction serves as a critical driver of innovation.

Within the Indonesian context, the influence of gamer content becomes even more pronounced, especially given the popularity of YouTube among young audiences. Putri et al. (2024) found that YouTube gamer content influences children's acquisition of new vocabulary, emphasizing how digital entertainment simultaneously functions as informal language education. While this may enrich children's lexicon, it also raises critical concerns about the quality, appropriateness, and long-term effects of such linguistic input. Unlike classroom settings where vocabulary is carefully curated, gamer-influenced lexical adoption is often unregulated, potentially

embedding slang, hybrid forms, or even offensive language into everyday use. This tension highlights the dual role of gamer influencers, they act as linguistic trendsetters but also as gatekeepers whose word choices carry significant cultural and educational consequences.

Theoretically, lexical adoption occurs when linguistic elements fulfill communicative needs, have symbolic value, or signify group membership (Haspelmath, 2020). In gaming communities, these processes are reinforced by repetition, validation from fellow members, and the prestige of influencers (Pitroso, 2024). When a popular gaming influencer creates or repeatedly uses a phrase, that phrase gains social capital and quickly spreads among teenage audiences who want to join the gaming subculture. However, although this phenomenon is evident in online spaces, systematic studies analyzing how teenagers adopt such lexicon in YouTube comment sections are still rare, especially in the Indonesian context.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing the lexical adoption of gaming influencers among Indonesian teenagers in YouTube comment sections. This study aims to identify the types of lexical items adopted and analyze how this adoption is realized linguistically. By locating the analysis at the intersection of gaming culture, influencer dynamics, and adolescent identity, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital subcultures trigger lexical innovation in contemporary Indonesian society.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate how Indonesian teenagers adopt words from gaming influencers on YouTube. The data for this study was obtained from 30 comments taken from selected Indonesian gaming YouTube channels. These channels were chosen based on their popularity among teenagers and their tendency to attract a large audience that actively participates in the comments section. The data collection process consists of two steps. First, relevant comments are selected based on the criteria, that is the lexical words or vocabulary related to the game used by Indonesian teenagers. Second, the lexical words identified in these comments are categorized based on their lexical types. This categorization aims to facilitate further analysis of the patterns of borrowing and adoption of these words.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN***Types of Lexical Adaption***

Data analysis shows that most of the gaming terms used in teenagers interactions found in comments on gaming influencers content on YouTube are borrowing words, in the sense that these terms often appear and are used collectively by Indonesian speakers. These borrowing can be classified into loanwords, loanblends, and loanshifts.

Types of Lexical Adoption	Frequency	Data (comments)	Function
Loanwords	9	Sigma	Refers to someone as “top-tier” or “alpha,” showing admiration or dominance.
		Yapping	Mocking or criticizing someone for talking too much or nonsensically.
		Dark System	Refers to unfair, rigged, or corrupted systems, often in games or real-life metaphors.
		Gg	Acronym for Good Game, signaling respect, closure, or sarcasm after a play.
		Goat	Acronym for Greatest of All Time, praising someone as the best or legendary.
		Farming	Describes repetitive activity to gain points/rewards in games; also used metaphorically.
		W	Shorthand for “win,” used to celebrate success or achievement.
		Epic	Expresses amazement or excitement over something outstanding.

Loandblends	6	Quest	Denotes missions/tasks in games, sometimes metaphorically for daily life struggles.
		Gendong	From “carry,” means helping weaker players succeed; shows collaboration.
		Ngebug	Refers to exploiting/experiencing a game glitch; signals technical issues or strategy.
		Ngekill	From “kill,” means defeating opponents in a game; expressing achievement.
		Kepencet Emot	Refers to accidental actions that cause character animations such as dances, facial expressions, or other actions (also called emotes) in the game.
		Ngerecall Ngerank	Refers to return to base for healing/items. Refers to play in ranked matches.
Loanshifts	15	Gercep	Acronym for <i>Gerak Cepati</i> ; refers to fast response/action, showing efficiency or urgency.
		Mabar	Acronym for “Main bareng” (play together), indicates social bonding through gaming.
		Anomali	Describes strange/unexpected situations, often humorously.
		Ngakak	Refers to laughter, indicating humor or amusement.
		Bjirrr	Euphemistic exclamation of surprise/shock.
		Gass	Encouragement to start/do something energetically.
		Kocak	Used to label something funny or silly.

Gokil	Similar to kocak, but more extreme; something crazy-funny or cool.
Feed	Refers to player who dies frequently gives the opposing team an advantage.
Membagongkan	Exaggeratedly surprising or unbelievable.
Indomaret	Used to describe ordinary and simple items.
Kelazzz	Used to describe something that is very good, sophisticated, or demonstrates above-average skill on the part of a player.
Gabut	Describes boredom or having nothing to do.
Mantul	Acronym for <i>mantap betul</i> (truly great), used to give praise or express admiration for something, such as a player's skill, a prize, or an interesting event in the game.
Salfok	Acronym for <i>salah fokus</i> (wrong focus), used when attention is distracted by minor details.

The findings show that lexical adoption from gaming influencers in Indonesian YouTube comment sections takes three main forms: loanwords, loanblends, and loanshifts. Among these categories, loanshifts dominate with 15 occurrences (50%), followed by loanwords with 9 (30%), and loanblends with 6 (20%). This distribution shows that Indonesian teenagers not only borrow words directly from English-language gaming discourse, but also adapt and modify them into local expressions that suit their communicative needs.

Borrowed words such as GG, GOAT, farming, and quest indicate the direct borrowing of international gaming terminology, reflecting adolescents' exposure to global gaming culture. Borrowed word combinations such as ngebug, ngerecall, and ngerank indicate morphological adoption, where English roots are combined with Indonesian affixes, making them sound natural in everyday interactions. The process of modified borrowing (loanshift) such as mabar, gabut, mantul, and salfok illustrates the most creative linguistic process, where existing Indonesian words or acronyms are given new meanings related to games.

The results of this study also support Weinreich's (1974) view that language contact produces interference and adoption phenomena, both at the semantic and morphological levels. From the analyzed data, variations in lexical adoption were found, indicating the creativity of adolescents in adapting foreign terms to suit the structure of the Indonesian language. This finding not only reinforces the theory of lexical borrowing or adaption, but also shows how digital communication practices shape new linguistic identities. Thus, this discussion will further elaborate on the dominant trends in lexical adoption, the adoption process that occurs, and its relevance to sociolinguistic studies and language development in the digital age.

Types of Lexical Adaption Process

Based on Weinreich's theory of borrowing and adoption, words adopted from gaming influencers into Indonesian teenagers' YouTube comments are linguistically realized through several adoption processes:

a. **Phonological Adoption**

Borrowed items are adjusted to Indonesian phonology or spelling conventions.

b. **Morphological Adoption**

English borrowings are combined with Indonesian affixes or structures.

c. **Semantic Adoption**

Lexical items are not direct borrowings, but semantic innovations influenced by gaming/influencer culture that experience a shift in meaning when used in the context of games.

d. **Orthographic Adoption**

Creative spelling variations and stylization are also evident in the data.

Discussion

The data shows that loanshifts (50%) dominates, while loanwords (30%) and loanblends (20%) appear less frequently. This indicates that Indonesian teenagers are not passive recipients of foreign vocabulary, but active language builders. Instead of importing foreign forms wholesale, they often utilize Indonesian morphemes and semantic frameworks to express specific gaming meanings (such as: *mabar* (from *main bareng*, meaning “play together”), *gercep* (from *gerak cepat*, meaning “fast movement”), and *gokil* (intensified from local slang)) are typical examples

of this process. These results challenge the simple distribution model of lexical borrowing, in which words from prestige languages simply replace native lexemes. This is in line with Weinreich's (1974) statement that language contact triggers both interference and adoption, showing that lexical borrowing is rarely a simple transfer but often involves creative reconfiguration.

One crucial finding is that loanwords such as GG, GOAT, quest, and farming reflect direct exposure to the international gaming community. Their adoption in Indonesian comments indicates the strong prestige and authority of global gaming terminology, reinforcing the role of English as a lingua franca in the context of online gaming. These loanwords function as markers of global identity, where teenagers use them to indicate participation in a broader gaming culture. This supports Chojimah's (2015) view that lexical borrowing in the context of media often carries prestige and reflects alignment with the dominant language.

On the other hand, loanblends such as ngebug, ngerank, and ngekill show morphological adoption, where English roots are integrated into Indonesian affixation patterns. This adoption reflects the linguistic creativity of teenagers, as foreign terms are naturalized into the local grammatical system, making them sound familiar and “authentically Indonesian.” This kind of mixing not only shows functional adoption but also cultural identity negotiation, where global discourse is localized without losing its specific connotations in the context of gaming.

The most dominant type is loanshifts. It describes semantic adoption and the creative use of existing Indonesian expressions. Words such as mabar (main bareng) and mantul (mantap betul) show how local vocabulary is adapted in gaming culture, acquiring new meanings. This process illustrates how teenagers reshape everyday language to reflect their digital lifestyle, thus blurring the boundaries between online interactions and offline life. Furthermore, the high frequency of loanshifts indicates that Indonesian teenagers tend to modify and recontextualize existing local words rather than rely on foreign borrowings. Unlike loanwords, which require direct transfer from English, loanshifts allow teenagers to play with words they already know, giving them new meanings shaped by gaming culture, as these expressions are more relevant and strengthen solidarity within the group. This is in line with Putri's (2025) findings that semantic shifts, including narrowing or broadening of meaning, commonly occur when global vocabulary is adapted into Indonesian youth discourse.

In addition, the presence of phonological and orthographic adoption, for instance, stylized spelling (such as: *bjirrr*, *kelazzz*) also reflects the playful nature of online discourse. Such modifications not only increase expressiveness but also serve as markers of identity, distinguishing members of the gaming community from outsiders. In this case, creative orthographic variations are in line with broader trends in digital communication, where stylization has become a tool for shaping teenagers' identities.

From a broader sociolinguistic perspective, these findings confirm that online spaces such as YouTube comment sections are active sites of language change and identity negotiation. The interaction between global gaming terminology and local linguistic practices highlights the hybrid nature of digital youth culture, in which Indonesian teenagers adopt, adapt, and innovate language to build a sense of global belonging and local uniqueness.

This study conclude that Indonesian teenagers adopt gaming-related vocabulary from influencers on YouTube through loanwords, loanblends, and loanshifts, with loanshifts being the most dominant. The preference for loanshifts shows that teenagers creatively reshape familiar local terms to fit gaming contexts, making language more inclusive, expressive, and culturally resonant. These findings support Weinreich's (1974) view of language contact as a site of adoption, while also confirming earlier studies that highlight semantic and morphological innovation in borrowing. Overall, lexical adoption in digital gaming communities illustrates how global and local elements merge, allowing teenagers to participate in international gaming culture while simultaneously reinforcing their group identity and contributing to the evolution of Indonesian digital vernaculars.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion this study reveals that gamer influencers on YouTube play a significant role in shaping the linguistic behavior of Indonesian teenagers through lexical adoption in comment sections. Teenagers do not merely borrow English vocabulary but creatively modify and adapt it to fit their cultural and social contexts. Analysis of 30 comments identified three main types of lexical adoption: loanwords (30%), loanblends (20%), and loanshifts (50%), with loanshifts being the most dominant. These adoptions are linguistically realized through phonological, morphological, semantic, and orthographic processes, reflecting teenagers' linguistic creativity in blending global and local elements. Terms such as *GG*, *GOAT*, *ngebug*, *ngekill*, *mabar*, and *mantul*

illustrate how teenagers actively construct new linguistic identities in digital spaces rather than simply imitating foreign words. Therefore, YouTube serves as a site of language contact and innovation, where gamer influencers act as agents of lexical distribution and teenagers emerge as active innovators contributing to the evolution of Indonesian digital vernaculars.

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