

CODE-MIXING AND LANGUAGE PLAY IN THREADS: CONSTRUCTING DIGITAL PERSONA OF INDONESIAN GAME STREAMERS

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Abstract

In the dynamic landscape of digital communication, bilingual expression has become an essential tool for online identity construction, especially among content creators in the gaming community. Despite increasing interest in social media discourse, limited attention has been paid to the linguistic strategies used by Indonesian game streamers on social media platforms. This study aims to explore the use of code mixing and language play in shaping digital personas through the public posts of three popular Indonesian streamers on Threads. Using a qualitative method, 90 purposively selected posts were analysed to identify code-mixing types, communicative functions, and creative language patterns. The study found that insertion and alternation were the most frequent code-mixing strategies, used to express emotion, share information, and maintain social connection. Each streamer demonstrated distinct language play styles, ranging from humorous exaggeration to brand-oriented clarity. These linguistic choices contribute to authenticity, audience engagement, and identity signalling. The study underscores how bilingual creativity operates as a social and aesthetic practice in digital youth culture.

Keywords: *Code-Mixing, Digital Persona, Game Streamers, Language Play, Social Media Discourse*

Introduction

In recent years, Indonesia has experienced significant growth in development in the field of online game streaming. Online game streamers have become a popular

job because of that phenomenon. Online game streamers are also increasingly popular as part of a dynamic online game and esports' ecosystem (Hidayanto, 2020). There are some famous online game streamers in Indonesia, such as Windah Basudara, Jess no Limit, DeanKT, MiawAug, and Jonathan Liandi. The online game streamers not only provide gameplay content but also build social interactions and strong digital personas through communicating with fans or viewers on various social media platforms.

One of the famous, interested and new media social platforms for Indonesian people nowadays is Threads. Threads, launched in 2023, is a social media that allows short and fast communication in the form of text posts (Zhang et al., 2024). There are some famous online game streamers who have an account in Threads, such as @aldeantg as the account of DeanKT or viewers usually call him as '*Mas Dear*', @miawaug as the account of MiawAug or viewers usually call him as '*Bang Regi*' and @Jessnolimit as the account of Tobias Justin. Threads also let the users interact with each other's informally and creatively. This phenomenon also usually happens to online game streamers and their fans or viewers. Therefore, this condition often gives rise to interesting linguistic phenomenon, especially sociolinguistics aspect, such as code-mixing and language play.

Most online games, such as PUBG, DOTA, Among Us, E-Football, let the players meet some players from different regions or countries (Xu et al., 2018). Therefore, this condition lets the Indonesian online game streamers conduct code-mixing in their communication both written and spoken. In addition, language used in the gaming sphere also fosters new communication habits, such as the emergence of slang and other informal expressions. From a pragmatic perspective, slang use in online gaming functions as a means of fostering social bonds, constructing group identity, and conveying emotional expression. In addition, slang plays a role in cross-cultural interaction and influences how messages are perceived during gameplay (Printsipalova, 2024). The research demonstrates how slang helps shape and sustain online communities.

Code-mixing as the use of two languages within a single utterance without a shift in topic, often carried out deliberately and without strict functional limits

(Wardhaugh, 1986). In online communication, this practice helps users connect with wider audiences while blending local and global identities (Rustan & Ajiegoena, 2023; Susanti et al., 2024; Kay et al., 2022). An analysis of the Twitter (X) account of KuntoAjiW identified instances of code-switching and code-mixing involving Indonesian, Javanese, and English, which were shaped by habitual practices, interlocutors, third-party presence, and popular expressions (Rahma, 2023). Social media's fluid nature makes code-mixing analytically complex, as it is strongly shaped by platform features and user behaviors (Barman et al., 2014; Khairunnas et al., 2025).

Code-mixing refers to the blending of two or more languages within a single utterance or discourse and is common in multilingual societies. Code-mixing is defined as the use of two languages simultaneously without a topic shift, often involving the insertion of elements from one language into another (Wardhaugh, 1986.; Muysken, 2000). Code-mixing can be classified into three types: insertion, which involves the use of a single word or phrase; alternation, which refers to switching between clauses or sentences; and congruent lexicalization, which occurs when shared grammatical structures accommodate a mixed lexicon (Muysken, 2000). In online communication, especially among youth and content creators, code mixing has shifted from being occasional to a stylistic norm.

A recent study reported that 87.5% of Gen Z students perceived code-mixing as enhancing the relevance of their Instagram content, while 93.8% indicated that it facilitated clearer message delivery, suggesting that in digital spaces code-mixing has developed into a normative communication style rather than a simple insertion of languages (Sintia et al., 2025). Similarly, the practice of code-mixing among South Jakarta teenagers is shaped by social media engagement, social environment, and identity construction, reinforcing its role as a contemporary sociolinguistic strategy (Fitriani & Ramadhani, 2022).

This practice is determined by various communicative functions. Code-mixing serves multiple functions, including referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic purposes (Appel & Muysken, 1987). These are especially

relevant in digital platforms where language use is performative and context dependent. Among digital influencers and streamers, code mixing not only reflects identity and emotion but also signals affiliation with online subcultures like gaming communities. The deliberate integration of English in Indonesian posts highlights global-local linguistic interplay and helps shape their online or digital persona. Code-mixing in digital spaces is not only a linguistic choice but also a performative act that reflects users' social identity, creativity, and negotiation of cultural alignment (Krishna, 2024; Nordin, 2023; Ahmad et al., 2024).

Language play is characterized as a normal aspect of human behavior in which individuals manipulate linguistic forms and functions for enjoyment or social bonding (Crystal, 1998). He emphasizes its importance in child development, linguistic awareness, and language teaching contexts. Social media has been shown to influence teenagers' language use, with the increasing prevalence of slang, abbreviations, and emojis that both construct social identity and affect formal language proficiency (Rianto & Juliarta, 2024). An analysis of speech act strategies used by the gaming YouTuber "Jess No Limit" demonstrates the predominant use of positive politeness strategies, such as seeking agreement, showing concern, offering rewards, involving viewers, and intensifying engagement, to establish rapport with the audience (Ibrahim & Qura, 2021).

Language play refers to the creative use of linguistic elements for humorous, expressive, or aesthetic purposes (Crystal, 1998). It includes techniques such as puns, slang, dramatization, visual elements (e.g., emojis), irony, and in-group jokes, each serving functions like expressing identity, building relationships, entertaining, or challenging norms. Language play occurs across various linguistic levels, ranging from phonology to pragmatics, and carries both pedagogical value and playful functions (Cook, 2000; Ferguson & Macken, 1983).

A sociolinguistic inquiry into the dynamics of digital language within social media environments has been conducted (Isnarini et al., 2025). Drawing on a literature review, their study examined how technological advancements reshape communicative practices, particularly in terms of language use and interactional

patterns. The analysis revealed that social media fosters distinctive linguistic forms and trends shaped by variables such as cultural background, gender, and age. Moreover, the interactions among users were found to play a crucial role in driving the ongoing development and transformation of language in digital spaces.

This phenomenon is particularly dominant in digital and youth cultures, where creativity in language use signals group affiliation and helps manage online interactions (Crystal, 1998). Such linguistic play often reinforces a sense of belonging, as participants adopt shared slang, memes, or stylistic conventions that mark them as insiders to a specific community. For streamers and digital figures, playful language, amplified by multimodal features like hashtags, visuals, and intertextuality, helps to engage audiences and shape a recognizable public persona. These stylistic choices also foster parasocial relationships, as audiences feel more personally connected through humor, wit, and a sense of shared cultural knowledge.

In digital environments, language plays a dominant role in shaping and expressing identity. Studies on digital discourse (e.g., Nordin, 2023; Tagg, 2015) showed that features like code-switching, informal language, and language play are strategically used to convey authenticity, authority, or relatability. For streamers and influencers, such linguistic choices are part of their ongoing performance as community builders, entertainers, and public figures. Furthermore, the fluidity of digital discourse allows creators to experiment with voice and identity, making their communication style both a branding strategy and a form of self-expression.

The use of bilingual and playful language not only distinguishes content creators but also promotes closeness with their audience. Through humor, fandom references, or emotionally expressive language, they construct a digital persona that echoes with followers. This study explores these practices within Indonesian streamer culture, examining how language use contributes to the formation of unique and engaging online identities.

Social interaction is understood as performative, with individuals shaping how they are perceived through impression management (Goffman, 2002). In digital contexts, this "presentation of self" applies to online personas, with linguistic, visual,

and multimodal choices serving as tools for identity construction. Language indexes social identity and community belonging, with stylistic and pragmatic choices functioning performatively to signal group membership, social norms, and relational stances (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

The online game streamers have a crucial communication language in creating their personal branding and social interaction. In casual online interactions, code-mixing is frequently used to convey humour, sarcasm, or playfulness, serving as a stylistic tool for persona projection (Krishna, 2024; Mewengkang and Fansury, 2021). However, the study regarding the use of code-mixing and language play on the Threads social media platform in the context of Indonesian game streamers are still very limited. From the three articles review above, it can be concluded that there is still a research gap in the context of Indonesian online game streamers as digital content creators who have a unique communication style. There are not many studies that combine code-mixing and language play analysis simultaneously in the context of the Threads platform, especially in non-commercial posts that represent personal communication. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the language styles of three popular streamers, namely DeankT, MiawAug and Jess no Limit, in forming their personas through language.

This research aims to (1) analyze code-mixing pattern used by three famous Indonesian esports streamers in their Threads accounts' posts (@aldeantg, @miawaug and @jessnolimit); (2) identify the types and functions of language play in their social media communication; (3) compare the use of code-mixing and language play across three esports streamers to see the differences and similarities in their language styles; (4) explore how these language uses contribute to building digital personas and social interactions with audiences, fans or viewers on the Threads platform. This research also focuses on posts without promotional or advertising elements to get more natural data. The result of this research is expected to contribute to the development of digital sociolinguistics and communication studies in the esports community, as well as providing insight into how language strategies are used by streamers in building personas and establishing closeness with their audiences in the era of social media.

Method

1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore and analyze the language styles used by Indonesian esports streamers on the social media platform Threads. Qualitative research aims to uncover phenomena holistically and contextually through data collection in natural settings, with the researcher serving as the key instrument (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fadli, 2021). It is descriptive in nature and typically employs an inductive approach, emphasizing meaning and process from the participants' perspective. Qualitative methods are appropriate for investigating the nuanced and contextual aspects of language use, particularly in informal, digital communication settings (Bouvier and Rasmussen, 2022). This study employed discourse analysis as the primary analytical approach for interpreting the linguistic patterns and contextual meanings within the data. Discourse analysis examines not only textual structures but also the ways in which language is used to shape social realities and identities (Paltridge, 2012). A cohesive framework integrating language use theory with analytical methodology has been proposed (Gee, 2014), while discourse analysis is emphasized as a key qualitative approach for examining discursive practices, focusing on language use in specific social contexts rather than on individual intentions or semantic meaning (Matta, 2024).

2. Sample and Population

The data for this study were collected from Threads, a text-based social media platform. Threads, launched by Meta in mid-2023, has quickly gained traction as a subject of academic inquiry into user engagement and platform behavior (Zhang et al., 2024; Lestari and Ambarwati, 2024). The researchers selected three prominent Indonesian streamers, MiawAug (Regi), DeanKT (Aldean Tegar), and Jess No Limit (Tobias Justin), based on their popularity, consistent posting, and bilingual audience engagement. From each account, the 30 most recent posts at the time of data collection were sampled, yielding a total of 90 posts.

3. Data Collection and Instruments

The selection used purposive sampling, with additional filtering to exclude posts that were purely promotional or advertisements. Purposive sampling is employed when researchers aim to target individuals with specific characteristics or interests relevant to the study (Turner, 2020). This approach ensured that the analysis focused on naturally occurring, interactional content where code mixing and language play were more likely to be present and contextually meaningful.

4. Procedure

Data was collected by systematically compiling posts from the selected streamers over a specified period. The posts include textual content such as captions, comments, and replies where code-mixing and language play are likely to occur. This approach aligns with prior qualitative social media research that uses naturally occurring data from digital platforms (Rahma, 2023; Bouvier and Rasmussen, 2022). The researcher collected 30 posts from each account, counted backward from the most recent post on each account as of June 12, 2025. All posts containing advertising elements were excluded, even if they contained instances of code-mixing and elements of language play.

5. Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using qualitative content analysis, a method that focuses on identifying patterns, themes, and meanings within textual data (Bengtsson, 2016), focusing on identifying instances of code-mixing and language play. The structural types of code-mixing were identified as insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization (Muysken, 2000). The communicative purposes were analyzed across six categories: referential, directive, expressive, phatic, metalinguistic, and poetic (Appel & Muysken, 1987). Instances of linguistic creativity, including puns, irony, exaggeration, visual-emotional play (e.g., emojis), and rhetorical teasing, were also examined (Crystal, 1998). These were further interpreted in relation to tone, humor, and persona projection.

6. Reliability or Trustworthiness

The study highlights that interactions among social media users significantly influence language development, as they not only reflect individual expression but

also shape broader linguistic patterns and trends. Through continuous engagement, users contribute to the evolution of digital language, making it a dynamic phenomenon that responds to cultural, generational, and contextual factors (Isnarini et al., 2025).

Results

After collecting and classifying the most recent 30 posts from each Indonesian gamer streamer's account, this analysis applies Muysken's typology to examine the structural types and functions of code-mixing (Muysken, 2000) and draws on Crystal's framework to investigate the forms and functions of language play (Crystal, 1998).

Table 1. Code Mixing and Language Play Instances per Account

Account	Total Posts Analyzed	Posts Containing Code Mixing	Posts Containing Language Play
MiawAug	30	8 posts (26.7%)	16 posts (53.3%)
DeanKT	30	8 posts (26.7%)	10 posts (33.3%)
Jess No Limit	30	7 posts (23.3%)	5 posts (16.7%)

All three streamers exhibit various forms of code mixing, specifically between Indonesian and English. Code mixing in their posts serves a range of communicative purposes, from lexical efficiency to stylistic emphasis and persona reinforcement. Drawing on Muysken's (2000) typology, the following sections explore how each streamer utilizes code mixing through insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization patterns.

1. Code-Mixing Patterns among Indonesian Esports Streamers

The first research question aims to identify the patterns of code-mixing employed by Indonesian game streamers in their Threads posts. By examining these patterns, the study seeks to capture how English and Indonesian are combined at different linguistic levels. This focus is important because the structural forms of code-mixing provide insight into how streamers strategically draw on both languages to achieve communicative goals. In line with Muysken's typology, the analysis considers insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization as the primary categories of code-

mixing (Muysken, 2000). Through this lens, the findings highlight not only the frequency of each pattern but also the creative ways in which code-mixing is integrated into digital interactions.

Table 2. Code Mixing Types per Streamer

Type of Code Mixing	MiawAug	DeanKT	Jess No Limit	Total
Insertion	6 (75%)	6 (75%)	7 (87.5%)	79.2%
Alternation	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	1 (12.5%)	20.8%
Congruent Lexicalization	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0%
Total	8	8	8	

MiawAug (Indonesian viewers usually call him as Regi) consistently integrates English lexical items into his Indonesian posts, reflecting a fluent and stylistically intentional form of code mixing. The mixing serves not only practical or referential purposes, but also constructs a particular digital identity aligned with youth culture, gaming discourse, and global lifestyle aesthetics. His posts display primarily insertional and occasional alternational mixing, with functions that range from emphasis and lexical need to stylistic self-branding.

Among the three streamers, MiawAug (Regi) demonstrates the most frequent and effortless use of insertional code mixing, in which single English lexical items are embedded within Indonesian sentences. This type of mixing, as described by Muysken (2000), is evident in posts like "*update per 2 hari sekali*" ("update every two days") and "*masih stuck pengen beli game di Steam Summer Sale*" ("I'm still stuck wanting to buy games during the Steam Summer Sale"). English words such as *update*, *stuck*, and the phrase *Steam Summer Sale* are employed not only for their lexical precision but also for their familiarity in digital youth culture. These insertions are unmarked and unaccompanied by translation, indicating that they are part of the shared linguistic repertoire of MiawAug's audience, many of whom are accustomed to English-dominant media and gaming discourse.

Another common example is "*silent reader* 🤫🤫🤫", where the English term *silent reader* is used as a label within Indonesian digital communities to describe passive followers. This phrase circulates as a humorous and lightly self-deprecating tag, allowing users to acknowledge their presence without actively contributing. This playful adoption of English highlights how code mixing can index group-specific norms and in-jokes that strengthen community bonds. At the same time, it illustrates the symbolic value of English in adding novelty and stylistic flair to otherwise ordinary expressions of online behavior.

Although less frequent, MiawAug also engages in alternational code mixing, where entire clauses or sentences shift to English. These instances typically occur in posts that emphasize emotion, reflection, or international lifestyle content. For example, "*Enjoying the view from up above in Osaka, Japan 🌸*" and "*Dream big, push your limit, and enjoy the process*" are full-sentence switches into English, appearing in the middle of otherwise Indonesian-dominated timelines. These alternations function as thematic or stylistic highlighters, marking specific moments as inspirational, aesthetic, or globally oriented.

Unlike the casual insertions seen in gaming-related posts, these English sentences are often used in travel contexts or as motivational captions, reflecting the influence of global social media trends. Such usage underscores how English is associated with cosmopolitanism and international visibility, projecting an image of sophistication and worldly experience. In this sense, alternational mixing becomes a deliberate act of stylistic elevation, signaling aspirational tone and emotional resonance. It also functions as a symbolic resource for constructing identity and aligning the self with globally circulating discourses of success and self-expression.

Compared to the other two streamers, DeankT exhibits a more unpredictable and community-driven pattern of code mixing. His bilingual expressions are often rapid, chaotic, and infused with humor, aligning with his energetic and informal digital persona. While structurally less polished, his use of English within Indonesian discourse serves clear communicative and stylistic functions, especially within the gaming subculture he inhabits.

DeanKT's code mixing is largely insertional, with frequent embedding of English words or abbreviations into Indonesian sentences. These inserted terms are typically drawn from gaming culture, digital platforms, or internet slang. Examples include "*live ye di ch ini ya*" ("we'll go live on this channel"), "*no skem tunggu YT-nya cooldown*" ("no scam, wait for YouTube to cool down"), and "*bikin 2nd channel*". In these examples, words like *live*, *ch* (channel), *cooldown*, and *2nd channel* are used fluently and without translation, reflecting a shared vocabulary among Dean's followers who are familiar with gaming environments and digital culture. This kind of mixing shows a clear tendency toward insertion, where lexical items from one language are inserted into the syntactic frame of another (Muysken, 2000). Dean's insertions are functional, often compressing complex ideas into concise forms that resonate with online gaming communities.

While less common than insertion, alternational mixing also occurs in DeanKT's posts, often for stylistic shifts or comic emphasis. For instance, his phrase "*thankyou ges blm 24 jam ud sgini*" ("thanks guys, not even 24 hours and it's already like this") blends an English expression (*thankyou*) with Indonesian structure. Other cases involve rapid alternation between codes for performative effect, such as "*gasssssss jujur yur*", where meaning is derived more from rhythm, rhyme, and tone than from semantic content.

Such alternations, though not always structurally clean, serve to mark tone shifts and emphasize audience interaction. They function as stylistic cues that guide readers in interpreting mood, irony, or humor within rapidly shifting digital exchanges. Alternation often reflects discourse boundaries or affective emphasis (Muysken, 2000), which aligns with Dean's fast-paced, reactive online persona. In this way, code-switching becomes not only a linguistic practice but also a performative strategy that enhances immediacy and relatability in his communication.

Jess No Limit uses code mixing more selectively and purposefully. His mixing patterns are embedded within structured content that aligns with his professional image as a public figure and brand ambassador. Though less frequent, his English

insertions serve important communicative and stylistic roles, particularly in the context of fan engagement, product references, and online giveaways.

Jess No Limit primarily employs insertional code mixing, where specific English lexical items are embedded within Indonesian utterances. These insertions often involve gaming terminology and product-related references, such as "*Skin Kakashi*", "*Savage pakai Kalea*", and "*MLBB x Naruto*". These terms are typically drawn from global franchises and are widely recognized by his audience, especially those familiar with Mobile Legends and anime culture.

Such usage reflects the practical and promotional nature of his language, where English terms function as brand labels that require no translation. These insertions streamline communication by preserving the authenticity of game-related terminology while avoiding the awkwardness of forced localization. This kind of insertion allows for precise and efficient communication, especially when referencing global game elements best understood in their original English form (Muysken, 2000). At the same time, it positions the speaker within a transnational gaming discourse, signaling cultural competence and alignment with global fandom practices.

Although rare, Jess occasionally employs alternational mixing when shifting tone or domain, particularly in captions related to travel or milestones. Examples include "*Full squad Naruto nih bos 🤩*" or "*Review Skin Gaara*", where the structure alternates briefly for effect. These shifts are typically short and embedded in contexts that highlight his connection to fandom or game promotions.

Such alternation often signals a heightened, expressive tone, aligning with Muysken's view that code alternation is frequently used to mark discourse boundaries or special emphases. In Jess's case, this strategy helps him maintain a smooth balance between casual interaction and polished self-presentation.

Table 3. Code Mixing Functions per Streamer

Function of Code-Mixing	MiawAug (10)	DeanKT (11)	Jess No Limit (9)	Total
Referential	20.0%	18.2%	55.6%	30.0%

Expressive	30.0%	27.3%	22.2%	26.7%
Phatic	10.0%	18.2%	11.1%	13.3%
Metalinguistic	10.0%	9.1%	0.0%	6.7%
Poetic	30.0%	18.2%	11.1%	20.0%
Directive	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	3.3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

The findings reveal significant differences in the quantity and quality of language play used by the three Indonesian gamer streamers. Out of 31 identified posts containing language play, MiawAug contributed 19, DeanKT 14, and Jess No Limit only 8. This distribution highlights the varying degrees of linguistic creativity and stylistic playfulness employed by each streamer. There are 7 types and 5 functions of language play (Crystal, 1998).

The code-mixing found in MiawAug's posts serves multiple communicative functions, many of which align with established categories of code-mixing functions (Appel & Muysken, 1987). The most salient function is referential, where English terms are used due to lexical gaps or as more widely recognized references within the global gaming and internet culture. For example, phrases such as "*Steam Summer Sale*" and "*update per 2 hari sekali*" are not only practical but also contextually precise, as their English forms are more commonly used among gamers and digital natives.

Additionally, MiawAug often employs code mixing for expressive purposes, particularly when highlighting emotions or personal reflection. Phrases like "*Dream big, push your limit, and enjoy the process*" or "*silent reader* 🎨🎨🎨" convey his tone, attitude, or mood in ways that are highly relatable to his audience. The blending of casual Indonesian with stylistic English not only reflects his emotional expression but also reinforces his digital identity.

The phatic function is also evident in his posts, especially in his frequent use of words like "*guys,*" "*live nanti ya,*" or "*update per 2 hari*," which help sustain a friendly

interactional tone. Such phrases do not primarily convey new information but instead work to keep channels of communication open and lively. These expressions serve to maintain social connection and engagement with followers, reinforcing a sense of digital community. In this way, the phatic use of language strengthens relational ties and makes the interaction feel more personal, despite its mediated and large-scale context.

Elements of the metalinguistic function can be seen when English terms are used playfully or self-referentially, such as in "*silent reader*", where the term itself is part of online slang. These instances foreground language itself as an object of attention, drawing awareness to the act of communication rather than just its content. The choice to code-mix in these cases shows an awareness of the language being used, turning the term into a marker of digital fluency or irony. In this sense, metalinguistic play highlights not only users' competence in navigating multiple codes but also their ability to exploit language for humor, identity performance, and community bonding.

The poetic function, though less dominant, is visible in moments of stylistic flair, such as "*spoiler pake emoticon aja yah wkwkwk*", where the humor lies in how the sentence disrupts expected norms through emoji substitution. These instances of playful language enhance the aesthetic and entertaining value of the message. However, the directive function is notably minimal or absent in MiawAug's data, as his tone remains consistently inclusive and informal. His code mixing is not used to include or exclude certain groups, but rather to invite broad participation in a shared digital space.

From a functional perspective, Dean's code-mixing aligns strongly with several established categories of code-mixing functions (Appel & Muysken, 1987). One dominant function is the expressive function. His exaggerated, mixed-language posts often reflect intense emotion, gaming frustration, or absurd humor, such as in "*tamat yt ges, libur seminggu*" ("YouTube is over, taking a week off") or "*bang uda bang ud jd abu vulkanik 🤔🤔*" ("bro I'm done, I've turned into volcanic ash 🤔🤔").

The phatic function also emerges, particularly in casual insertions like *"guys"*, *"live nanti ya"*, and *"thankyou ges"*, all of which serve to maintain social bonds and foster a sense of community among followers. In terms of referential function, his use of gaming terms, such as *cooldown*, *live*, *channel*, provides precise reference within a specific discourse domain, especially where Indonesian equivalents would be less efficient or commonly used. Dean also makes use of poetic function, particularly in his rhythm-based expressions like *"gass jujur yur"* or the playful chant *"jiko mas jiko mas"*, which reflect wordplay and linguistic creativity rooted in community in-jokes. Less prominent but still notable is the metalinguistic function, where code mixing is used as a stylistic device to parody or imitate certain speech styles, especially in lines like *"ucap bocil"* ("said the little kid"), which reflect mimicry of a stereotyped voice common in gamer communities. The directive function is less central but arguably present in certain expressions that build a sense of insider exclusivity, such as *"jangan sampe ada yg gocek link"* ("don't let anyone trick you with the wrong link"), which signals awareness of in-group behavior and protects the community.

Jess No Limit's code-mixing supports several communicative functions that correspond to established categories of code-mixing functions (Appel & Muysken, 1987). The most prominent is the referential function, especially in the use of brand-specific or game-related terminology. By using globally recognized terms such as *skin*, *savage*, or *diamond*, he provides accurate references within a shared discourse community.

Additionally, his code mixing also reflects an expressive function, particularly when interacting with followers or celebrating personal milestones. Phrases like *"Full squad Naruto"* or *"Lord berubah jadi Madara"* serve as both fan references and expressions of excitement or pride. There is also a subtle presence of the phatic function, particularly in interactive posts that use English as part of casual prompts, such as *"Coba kalian komen..."* ("Try commenting..."), which may not mix grammatically but stylistically engages with followers in a cross-linguistic mode. The metalinguistic and poetic functions are less dominant in Jess's language compared to the other streamers, as his style avoids playful disruption. Instead, code mixing in his

post's functions more as a branding strategy, projecting a polished, professional persona while remaining accessible to his Indonesian fan base.

2. Types and Functions of Language Play in Social Media Communication

This section explores the types and functions of language play found in the streamers' posts. Language play refers to the creative manipulation of linguistic resources that transcends conventional communication to generate humor, construct identity, or foster social bonding (Cook, 2000). In the context of social media, language play manifests through stylistic choices such as puns, creative spellings, parodic expressions, and hybrid language forms that engage audiences in interactive and entertaining ways. Identifying these instances provides insight into how Indonesian game streamers use language play not only as a communicative strategy but also as a tool for fostering online persona and audience rapport.

Table 4. Types of Language Play per Streamer

Type of Language Play	MiawAug	DeanKT	Jess No Limit	Total
Slang and informal expressions	15.63%	12.50%	3.13%	31.25%
Hyperbole (exaggeration)	9.38%	6.25%	0.00%	15.63%
Irony and sarcasm	9.38%	3.13%	0.00%	12.50%
Wordplay (e.g., angka cantik)	6.25%	6.25%	0.00%	12.50%
Visual play (emojis, emoticons)	9.38%	0.00%	0.00%	9.38%
Parody and fandom references	0.00%	6.25%	3.13%	9.38%
Sound play / Onomatopoeia	0.00%	6.25%	0.00%	6.25%

Role-based mimicry / Stylized voice	0.00%	3.13%	0.00%	3.13%
Total	50.00%	43.75%	6.25%	100%

A single expression of language play may fall into more than one type and function. After presenting the data on the types of language play, the following section outlines the functions of language play.

Table 5. Functions of Language Play per Streamer

Function of Language Play	MiawAug	DeanKT	Jess No Limit	Total
Expressing humor and playfulness	22.58%	12.90%	3.23%	38.71%
Building group identity/in-group talk	9.68%	6.45%	3.23%	19.35%
Engaging followers/interaction	6.45%	6.45%	3.23%	16.13%
Expressing emotions	6.45%	6.45%	0.00%	12.90%
Highlighting gaming culture/fandom	0.00%	3.23%	3.23%	6.45%
Constructing digital persona	6.45%	0.00%	0.00%	6.45%
Total	51.61%	35.48%	12.90%	100%

Discussing the use of language play, MiawAug (Regi) exhibits the most consistent and multifaceted use of language play in his online interactions. His posts frequently incorporate a mix of stylistic strategies such as lexical creativity, visual cues (e.g., emoji use), and ironic or exaggerated phrasing. This blend of forms results in a playful, intimate, and entertaining communication style that closely mirrors the digital culture of his followers.

One of Regi's most noticeable stylistic strategies is his use of exaggerated emotional expression. Phrases such as "*bangun dari jam 4 pagi wkwkwk*" ("woke up at 4 a.m. lol"), "*gemeter sampe sekarang 🤪🤪🤪*" ("still shaking until now 🤪🤪🤪"), and "*semoga next time bisa mampir lg yaaa*" ("hopefully I can drop by again next timeeee") exemplify how he dramatizes everyday experiences to increase relatability and humor. These forms of playful exaggeration humanize his content, allowing followers to emotionally connect even the most mundane details of his daily life.

Regi also integrates clever word choices and light sarcasm that blur the line between sincerity and humor. This is evident in posts like "*giveaway senyuman ceria 🤪🤪🤪*" ("a giveaway of cheerful smiles 🤪🤪🤪"), "*jadi ga enak ni kalo gak ngepost apa2 🤪*" ("I feel kinda bad if I don't post anything 🤪"), and "*reminder buat gw aja... wkwkwk*" ("just a reminder for myself... lol"). These expressions parody common influencer tropes (e.g., giveaways, motivational quotes) in a way that feels familiar and humorous to his audience. The use of deliberate understatement and mock formality adds layers of meaning that reward engaged readers.

Visual cues such as emojis and unconventional spelling are also a prominent feature in MiawAug's posts. For example, "*silent reader 🤪🤪🤪*", "*angka cantik*" ("pretty number," referring to lucky or aesthetically pleasing digits), and "*spoiler pake emoticon aja yah wkwkwk*" ("I'll spoil it using only emojis lol") demonstrate how he uses both linguistic and visual elements to convey tone, signal humor, and create space for audience interaction. These markers serve as social cues, inviting readers into shared digital norms and enhancing the sense of group belonging.

Explaining about his use of language play, DeanKT uses language play in a more chaotic and absurdist style. His linguistic choices often reflect the spontaneity and intensity of gamer culture, with an emphasis on exaggerated emotion, inside jokes, and cultural parody. The humor in his posts is typically loud, unexpected, and hyper-personal, targeting an audience that is digitally fluent and embedded in gaming subcultures.

combination of religious greeting, emoji overload, and ironic politeness results in a stylized parody of influencer etiquette.

Similarly, "*di-spam 'jiko mas jiko mas' di offline sm bocil2 ajg*" ("I got spammed with 'jiko mas' chants by little kids while I was offline") and "*trus broadcast di IG buat apa ajg*" ("so what's the point of doing a broadcast on Instagram, dude?") illustrate how Dean draws from community slang, abbreviations, and directness to challenge traditional norms of communication. His language often borders on nonsense, but in a way that rewards those who understand the underlying context, creating a digital in-group bound by shared cultural references.

Jess No Limit adopts a more composed and brand-conscious approach to language play. His posts reveal a carefully curated balance between digital entertainment, fan interaction, and personal life updates. While the frequency of playful language is lower, the style remains relevant to his public image as a well-known content creator and former esports athlete. His language use is subtler, more polished, and less disruptive, yet still reflects forms of creativity, familiarity, and community engagement.

Jess frequently draws from pop culture and anime references to create playful, fan-centered interactions. Examples such as "*Full squad Naruto nih bos 🤩*" ("We've got a full Naruto squad, boss 🤩"), "*Lord berubah jadi Madara 🤩*" ("The Lord turned into Madara 🤩"), and "*Savage pakai Skin Kakashi*" ("Savage using Kakashi's skin") demonstrate how he uses references from popular anime (*Naruto*) and gaming jargon to entertain and bond with his audience. These allusions create intertextual connections that resonate with shared fan knowledge, inviting followers to engage through humor and recognition. By blending anime symbolism with gaming discourse, Jess strengthens his credibility within fan communities and frames himself as both gamer and cultural insider.

These expressions work as intertextual humor, drawing from well-known fictional characters and in-game contexts to make followers feel part of a shared world. By referencing recognizable figures, Jess taps into a reservoir of shared cultural knowledge that strengthens the bond between creator and audience. Instead of

inventing new words or formats, he repurposes existing cultural icons in humorous ways, reinforcing his alignment with gaming and anime fanbases. This strategy not only entertains but also signals insider status, positioning Jess as both a participant in and a curator of fan culture.

Another aspect of Jess's language play lies in his use of light-hearted family-centered humor. For instance, he writes "*sophianolimit lagi main sama ayam mainan 😊*" ("Sophia No Limit is playing with a toy chicken 😊"), referring to his daughter in a cute, relatable context. Posts like this often include emoji-based cues and baby talk, creating a sense of warmth and closeness between creator and followers.

While this type of language play lacks the chaotic flair of DeankT or the sarcasm of MiawAug, it contributes to Jess's more mature and nurturing digital persona. His word choices and references project stability and warmth, contrasting with the edgier tones of other streamers. He presents himself not only as a public figure but also as a father and husband, which broadens the emotional appeal of his content. This blending of professional and personal identities allows Jess to cultivate trust and relatability, positioning him as both entertainer and role model within his community.

Jess's engagement with fans occasionally includes interactive and subtly ironic phrasing. For example, in "*kalian pilih iPad atau MacBook? Kasih aku alasan terbaik...*" ("Would you choose an iPad or a MacBook? Give me your best reason..."), "*kalian dapet THR dari aku, dipakai buat apa?*" ("If you received holiday allowance from me, what would you use it for?"), and "*selanjutnya dari daerah mana guys?*" ("Which region is next, guys?"), he invites his followers into playful participation.

3. Comparative Use of Code-Mixing and Language Play

This section presents a comparative overview of how the three streamers, MiawAug, DeankT, and Jess No Limit, employ code-mixing and language play in their Threads posts. The aim is to identify similarities and differences in their linguistic practices, focusing on the frequency and functions of language play across the data set.

Table 6. Distribution of Language Play Functions by Streamer

Function of Language Play	MiawAug (n=16)	DeanKT (n=11)	Jess No Limit (n=4)	Total (n=31)
Expressing humor and playfulness	43.8%	36.4%	25.0%	38.7%
Building group identity / in-group talk	18.8%	18.2%	25.0%	19.4%
Engaging followers / interaction	12.5%	18.2%	25.0%	16.1%
Expressing emotions	12.5%	18.2%	0.0%	12.9%
Highlighting gaming culture / fandom	0.0%	9.1%	25.0%	6.5%
Constructing digital persona	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	6.5%

The data indicate that the distribution of language play is not uniform across streamers. MiawAug contributes the highest proportion of instances (16 out of 31, or 51.6%), followed by DeanKT (11 instances, 35.5%), while Jess No Limit shows the least engagement with language play (4 instances, 12.9%). Humor and playfulness are the most salient functions across all three streamers, although the extent of use varies.

MiawAug demonstrates the most frequent use of language play, especially in humorous and playful expressions (43.8% of his cases). This pattern suggests that his style leans heavily toward entertaining his audience through jokes, puns, or lighthearted comments. DeanKT shows a more balanced distribution across categories, with humor (36.4%) and follower engagement (18.2%) being central. Interestingly, he also incorporates fandom references (9.1%) that link his persona with the gaming community. Jess No Limit, although less frequent in producing language play, tends to employ it strategically. His use emphasizes interaction (25%) and fandom references (25%), aligning his presence more with referential and stylistic cues rather than consistent humor.

4. Contribution of Language Use to Building Digital Personas and Social Interaction

The data show that code-mixing, language play, and other linguistic resources are consistently linked to how each streamer constructs their digital persona and interacts with their audience. While the specific strategies differ, several common practices can be observed. Across cases, English insertions serve as tools of branding and stylistic elevation, intertextual humor fosters a sense of shared culture, and phatic expressions help maintain ongoing engagement.

MiawAug frequently combines Indonesian with English phrases, emojis, and playful spellings to create a humorous and emotionally expressive voice. For example, posts such as "gila sih ini HAHAHA 🤪🔥" blend laughter, exaggeration, and visual markers, reinforcing a friendly and approachable persona. His language use invites interaction and simulates peer-like closeness with followers.

DeanKT relies on exaggerated slang, parody, and chaotic language mixing to strengthen his image as an unfiltered and humorous gamer. Expressions like "anjayyy let's goo!! 🤪🎮" illustrate a style that merges local slang with English gaming jargon, producing a deliberately noisy register that resonates with digital youth subculture. His followers often respond in kind, showing shared recognition of the linguistic play.

Jess No Limit employs a more controlled form of bilingualism, often using English phrases in promotional or motivational contexts. For instance, captions like "New skin coming soon, guys! Stay tuned 😊" combine Indonesian and English with a promotional register, showing cultural awareness while keeping a polished tone. This aligns with his identity as a professional and aspirational content creator.

Regi, meanwhile, constructs his persona through a mix of playful code-mixing, memes, and rhetorical questions. Examples such as "mau push rank atau push tidur dulu nih? 🤪🎮" demonstrate how humor and relatability are embedded in casual interactions. His language fosters engagement by balancing entertainment and identification with everyday youth concerns.

Overall, the results indicate that language use directly supports digital persona construction and audience interaction. Playful strategies (MiawAug, DeanKT, Regi)

emphasize closeness and community bonding, while controlled code-mixing (Jess No Limit) highlights professionalism and aspirational qualities.

Discussion

Based on the findings presented, this section explains the types and functions of code-mixing, as well as the discussion of the functions and styles of language play used by the three streamers. In addition to these aspects, the digital persona of each streamer is also described in this section.

This section synthesizes the findings from the three streamers; MiawAug, DeanKT, and Jess No Limit, by comparing the types and functions of language play observed in their posts, as well as how these linguistic features contribute to the construction of their digital personas. While all three utilize playful language in distinct ways, their choices reflect different audience strategies, cultural affiliations, and persona development goals.

1. Code-Mixing in Social Media Communication

The three streamers' code-mixing practices collectively demonstrate how language choice is tied to digital persona construction. MiawAug employs code mixing to project a humorous, expressive, and socially engaged identity, while DeanKT uses it to reinforce a chaotic and playful gamer persona rooted in online subcultural norms. In contrast, Jess No Limit applies a more controlled and strategic bilingual style that reflects his aspirational, culturally aware, and audience-sensitive role as a public-facing content creator. Together, these cases highlight how code mixing is not random, but a deliberate practice that aligns with each streamer's identity and community positioning.

The analysis of MiawAug, DeanKT, and Jess No Limit demonstrates that code-mixing in social media is a deliberate, identity-driven practice rather than a random insertion of foreign elements, aligning with established definitions of code-mixing and its typologies of insertion, alternation, and congruent lexicalization (Wardhaugh, 1986; Muysken, 2000). MiawAug's humorous and expressive use of English within Indonesian posts primarily reflects expressive and phatic functions, facilitating social engagement with followers. DeanKT's chaotic yet playful bilingual style similarly

illustrates the performative role of code-mixing in signaling membership in online subcultures, such as the gaming community. In contrast, Jess No Limit employs code-mixing in a more controlled, strategic manner, aligning with metalinguistic and directive functions to manage audience perception and uphold a professional digital persona.

The evolution of code-mixing into a normative communication strategy in digital spaces is evident in the way bilingual posts are perceived as enhancing relevance and clarity (Sintia et al., 2025). The shaping of code-mixing practices through social media engagement and identity construction reflects the intentionality of streamers' language choices (Fitriani & Ramadhani, 2022). Collectively, these findings affirm the functional perspective of code-mixing, in which its expressive, affiliative, and identity-oriented purposes illustrate the strategic use of multiple languages by digital influencers and streamers to negotiate social identity, creativity, and community alignment (Appel & Muysken, 1987; Krishna, 2024; Nordin, 2023; Ahmad et al., 2024).

2. Types and Functions of Language Play

The analysis of MiawAug, DeanKT, and Jess No Limit shows that language play is a key feature of their digital communication, with humor being the dominant mode. MiawAug exhibits the broadest range, including emotive exaggeration, lexical creativity, wordplay, irony, and emoji-based humor (e.g., "angka cantik", "silent reader 🤫🤫🤫", "spoiler pake emoticon aja yah wkwkwk"), combining written and visual modes to engage his audience. DeanKT favors absurd and chaotic forms such as onomatopoeic laughter ("WKWOWKWKWKWKWKWKO"), metaphorical exaggeration ("jd abu vulkanik"), and voice mimicry ("ucap bocil"), resonating strongly within gaming subcultures. Jess No Limit's language play is more controlled and strategic, relying on pop culture references, soft humor, and fan engagement prompts (e.g., "Savage pakai Skin Kakashi", "Lord berubah jadi Madara"), maintaining a family-friendly and curated tone.

These findings align with theories of language play. Language play involves the creative manipulation of linguistic forms for humorous, expressive, or aesthetic purposes and occurs across multiple linguistic levels, from phonology to pragmatics,

often serving both social and cognitive functions (Crystal, 1998; Cook, 2000; Ferguson & Macken, 1983). MiawAug's multimodal and highly expressive play demonstrates the relational and performative functions of language play, facilitating emotional connection and inclusive interaction with followers. DeankT's chaotic and exaggerated expressions function as in-group signals and subcultural markers, consistent with the notion of community-coded humor in digital discourse (Tagg, 2015). Jess No Limit's strategic use illustrates controlled performativity, where humor and intertextuality reinforce brand identity and audience loyalty (Nordin, 2023; Isnarini et al., 2025).

Comparison with prior studies supports these interpretations. Playful language helps youth negotiate social identity and strengthen fan communities (Rianto & Juliarta, 2024). Humor also enhances interactivity and engagement on social media (Ibrahim & Qura, 2021). The current findings extend these insights by demonstrating variation in spontaneity and control: MiawAug represents high expressivity and peer-like engagement; DeankT emphasizes chaotic subcultural resonance; Jess No Limit illustrates deliberate, brand-conscious play. Collectively, these results highlight that language play in digital spaces functions not only as humor or aesthetic expression but also as a strategic tool for identity construction, community alignment, and audience engagement.

3. Comparative Use of Code-Mixing and Language Play

The comparative analysis shows that MiawAug exhibits the highest frequency and diversity of both code-mixing and language play, whereas Jess No Limit demonstrates more restrained and strategic usage. MiawAug's dominance can be interpreted as a reflection of his personal, informal style and his target audience, which primarily consists of younger followers who value humor, relatability, and peer-like interaction. His playful, multimodal expressions, ranging from lexical creativity to emoji-based humor, enhance engagement and foster a sense of community, aligning with the interactive and entertainment-oriented norms of youth digital culture.

In contrast, Jess No Limit employs code-mixing and language play more sparingly, reflecting a deliberate, audience-conscious strategy. His communication emphasizes brand management, family-friendly content, and controlled engagement,

which necessitates limiting chaotic or overly humorous forms. DeanKT occupies an intermediate position: his chaotic and sub culturally coded language serves as both identity signalling and in-group humor, balancing expressivity with audience expectations.

These patterns echo findings from prior studies on streamer variation. The use of playful and bilingual language has been shown to vary depending on persona, target audience, and subcultural alignment (Rianto & Juliarta, 2024). Similarly, code-mixing and humor are modulated by social positioning, audience maturity, and content goals (Ibrahim & Qura, 2021). The current findings extend these insights by showing that streamers' linguistic strategies are not uniform: personal style, audience demographics, and branding considerations jointly shape the extent and nature of code-mixing and language play.

Overall, the comparative analysis underscores that language use in social media is both a personal and strategic tool, reflecting identity, audience orientation, and cultural positioning in the competitive landscape of Indonesian streamer culture.

4. Contribution of Language Use to Digital Personas and Social Interaction

The analysis indicates that the streamers' code-mixing and language play are central to constructing their digital personas and facilitating social interaction. MiawAug's playful, emotive, and multimodal language establishes a friendly, approachable, and peer-like persona, fostering direct engagement and emotional connection with his audience. DeanKT's chaotic, exaggerated, and subculturally coded expressions project a high-energy, unpredictable gamer persona, signaling insider knowledge and reinforcing solidarity within the gaming community. Jess No Limit, through strategic, controlled, and family-friendly language play, cultivates a polished, aspirational, and audience-conscious persona that maintains brand identity and broad appeal.

These findings align with the theory of self-presentation, which views identity as a performance shaped by audience perception (Goffman, 2002). Language has also been highlighted as a key resource in indexicality, identity negotiation, and community alignment (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) In digital environments, linguistic choices such as

code-mixing and playful expressions function as performative acts that communicate personality, social position, and relational intent.

Moreover, these strategies enhance audience engagement, a core concept in social media literature. Prior studies (e.g., Nordin, 2023; Tagg, 2015; Krishna, 2024) highlight that playful and expressive language encourages participation, interaction, and co-creation of meaning between content creators and followers. The streamers' multimodal and culturally aligned language fosters interactivity, loyalty, and communal identity, demonstrating that digital personas are co-constructed through deliberate linguistic performance. Overall, language use serves as both a symbolic and practical tool for identity presentation, social bonding, and participatory engagement in Indonesian streamer culture.

Conclusion

This study examines how Indonesian gaming streamers engage in code mixing and language play on Threads. Based on the typology of code mixing (Muysken, 2000), the analysis identified distinct types, primarily insertion and alternation. The functional framework of code-mixing highlights a range of communicative purposes, including referential, expressive, and phatic functions (Appel & Muysken, 1987). Furthermore, the notion of language play sheds light on the humorous, stylistic, and identity-driven aspects of the streamers' linguistic choices (Crystal, 1998). The three streamers, MiawAug, DeankT, and Jess No Limit, demonstrated distinct strategies: MiawAug blended humor and emotion, DeankT employed chaotic, insider-oriented code mixing, and Jess No Limit favored controlled, referential English insertions aligned with his brand.

These findings show that code mixing and language play function as key resources for constructing digital identity and engaging audiences, enabling authenticity, social belonging, and relational intimacy. Limitations include the exclusive focus on Threads and the thirty most recent posts per streamer, without audience interactions. Future research could expand to other platforms, multimodal content, fan discourse, or commercial branding, continuing to illuminate digital identity construction. From an applied perspective, these insights underscore the role of

language choices in shaping identity, engagement, and community norms, offering authentic examples for English digital learning and sociolinguistic analysis.

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