

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents five sub-chapters, which include the background of the study, the research question, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, and the scope and limitations.

1.1 Background of Study

In the digital era, human communication has undergone significant changes, as interaction is no longer restricted to direct, face-to-face contact. The development of internet-based technologies has enabled people to communicate across distance and time through various online platforms. As a result, new forms of interaction have emerged in which language continues to play a crucial role in conveying meaning and maintaining social connections (Latifah, 2022). One platform that reflects this transformation is Roblox, a digital environment that combines online gaming with social interaction. Although initially designed as a game, Roblox has grown into a virtual social space where users, particularly young players, interact, cooperate, and form communities through written communication in in-game chatrooms (Androutsopoulos, 2014; Crystal, 2011).

The chat feature in Roblox enables players to communicate in real-time during gameplay, whether to coordinate strategies, express reactions, or engage in casual conversation. These interactions exhibit a wide range of linguistic behaviours, from structured dialogue to playful expression (Ramadani et al., 2026). Within this digital environment, language use becomes flexible and innovative. Players frequently shift between different registers depending on the situation and the participants involved (S. A. W. Q. Putri Alvina; Hasrianti, Hasrianti; anhar, Anhar, 2025). Furthermore, various forms of slang, informal expressions, and regional dialects appear as integral parts of player communication. Terms such as *mabar* (short for *main bareng*, meaning “play together”), *noob* (referring to a beginner player), *gas* (an encouragement to start or

continue), and *vibes* (meaning atmosphere or mood) demonstrate how digital users adopt distinctive linguistic styles that characterize their mode of interaction. These linguistic forms highlight how language variation naturally emerges within online communities and reflects the dynamics of communication among participants (Anggraini & Amalia, 2026)

From a sociolinguistic perspective, differences in how people use language are known as language variation, which refers to systematic changes in language that are influenced by social background, cultural norms, and situational context (Labov, 1972; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Sociolinguists emphasize that language is closely connected to the social lives of its speakers, meaning that every linguistic choice, such as word selection, level of formality, or style, reflects the context and relationships involved in communication. In everyday life, language variation can be seen when a student uses formal language while speaking to a lecturer but shifts to informal expressions when talking with friends, or when young people use slang terms like “Let’s grab some food after class, I’m starving”, and “This place has really good vibes”, it is the example of slang such as “starving” and “vibes”. Regional background also shapes language use, as speakers may include local dialect features when communicating with people from the same area. In digital environments such as online games or social media, users often adapt their language by shortening words or using informal spelling to communicate quickly and efficiently. These examples demonstrate that language is not fixed or uniform but flexible and responsive to social, cultural, and contextual factors, reinforcing the sociolinguistic view that variation is a natural and essential part of human communication (Labov, 1972; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015).

The sociolinguistic significance of Roblox is also reflected in the diversity of its multilingual user community. Players from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds interact within the same virtual space, allowing various language practices to coexist and overlap. In such environments, speakers often combine linguistic elements from different languages during communication. For example, players may mix English with regional or local languages in online interactions,

resulting in hybrid forms of language use that are typical of digital communication. This phenomenon demonstrates how online platforms enable speakers to maintain local linguistic features while participating in global digital networks, highlighting the influence of globalization on language practices in virtual communities (Blommaert, 2012)

Compared to social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or Twitter, interaction in Roblox chatrooms takes place in real time and requires immediate responses. While communication on social media may be delayed, edited, or asynchronous, online games demand quick reactions, coordination, and continuous participation from players (Wulandari & Alwi, 2025). This real-time environment leads to language use that is flexible, adaptive, and sensitive to the pace of gameplay. However, much of the existing research on online gaming has focused on social or behavioral issues like community building, player identity, or toxicity, rather than on the linguistic features of in-game communication (Miswaty et al., 2024). As a result, there remains a gap in sociolinguistic research exploring how language variation emerges within interactive gaming environments like Roblox, indicating the need for further investigation in this area (Gerber & Abrams, 2014; Tagg & Seargeant, 2021)

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the study's background, the researcher found the problem and formulated the research questions, as follows:

1. What are types of language variation found in the chatroom communication of Roblox players?
2. What are situational contexts influence the use of language variation in roblox chatrooms?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In line with the research questions, this study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the types of language variation used by players in the chatrooms of Roblox.
2. To explain the situational context that influences the use of language variation in Roblox chatrooms.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the study of language, particularly within the field of sociolinguistics.

1.4.1 Theoretically Significance

This study enriches the existing body of knowledge on language variation by exploring how linguistic diversity manifests in digital communication, especially within the context of online gaming. While many studies have examined variation in traditional or face-to-face settings, this research extends the discussion into a virtual environment where interaction is mediated through technology. By focusing on language variation and examining the situational context that influences their use, this study provides insight into how linguistic practices adapt to new modes of communication in the digital era. It also contributes to the growing field of digital sociolinguistics, demonstrating how online platforms such as Roblox serve as active spaces for observing contemporary language behavior.

1.4.2 Practically Significance

The findings of this study are expected to benefit several audiences. For students and researchers, this study can serve as a reference for further investigations into language use in digital or game-based contexts, offering a model for how sociolinguistic frameworks can be applied to online communication. For educators and linguists, the research provides an updated understanding of how younger generations use and modify language creatively within digital spaces, which can inform teaching strategies, language policy discussions, or curriculum design related to media literacy and sociolinguistic awareness. Lastly, for general readers, the study offers a clearer

picture of how digital interaction reshapes the way language is used, showing the dynamic relationship between communication, technology, and culture.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is Sociolinguistics, specifically the analysis of language variation as used in online communication. This study focuses on identifying and classifying the types of language variation and the situational context employed by roblox player in chatrooms. In analyzing the data, this study applies the language variation and the situational context theory proposed by Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015).

The limitation of the study lies in the data source, which is that the data are collected only from the “Indo Hangout” map on the roblox platform, during gameplay sessions conducted in the evening between 19.00 and 21.00 WIB, with each session containing one to two hours and the data collection was conducted over a two-week period, with data gathered on six selected days on the February 2026. The analysis includes only chat messages that contain types of language variation, while other messages are excluded. This research does not examine spoken interaction, voice chat, or other non-verbal elements.