

SLANG FORMATION AND USAGE IN VTUBER COMMUNITIES ON REDDIT

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze VTuber community slang on Reddit utilizing digital ethnography. Specifically, this research aims to examine the formation and use of slang in VTuber communities. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach and purposive sampling. The data were collected from posts and comments on two subreddits, r/kurosanji and r/VirtualYoutubers, in text form. The data analysis was conducted utilizing Allan and Burridge's slang theory. The researcher finds that the VTubers community utilized four categories of slang: acronym, clipping, flippant, and fresh and creative. Clipping, fresh, and creative are the most commonly used VTuber community slang, while acronym and flippant are the least used. The slang was used to create a sense of identity among VTubers. It is also used to label and offend members of VTuber subreddits and other groups. It also serves as a quick communication between members. This research contributes to the development of digital ethnography and further research regarding the VTuber community and its slang.

Keywords

Digital Ethnography, Community, Slang, VTuber.



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INTRODUCTION

The growth of social media has created a new type of digital community: the Virtual YouTuber, or VTuber. VTubers, or Virtual YouTubers, are performers who create engaging virtual content through the internet, utilizing computer-generated 2D or 3D personas (Bredikhina, 2025, p. 1). VTubers emerged in Japan in 2016 and have since become an increasingly prevalent trend (Li, 2023, p. 381). In addition, considering VTubers originated and are widely recognized in Japan, the majority of VTubers' avatars are animated in the Japanese animation aesthetic, therefore improving their appeal factor (Tan & Greene, 2025, p. 1). Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has boosted the popularity of Vtubers. Kim & Suh, p. (2024, p. 1723) stated that the COVID-19 pandemic placed restrictions on physical gatherings, resulting in a change of preference towards interactive virtual environments such as social media and the metaverse.

VTubers create engaging content through real-time interactive livestreams or prerecorded, edited videos. The content of livestreams or videos can cover many topics, such as music, food, memes, or video gameplay. These real-time interactions and the content created have developed a digital community, which in turn has led to the development of in-group slang within the VTubers community. Although these digitally generated Virtual YouTubers (VTubers) have grown in popularity all over the world Chen & Hu, p. (2024, p. 3429), Previous research regarding VTubers is not extensive and lacks consistency, as, according to Tan & Greene, p. (2025, p. 1), Research availability regarding the VTuber industry is quite limited and appears inconsistent. Moreover, research regarding Vtubers' linguistic aspects, especially regarding slang, has been overlooked.

Previous research on slang analysis had already been conducted. Wedananta et al. (2023) analyze slang words utilized by the Balinese Generation Z on Instagram. The research aims to analyze the types of slang and their origins among Balinese Generation Z on Instagram, using Allan and Burridge's theory and the digital ethnography approach. The research found that the slang types were acronym, clipping, flippant, fresh and creative, imitative, and mixing. The slang originated from Balinese, Indonesian, a mix of Indonesian and English, and Thai. Additionally, somewhat similar to Wedananta et al. (2023), Subramaniam & Thangavelu (2025) analyze digital slang among Malaysian Generation Alpha using Allan and Burridge's theory from a sociolinguistic perspective. The research aims to analyze the types and purposes of the slang used by Malaysian Generation Alpha.

In addition, the research aims to uncover the factors that affect the adoption of slang. The research found that the slang types were acronyms, clipping, fresh and creative, flippant, and imitative, providing purposes such as addressing, humiliating, and conveying impressions. Digital media, gaming communities, and sibling interactions influenced the adoption of slang. Aside from slang, research regarding VTubers and their linguistics had been conducted before. Ochiai & Niiyama (2025) analyzed the interactional constraints and linguistic strategies utilized by Japanese VTubers during “just chatting” YouTube livestreams with discourse analysis. The research revealed that viewers' messages and message lag overwhelmed the VTubers. The VTubers resolved this using linguistic methods: reading the messages and usernames aloud and using adjacency pairs.

In addition, Aolia & Widianingtyas (2024) analyzed an Indonesian VTuber named Ayunda Risu. The research aims to analyze how her persona can influence her branding through a sociolinguistic lens. The researcher found that the VTuber's likable persona positively influenced her branding, which helped maintain and attract viewers. Salsabila & Imperiani (2023) analyzed an Indonesian VTuber named Kobo Kaneru. The research aimed to identify the types of code-switching and code-mixing used by the VTuber and their underlying purposes. The researcher found that Kobo used intra- and inter-sentential code-switching, as well as emblematic code-switching. Further, code-mixing included intersentential mixing, intralexical mixing, and pronunciation changes. Furthermore, Kobo used code-switching and code-mixing due to limited English proficiency and to discuss certain topics.

Based on previous research, although analysis of slang and VTubers exists, gaps remain. Previous research analyzing slang mostly focuses on slang used by age demographics, such as Generations Alpha and Z. Additionally, research on VTubers mostly focuses on code-mixing, code-switching, persona, and linguistic strategies rather than VTubers' slang. This research addresses a research gap by providing a new analysis of VTuber communities and their slang. This research aims to analyze slang used in VTuber communities through a digital ethnographic lens, examining the formation of words and their usage. Two VTuber communities on Reddit were chosen rather than multiple communities due to limited time. The explanation for choosing Reddit is that it is a social media forum focused on discussion. These VTuber communities are r/kurosanji and r/VirtualYoutubers.

In addition, this research uses Allan and Burridge's theory of slang to analyze and categorize the formation of slang in VTuber communities. From a theoretical standpoint, adopting a digital ethnography perspective for this research on VTuber communities and their slang will yield additional digital ethnographic data. Furthermore, from a pragmatic standpoint, this research offers new insights into how VTuber communities use their slang on Reddit.

METHOD

This research employs descriptive qualitative methods and digital ethnography. The reasoning for this is that, according to Creswell & Creswell, p. (2023, p. 5) Qualitative research is an approach for investigating and comprehending the meanings individuals or groups attribute to issues in humanity or society. In addition, according to Paoli & D'Auria, p. (2021, p. 243), Digital ethnography is a current form of ethnography that analyzes digital social media platforms in the context of advancements in data transmission technologies. This method will explain and clarify the phenomenon of slang and its use in the VTuber community. The data collection method for this research is observation, with the researcher acting as a complete observer.

The rationale for choosing observation as the methodology for this research is that the researcher observes the activities of the VTuber community. According to Rose et al., p. (2020, p. 92), Observations in social research involve observing, documenting, and using qualitative approaches to understand and analyze human activities and behaviors. Moreover, the data for this research consists of texts from two Reddit communities that use VTuber slang. The reason for choosing a complete observer is that, according to Johnson & Christensen, p. (2020, p. 200), The researcher never informs the research participants that they are under observation, so participants typically remain unaware of this. The utilization of complete observation is beneficial for this research, as the researcher aims to minimize inauthentic data and the Hawthorne effect.

According to McCambridge et al. (2014) in Svensberg et al. (2021, p. 2137), the observer effect suggests that individuals often alter their conduct when aware of being observed. Avoiding the Hawthorne effect will minimize bias and inauthentic data. The data analysis method for this research is qualitative content analysis. Kuckartz & Rädiker (2023, p. 21) define qualitative content analysis as a structured, methodologically rigorous scientific examination of texts, images, films, and other forms of communicative content. The rationale for choosing qualitative content analysis is that

this research aims to analyze texts produced by VTuber communities. This research utilizes purposive sampling. According to Andrade (2020, p. 87), a purposive sample is characterized by features that align with the research's objectives. In this case, the sample purpose is slang in VTuber communities on Reddit.

The data for this research are slang texts from two VTuber subreddits. The data sources for this research are from r/kurosanji and r/VirtualYoutubers. The researcher chose the r/kurosanji subreddit because it primarily focuses on discussions of Nijisanji, a VTuber company, and VTuber-related news and drama. In addition, although it does not focus too much on VTuber discussion, the reason for choosing r/VirtualYoutubers is that it is the most popular VTuber subreddit. The data collection was conducted in several steps. Firstly, the researcher searched through various posts on both r/kurosanji and r/VirtualYoutubers. Secondly, the researcher analyzed and collected posts and comments containing VTubers' slang. The data was then categorized and interpreted in accordance with Allan and Burridge's slang theory.

Salieva et al., p. (2025, p. 108) claim that Allan and Burridge's theory identified several techniques for forming slang, namely acronyms, clipping, flippant, fresh and creative, and imitative. The categorized data were analyzed and interpreted to understand how slang is used among VTuber communities; this aligns with content analysis. Ethical considerations and anonymity were maintained in this research because it focused solely on analyzing the text. The interpretation of slang usage also considers contextual meanings within community interactions to avoid decontextualized analysis. This methodological approach allows the findings to reflect authentic linguistic practices within VTuber communities while maintaining transparency and credibility in qualitative analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

From the data collection, the researcher identified at least 48 slang words used in VTuber communities on the r/kurosanji and r/VirtualYoutubers subreddits, in accordance with Allan and Burridge's theory of slang. The data reveals that the majority of the slang, twenty-eight of the slang data, is fresh and creative; four are acronyms, fourteen are clippings, and two slang words are flippant.

Table 1. Types of VTuber Slang Words

Types	Number
Acronyms	4
Clipping	14
Flippant	2
Fresh and Creative	28
Imitative	0

According to the table above, VTuber slang words are divided into four categories: acronym, clipping, flippant, and fresh and creative. Imitative slang does not appear in VTuber communities.

Table 2. VTuber's Acronyms and Slang Words

Slang	Variants	Word Formation	Definition
EN	JP, CN, KR, GER	English = EN	Refers to the language that the VTuber speaks
L2D		Live2D = L2D	Software for animating a VTuber model
PL		Past Life = PL	Refers to a VTuber's previous name or account on YouTube or Twitch
VOD		Video on Demand = VOD	A saved video from a VTuber livestream

The researcher found at least four acronyms used in the VTuber communities on Reddit, including "EN," "L2D," "PL," and "VOD."

Table 3. VTuber's Clipping Slang Words

Slang	Variants	Word Formation	Definition
Akasupa		Aka Superchat	A huge donation on YouTube is highlighted in red.
ASMRtist		ASMR Artist	A VTuber who does ASMR
Collab		Collaboration	A collaboration between two or more VTubers
Corpo		Corporation	A VTuber who works at a company
DramaTuber		Drama YouTuber or Drama VTuber	A VTuber who covers drama-related stories in the VTubing community
Fleshtuber		Flesh YouTuber	A VTuber term for a YouTuber who shows their real-life self
Gen		Generation	A VTuber group that debuted together in a company
Holomem		Hololive Member	A member of the Hololive group
Indie		Independent	A VTuber who does not work at a company

Lewdtuber		Lewd YouTuber or Lewd VTuber	A Vtuber who promotes their content
Mods	Mod	Moderator	A person who moderates the VTuber's livestream chat
Off collab	Off-collab	Offline Collaboration	An offline collaboration meeting between two or more VTubers
PNGTuber		PNG YouTuber or PNG VTuber	A YouTuber who uses static images as their model.
Rrat		Narrative	A theory or rumor speculating about a VTuber or a company

From the table above, the researcher identified 14 slang terms used by the VTuber Reddit community.

Table 4. VTuber's Flippant Slang Words

Slang	Variants	Word Formation	Definition
Free Talk	Zatsudan	Free, Talk	A VTuber stream that talks about anything
Guerrilla Stream	Guerrilla	Guerrilla, Stream	A VTuber who streams without a schedule

Flippant is the least-used type of slang in VTuber communities on Reddit. The researcher found at least two flippant slangs in Vtuber communities on Reddit, “free talk” and “guerilla stream,” also known as “zatsudan” and “guerilla.”

Table 5. VTuber's Fresh and Creative Slang Words

Slang	Variants	Definition
Affiliate		A VTuber that got approved for monetization on Twitch; A VTuber who is still associated with a VTubing company
Anti	Antis	A hater
Avatar	Model	A VTuber model or design
Birthday		A celebration of the VTuber's character's birthday
Clipper		A person who clips a VTuber moment
Debut		A VTuber introduction stream
Graduate	Ungraduate	A VTuber who quits VTubing
Liver		A Nijisanji term for a livestreamer
Lore		VTuber background

story		
Mama		An artist who made the VTuber model
Member		A YouTube membership for fans
Nijisister		A term for a Nijisanji defender
Oshi		Favorite VTuber
Outfit		The VTuber's uniform
Papa		A person who rigs the VTuber model
Pre-debut	Pre-debut	The VTuber advertising themselves before making a debut
Raid		After their stream ends, a VTuber redirects their viewers to another VTuber.
Redebut	Rebrand	A VTuber reintroduction with changes to design, lore, name, etc.
Redesign		A VTuber's new model
Reincarnation		A VTuber's new YouTube or Twitch account
Seiso	Unseiso	VTuber being family-friendly
Superchat		A donation on YouTube
Talent		The VTuber
The Swarm		A fan term for a VTuber called Neurosama
Tracking		Refers to capturing the movement of body parts by a camera
Unarchive		A video or a livestream that will not be preserved online
Unicorn		A parasocial VTuber fan who wants their VTuber to not collab with the opposite sex
Yabai		Something that might be risky for the stream

Fresh and creative is the most utilized slang type in VTuber communities on Reddit. From the table above, the researcher identified 28 fresh and creative slang terms used by the VTuber Reddit community.

Discussion

The researcher identified four categories of slang in the VTuber community: acronym, clipping, flippant, and fresh and creative. Imitative slang does not appear in the VTuber communities. The results are categorized in accordance with Allan and Burridge's slang theory. The researcher finds that some of these slang terms are borrowed from Japanese idol culture. Slang words such as "akasupa," "superchat," "liver," "oshi," "papa," "mama," "yabai," "seiso," "unseiso," and "zatsudan" are all borrowed from Japanese words. In addition, most slang used in VTuber communities is fresh and creative. Fresh, creative slang is the most widely used in VTuber communities across both subreddits. The dominance of fresh, creative slang serves as an identity marker for the communities. This is because slang terms such as "oshi" and "graduate" are unique to VTuber communities on Reddit, which contributes to a sense of belonging among members.

The fresh and creative slang also showcased a form of conflict. Slang terms such as "unicorn" and "nijisister" can serve as a form of labelling against other in-group members, while terms such as "anti" can serve as a form of insult against in-group and out-group members. The use of fresh, creative slang in VTuber communities on Reddit showed that Reddit users are highly participatory in using it; this is because members constantly communicate on posts about VTuber-related content. This indicates that slang functions not only as a marker of solidarity but also as a discursive tool for negotiating power relations and ideological boundaries within the community. Such usage reflects how linguistic creativity in online fandoms can simultaneously foster cohesion and intensify internal fragmentation through symbolic labeling.

Additionally, clipping is the second-most-used slang in VTubers' communities on Reddit. Clipping makes communication much easier between members. Slang such as "corpo," "indie," "rat," and "Holomem" can be mentioned and understood much more quickly. Furthermore, acronyms are rarely used in the VTuber community; this is evident in the four acronyms the researcher found: EN, L2D, PL, and VOD. The abbreviations of the languages, such as English, Japanese, and Korean, into EN, JP, and KR are quite widespread in the VTuber community. Moreover, flippant exists in the VTuber community; however, the researcher found only two examples: guerrilla stream and free talk, also known as zatsudan. "Guerrilla stream" in the VTuber context refers to an unscheduled stream, and "free talk" refers to a stream where the VTuber is mainly just chatting.

In comparison to Wedananta et al. (2023), this research mainly focuses on the VTuber community on Reddit rather than Generation Z on Instagram. The research mainly uses five categories of Allan and Burridge's slang theory; Wedananta et al. (2023), on the other hand, added mixing and combination in their research. However, there is some similarity, as some VTuber slang originates in Japan. Similar to Wedananta et al. (2023), Subramaniam & Thangavelu (2025) mainly focus on Malaysian Generation Alpha, seeking to understand the various kinds and uses of slang among this group, as well as the factors that influence its popularity. The only similarity between this research and Subramaniam & Thangavelu (2025) is the analysis of the types of slang used by a group.

Compared with (Aolia & Widianingtyas, 2024; Ochiai & Niiyama, 2025; Salsabila & Imperiani, 2023) Aside from VTubers, this research has nothing in common with it, as it analyzes VTubers' slang on Reddit. Ochiai & Niiyama (2025) analyze VTubers, interactional constraints, and linguistic strategies during a livestream. Aolia & Widianingtyas (2024) Analyze Ayunda Risu's persona and its influence on her branding. Salsabila & Imperiani (2023) analyze code-switching and code-mixing utilized by the Kobo Kaneru, including their purposes. These findings suggest that VTuber communities use slang as a form of labeling and insulting in-group and out-group VTuber members. Additionally, it helps ease communication between Reddit users on VTuber subreddits. Moreover, slang also serves as an identity marker.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to examine VTuber slang by analyzing the formation of VTuber-related terms and their usage. Through the digital ethnography approach and Allan and Burridge's slang theory, the researcher had identified that VTuber communities on Reddit, in the r/kurosanji and r/VirtualYouTubers subreddits, had utilized four types of slang. These slangs are acronyms, clipped words, and fresh, flippant, and creative. Clipping and fresh, and creative are the most commonly used slang, while acronym and flippant are the least used. The slang was utilized to serve as an identity between members of VTubers'. It is also used to label and offend members of VTuber subreddits and other groups. It also serves as a quick means of communication between members. This research aims to lay a foundation for future studies on digital ethnography and VTubing slang. The limitation of the research is that, due to time constraints, it is mostly focused on two VTuber

communities. Further research should examine the frequency of VTuber slang use and the semantic shifts that accompany it. Future studies may also adopt comparative approaches by examining multiple platforms, such as YouTube, X (Twitter), and Discord, to capture cross-platform variations in slang usage. In addition, longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into how VTuber slang evolves in response to community dynamics and industry developments. Such expansions would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of linguistic innovation and identity construction in digital fan communities.

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