

English in online dating: Analysing language use on Grindr's "about me" section in Pampanga

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Abstract - With the growing population and increasing visibility of the gay community, platforms such as Grindr have become crucial spaces for Filipino gay men to explore and connect; however, existing studies largely focus on hook-up culture, thereby overlooking how users construct identity through language. Thus, this study examined how Filipino gay men use their Grindr's "About Me" section to perform identity and navigate stigma in the Philippines. Situated within digital linguistics and queer studies, the research analyses ninety publicly visible Grindr profiles from Angeles City, Pampanga. Specifically, it was guided by Corpus Linguistics and Nguyen-Trung Kien's Digital Dramaturgical Model, employing a qualitative, exploratory design through purposive sampling and corpus-based Thematic Analysis. In particular, linguistic features were examined across three categories: (1) words and phrases, (2) acronyms and slang, and (3) emojis. The findings revealed recurring lexical patterns emphasizing discretion, masculinity, sexual roles, health, and immediacy. While acronyms and slang function as efficient subcultural codes for expressing preferences and boundaries, Emojis serve as paralinguistic cues that convey affect and intent. Consequently, these linguistic strategies reflect forms of impression management shaped by platform constraints, sociocultural stigma, and local norms. The study demonstrates that Grindr profiles serve as digital front-stage performances where users negotiate visibility, desirability, and safety, thereby offering localized insight into how Filipino gay men strategically use language to construct identity within a conservative, postcolonial, and multilingual context.

Keywords: grindr, digital self-presentation, gay hookup culture, filipino queer identity, online dating applications

1. Introduction

The rise of location-aware mobile technologies has significantly reshaped how individuals form and maintain social and intimate relationships in the digital age. Among these innovations, location-based real-time dating (LBRTD) applications have become particularly influential due to their ability to connect users with nearby individuals in real time (Handel & Shklovski, 2012). These platforms prioritize immediacy, visual presentation, and rapid interaction, distinguishing them from earlier online dating websites that allowed more extensive textual self-description (Ellison, 2012).

One of the most widely used LBRTD platforms is Grindr, a geolocation-based social networking application designed primarily for gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer men. Since its launch in 2009, Grindr has become a central digital space for facilitating both romantic and sexual encounters, particularly among men who have sex with men (MSM). Unlike traditional dating platforms, Grindr emphasizes proximity and image-based interaction, offering only limited textual space in the form of short profile bios or "About Me" sections. Despite their



brevity, these bios play a crucial role in shaping user perception, signaling identity, and negotiating desire within a highly competitive digital environment (Gudelunas, 2012; Blackwell, n.d.).

The importance of these textual fragments lies in their function as sites of self-presentation. In environments where physical interaction is mediated by digital interfaces, users engage in impression management through carefully selected words, abbreviations, and stylistic choices. Even minimal linguistic input becomes meaningful, as users attempt to project desirability, assert identity, and attract specific audiences. This process is particularly significant in queer digital spaces, where self-expression is shaped not only by personal preference but also by broader social norms, stigma, and cultural expectations (Savin-Williams, 2005).

In the Philippines, these dynamics are further complicated by the persistence of religious conservatism and social stigma surrounding non-heteronormative identities. Although urbanization and globalization have contributed to increased visibility of LGBTQ+ communities, same-sex relationships and expressions of sexuality continue to be socially contested in many contexts. Within this environment, digital platforms such as Grindr function as both safe spaces and mediated arenas of identity negotiation, allowing users to explore intimacy while managing anonymity and discretion (Conley et al., 2011; Garcia, 2013).

Recent studies on online dating platforms and digital communication have demonstrated that language functions as a central tool for constructing identity, negotiating relationships, and reproducing social inequalities in virtual environments. Research on Grindr and Tinder reveals that users strategically employ linguistic and visual resources to present idealized versions of themselves, often reinforcing hegemonic masculinity, feminine devaluation, and femmephobic attitudes. Such studies highlight how self-presentation is shaped by social expectations and power relations, although most investigations focus predominantly on Western contexts, limiting cross-cultural generalizability (Fadzil & Hamid, 2020; García-Gómez, 2020; Evripidou, 2020; Costa, 2021).

Scholars have also explored discourse strategies in online dating profiles, emphasizing evaluative language, social approval, and communicative tactics used to establish trust and attractiveness. These studies contribute significantly to understanding digital persuasion and identity construction but pay limited attention to multimodal elements and the evolving influence of artificial intelligence and algorithmic matching on linguistic choices (Lee et al., 2024; Otemuyiwa & Akinyemi, 2025).

Another prominent area of research concerns code-switching and code-mixing in digital communication. Studies have documented the widespread use of bilingual and multilingual practices in texting, social media interactions, and online communities, demonstrating that code-switching serves communicative, identity-related, and interpersonal functions. Nevertheless, many studies are descriptive and concentrate primarily on structural patterns rather than examining the broader sociocultural and ideological implications of language alternation in digital spaces (Montes-Alcalá, 2024; Reponte-Sereño et al., 2023; Pérez-Sabater, 2022; Mushaathoni & Dondolo, 2025; Nuraini & Fitriana, 2024; Lising et al., 2020; Pílares & Dizon, 2025; Akinwotu et al., 2025; Pérez-Sabater & Maguelouk-Moffo, 2024).

Furthermore, research on dating applications has increasingly addressed issues of discrimination, inequality, and sexual markets. Studies reveal that online platforms frequently reproduce racial biases, exclusionary preferences, and unequal power dynamics, particularly among LGBTQ+ communities and transgender users. While these studies provide valuable insights into digital inequalities and identity negotiations, they often emphasize experiences of marginalization without sufficiently exploring users' resistance strategies and the potential for more inclusive communicative practices (Forbes & Stacey, 2022; Masullo & Coppola, 2021; Conner, 2022; Green, 2021; Suenzo, 2024; Licoppe, 2020).

Collectively, the literature demonstrates that online communication, particularly on dating applications and social networking platforms, is characterized by complex interactions between language, identity, power, and technology. However, significant gaps remain regarding

cross-cultural comparisons, multimodal discourse analysis, and the intersection between code-switching practices and identity construction in online dating environments, indicating the need for more integrative and context-sensitive research approaches.

Grindr's geolocation-based interface intensifies this negotiation by enabling users to view and interact with nearby profiles in real time. This spatial immediacy contributes to the formation of what has been described as a digital cruising environment, where identity, desire, and proximity intersect. Within this environment, the "About Me" section becomes one of the few available spaces for textual self-expression, making language a critical tool for managing impressions and signaling social and sexual preferences.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study draws on Erving Goffman's dramaturgical model of self-presentation (1959), which conceptualizes social interaction as a form of performance in which individuals manage impressions before an audience. However, contemporary digital environments complicate this framework. Nguyen Trung Kien's Digital Dramaturgical Model (2015; 2022) extends Goffman's theory by emphasizing the role of technological mediation, context collapse, and algorithmic visibility in shaping identity performance. In platforms such as Grindr, self-presentation is not only performed but also continuously mediated by platform design, audience fragmentation, and interactional feedback.

Research on online dating discourse has increasingly demonstrated that digital platforms function as spaces where language, identity, and self-presentation are continuously negotiated. Studies have shown that users strategically construct identities through lexical choices, profile descriptions, and linguistic performances to maximize desirability and social acceptance. However, many studies tend to emphasize individual impression management while paying limited attention to broader sociocultural and ideological factors shaping these linguistic practices (Tong et al., 2019; Pidoux et al., 2021).

The relationship between language and identity construction is particularly evident in LGBTQ+ online communities. The emergence of bisexual lingo on Planet Romeo illustrates how linguistic innovation becomes a means of negotiating visibility, belonging, and marketability within digital queer spaces. Nevertheless, the study is context-specific and offers limited comparative perspectives on how similar linguistic practices operate across other queer dating platforms and cultural environments (Enardecido, 2020).

Several studies have focused on the role of language accuracy and linguistic style in impression formation. Profile texts containing grammatical or spelling errors are often associated with lower attractiveness and perceived competence, indicating that language proficiency significantly influences interpersonal evaluations in digital dating contexts. Yet, these studies predominantly rely on experimental designs and may oversimplify the complexity of human attraction by reducing it to textual characteristics alone (Van Der Zanden et al., 2020).

Research on relationship goals and linguistic behaviour reveals that users modify their linguistic choices according to their intentions, such as seeking long-term relationships or casual encounters. Such findings highlight the adaptive nature of self-presentation strategies, although they pay insufficient attention to how cultural norms and platform-specific affordances shape these communicative adaptations (Van Der Zanden et al., 2019).

Anthropological perspectives have further demonstrated that online dating profiles serve as sites where intimacy, affection, and social relationships are redefined according to local cultural values. The language of love in online dating reflects ongoing transformations in interpersonal relations and identity formation. However, these studies often emphasize contextual particularities, limiting their applicability to broader digital communication patterns (Dundon, 2021).

Recent scholarship has increasingly addressed gendered dimensions of digital sexual cultures, illustrating how young women negotiate agency, vulnerability, and social expectations through online interactions. Although these studies provide critical insights into the intersection of gender and technology, they frequently focus on experiences of femininity while giving less

attention to comparative analyses involving other gender identities and sexual orientations (García-Gómez, 2024).

The growing prevalence of romance scams has generated studies examining linguistic strategies employed by scammers and ordinary users. Findings indicate that scammers deliberately manipulate self-descriptions and expressions of social approval to establish credibility and emotional attachment. Despite their valuable contributions, these studies largely concentrate on deceptive discourse and pay less attention to the structural conditions that facilitate digital manipulation and vulnerability (Lee et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024).

Emerging studies from diverse geographical contexts have revealed recurring discourse strategies in online dating profiles, including the use of persuasive language, idealized self-descriptions, and culturally embedded expressions of intimacy. Nevertheless, the predominance of qualitative and descriptive approaches limits the development of broader theoretical frameworks capable of explaining cross-cultural variations in online dating discourse (Otemuyiwa & Akinyemi, 2025; Федоренко, 2026).

Recent investigations into men's virtual self-presentation and historical comparisons of dating advertisements have demonstrated that although technological platforms evolve, fundamental communicative objectives—such as attracting partners and projecting desirable identities—remain relatively stable over time. However, these studies have not sufficiently explored how algorithmic features and platform governance influence linguistic practices and identity performances (Marabe et al., 2026; Visser & Lamers, 2022).

Finally, studies on personality perception indicate that users frequently infer intelligence, trustworthiness, and personality traits from limited textual information. While these findings underscore the significance of language in digital impression formation, they also reveal the potential for stereotyping and inaccurate judgments, highlighting the need for more interdisciplinary research integrating sociolinguistic, psychological, and technological perspectives (Von Andrian-Werburg et al., 2020).

In addition to its sociological dimension, self-presentation in digital dating platforms is fundamentally linguistic. Prior research has shown that even brief profile texts carry significant pragmatic and social meaning, encoding identity, desire, and relational intent (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Baker, 2019). Linguistic choices such as lexical selection, abbreviations, humour, and coded expressions function as tools for managing impression and signaling group affiliation. In queer digital spaces, terms such as “masc,” “discreet,” or “no fems” operate not only as preferences but also as indicators of cultural norms and internalized hierarchies (Hall et al., 2010).

Corpus linguistics provides a useful framework for analyzing these patterns systematically. Biber's (1998) approach emphasizes the importance of frequency, distribution, and stylistic variation in uncovering underlying discourse functions. Applied to Grindr bios, this method allows for the identification of recurring linguistic strategies used by users to construct identity and negotiate desirability within constrained textual spaces.

Existing scholarship on online dating and digital self-presentation has largely focused on Western contexts and broader psychological or sociological dimensions of platform use (Toma & Hancock, 2013; Race, 2015). While these studies provide valuable insights into impression management and sexual culture in digital environments, limited attention has been given to how language operates within localized, non-Western queer communities, particularly in the Philippines. Furthermore, much of the existing research relies on interviews or self-reported data, which may introduce ethical, interpretive, or safety limitations when studying sensitive populations.

In response to these gaps, this study focuses on publicly available textual data from Grindr profiles in Angeles City, Pampanga—a region characterized by a vibrant nightlife economy and active digital dating culture. By analyzing the “About Me” sections of users, this research examines how Filipino gay men linguistically construct self-presentation within the constraints of a mobile, location-based platform. It specifically investigates how word choice,

stylistic patterns, and coded expressions reflect broader processes of identity negotiation, desire articulation, and social positioning.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the fields of digital linguistics, queer studies, and sociolinguistics by demonstrating how language functions as a strategic tool of self-presentation in LBRTD environments. It also highlights the intersection of technology, language, and sexuality in shaping contemporary queer identities in the Philippine context. By situating Grindr bios as sites of linguistic performance, this research offers a localized understanding of how digital platforms mediate both expression and constraint in the construction of self.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design & Framework

This study employed a qualitative, exploratory, and interpretive design to examine linguistic self-presentation in the “About Me” sections of Grindr profiles in Angeles City, Pampanga. Qualitative methods were used to analyse how language constructs identity and meaning in digitally mediated queer spaces (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The exploratory nature of the study is appropriate given the limited Philippine-based research on Grindr discourse (Baskerville & Pries-Heje, 2010), while an interpretive lens was applied to understand how meanings are socially constructed through language (Putnam & Banghart, 2017).

The analysis was guided by Biber’s (1998) Corpus Linguistics Approach, Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical theory, and Nguyen Trung Kien’s (2022) Digital Dramaturgical Model, enabling both linguistic and sociological interpretation of digital self-presentation.

2.2. Data

Data consisted of 90 publicly available Grindr profiles geolocated in Angeles City, Pampanga, specifically around Adonis Bar and the Angeles University Foundation (AUF) area. These locations were chosen due to their high concentration of nightlife activity and active Grindr user presence. Only “About Me” sections were included. Profiles containing at least one complete sentence in English, Filipino, or Taglish were selected. All personal identifiers (usernames, photos, and chat content) were excluded.

2.3. Procedure

The resulting corpus included textual data composed of words, acronyms, slang, and emojis, all treated as linguistic units of self-presentation. All data were anonymized and coded. Non-linguistic elements were removed except emojis, which were retained when semantically meaningful. The dataset was organized into a structured qualitative corpus for analysis.

Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, corpus linguistic analysis (Biber, 1998) identified frequency patterns, lexical choices, and recurring stylistic features, including adjectives, abbreviations, and emojis used for identity and preference signaling. Second, Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis was applied to group recurring linguistic patterns into broader themes reflecting shared communicative strategies in self-presentation. Third, Nguyen Trung Kien’s (2022) Digital Dramaturgical Model was used to interpret findings as staged identity performances shaped by technological affordances, audience perception, and cultural norms of masculinity, desirability, and discretion.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results: Linguistic Features in Grindr Profiles

The data gathered from ninety (90) publicly available Grindr “About Me” sections were analysed using Biber’s (1998) Corpus Linguistics Approach to identify recurring linguistic patterns, alongside Nguyen Trung’s (2022) adaptation of the Dramaturgical Model to interpret how these features shape users’ digital self-presentation.

The analysis focused on the dominant linguistic features found in the “About Me” sections of 90 Grindr profiles collected in Angeles City, Pampanga, particularly recurring words and phrases, acronyms and slang, and emojis. The findings reveal how users employ



compressed and coded language to negotiate identity, desire, and discretion within Grindr's mediated environment.

3.1.1 Words and Phrases

The profiles frequently relied on concise descriptors that communicated identity and relational intent. The term *discreet* emerged as one of the most common expressions, reflecting users' preference for privacy and controlled visibility in a socially conservative environment. Similar patterns have been observed in online dating studies, where selective disclosure functions as a strategy for managing stigma and audience perception (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Tziallas, 2015).

Descriptors associated with masculinity, particularly *manly*, also appeared prominently, reflecting the continued valorization of hegemonic masculinity in queer digital spaces (Bonner-Thompson, 2018; Woo, 2013). Sexual role identifiers such as *top*, *bottom*, and *vers* further functioned as compressed markers of compatibility and identity positioning (Blackwell et al., 2015).

Health- and body-related terms such as *clean*, *vaccinated*, and *fit* suggested a discourse of bodily maintenance and responsibility, while descriptors like *fun* and *wild* reinforced Grindr's association with casual interaction and sexual exploration. Together, these lexical choices illustrate how users strategically balance desirability, caution, and self-curation within constrained digital spaces.

3.1.2 Acronyms and Slang

The corpus also revealed the extensive use of acronyms and slang as forms of efficient and coded communication. One of the most frequent expressions was *NPNR* ("No Pic, No Reply"), which functioned as a filtering mechanism regulating interaction and visual reciprocity. Such expressions serve as linguistic boundaries that allow users to manage audience access and maintain control in digital encounters (Brubaker et al., 2014).

Sexual role acronyms such as *TOP*, *BTM*, and *VERS* further emphasized the performative role of linguistic shorthand in Grindr communication, facilitating rapid categorization and signaling identity alignment (Birnholtz et al., 2014). Meanwhile, terms such as *NSA* ("No Strings Attached") and *FWB* ("Friends With Benefits") reflected the normalization of casual relational arrangements associated with hookup culture (Licoppe et al., 2015).

Localized expressions such as *Pabayan* and *NotForFree* additionally suggested economic and transactional dimensions within certain forms of digital intimacy. Overall, the widespread use of acronyms and slang highlights the coded, efficient, and subculturally informed nature of queer digital discourse.

3.1.3 Emojis as Visual Linguistic Devices

Emojis also functioned as important semiotic resources in Grindr profiles. Frequently used symbols such as 🍆, 🍌, and 😏 conveyed sexual openness, flirtation, and erotic humour, supporting Döring and Mohseni's (2018) view of emojis as paralinguistic devices that intensify or soften textual meaning. Emojis such as 💪 and 🔥 reinforced ideals of masculinity and attractiveness, while 😊 and 😍 introduced more playful and affective tones. Symbols like 👁👁 and 🍷🍷 further operated as visual euphemisms that communicated sexual intent indirectly while maintaining ambiguity. These findings suggest that emojis are not merely decorative elements but extensions of linguistic self-presentation. Through visual shorthand, users negotiate desire, humour, and audience interpretation within Grindr's highly compressed communicative environment.

3.1.4 Thematic Analysis of Linguistic Features in Grindr Profiles

The thematic analysis of linguistic data from 90 publicly available Grindr "About Me" sections collected in Angeles City, Pampanga. Guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach and supported by Biber's (1998) corpus linguistic framework, the analysis identifies recurring linguistic patterns that reflect how users construct identity, desire, and social positioning in a constrained digital environment.

Theme 1 – Negotiated Masculinity and Discretion



Profiles frequently combine markers of masculinity with explicit signals of discretion. Expressions such as “discreet,” “manly,” “gym fit,” and “no trace” appear in condensed formulations like “Discreet manly LF4SAME” and “Manly / discreet.” This pairing reflects a consistent strategy of balancing desirability with concealment. From a corpus perspective, these recurring lexical choices indicate a shared stance of “calculated masculinity,” where users align with hegemonic masculine norms while managing visibility risks. Consistent with Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgy and Nguyen Trung’s (2022) digital dramaturgical model, these markers function as frontstage cues that regulate how identity is both performed and protected. In the Philippine context, this negotiation reflects broader sociocultural pressures surrounding gender nonconformity. Masculinity becomes a form of symbolic capital that enhances desirability while discretion operates as protection against stigma.

Theme 2 – Transactional Interaction and Boundary-Setting

A dominant pattern across the corpus is the use of acronyms and fixed expressions that regulate interaction before engagement occurs. Terms such as NPNR (No Pic, No Reply), NRNI (No Reply No Interest), “No blind meet-up,” and “No for hire” function as pre-emptive filters. These expressions represent a compressed transactional register, where communication is reduced to efficiency-driven directives. As Biber’s (1998) framework suggests, their repetition signals register specialization shaped by platform constraints. They also function as linguistic gatekeeping mechanisms that control access and minimize unwanted interaction. Aligned with Brubaker et al. (2014), these shorthand expressions serve both practical and strategic purposes: they streamline communication while asserting agency over digital encounters. At the same time, they reflect a marketplace logic of interaction, where attention and access are selectively managed.

Theme 3 – Sexual Capital and Erotic Self-Presentation

Many profiles foreground sexual desirability through explicit or stylized self-descriptions. Terms such as “daks,” “good catch,” and “good in bed,” alongside explicit statements of sexual capability, position the self as an object of erotic evaluation. These expressions reflect what Hakim (2010) terms erotic capital, where sexual attractiveness and performance function as social assets. Linguistically, this is reinforced through evaluative and intensifying language that constructs competence, dominance, or desirability. In many cases, erotic claims are combined with humour or exaggeration, softening explicitness while maintaining impact. This reflects a culturally embedded style of queer expression in the Philippines, where humour mediates sexual openness (Manalansan, 2003). However, this performance of sexual capital also reinforces hierarchies of desirability. Traits associated with fitness, masculinity, and dominance are consistently privileged, reproducing normative standards within queer digital spaces.

Theme 4 – Affective Desire and Relational Longing

Despite the dominance of transactional and sexual discourse, a significant subset of profiles expresses emotional or relational intent. Phrases such as “LF Jowa,” “good talks,” and “romantic at heart” indicate a desire for companionship beyond casual encounters. These expressions reflect what MacKee (2016) describes as the coexistence of intimacy and hookup culture in digital dating environments. Users compress emotional needs into short linguistic cues due to platform constraints, producing condensed expressions of relational aspiration. In the Philippine context, this affective dimension aligns with cultural orientations toward relationality and shared identity (*pakikipagkapwa*). As a result, Grindr becomes a space where emotional and sexual economies intersect, rather than existing in opposition. This theme highlights what Duguay (2017) terms “affective oscillation,” where users shift between vulnerability and detachment depending on perceived audience and intent.

Across the dataset, four dominant linguistic strategies emerge: (1) negotiated masculinity and discretion, (2) transactional boundary-setting, (3) sexual capital performance, and (4) affective relational expression. These patterns demonstrate that Grindr bios are not merely descriptive texts but condensed performances of identity shaped by technological constraints and sociocultural norms. From a corpus linguistic perspective, repeated lexical

choices and acronyms indicate stable registers of communication within the platform. Thematically, these registers reflect ongoing negotiations of visibility, desirability, and intimacy. Together, they illustrate how users construct hybrid identities that shift between protection, performance, and emotional expression within a highly mediated digital space.

3.1.5 Integrated Front-Stage Interpretation Using Nguyen Trung's Digital Dramaturgical Model

Nguyen Trung's (2015, 2022) Digital Dramaturgical Model extends Goffman's (1959) theory to digitally mediated environments, where self-presentation becomes fragmented, audience-specific, and shaped by platform design. In this view, Grindr functions as a constrained digital stage where identity is performed through compressed linguistic and visual cues. This study applies the model to interpret the four emergent themes not as separate categories but as interconnected front-stage strategies shaped by Grindr's affordances, including limited text space, geolocation, anonymity, and emoji use. These conditions produce what Nguyen Trung calls a "grammar of micro-performance."

Each theme reflects a distinct mode of self-presentation. Sexual explicitness functions as rapid erotic scripting that signals desire. Transactional shorthand (e.g., NPNR, NRNI) operates as pre-emptive boundary-setting. Masculinity and discretion serve as reputational management strategies within a collapsed audience environment. Emotional expressions function as strategic authenticity used to signal sincerity and relational appeal. Together, these practices reflect what Nguyen Trung (2015) terms the "multiplexed self," where users address multiple imagined audiences—sexual, emotional, and transactional—within a single profile.

Authenticity is therefore performative rather than spontaneous. Emotional claims ("romantic at heart," "good talks") function as credibility markers, while sexual and hygiene-related language constructs desirability and trust. These cues are adjusted in response to platform visibility structures and perceived audience expectations. The model also highlights Grindr bios as products of ongoing self-presentation labour. Users continuously refine their profiles to align with norms of masculinity, desirability, and discretion. However, these performances also reproduce structural inequalities by privileging masculine, fit, and sexually assertive identities, while marginalizing non-conforming expressions.

Overall, the four themes—erotic scripting, transactional boundary-setting, reputational masculinity, and strategic authenticity—demonstrate how users navigate identity construction under technological and social constraints. In conclusion, Nguyen Trung's framework shows that Grindr self-presentation is a multiplexed front-stage performance shaped by platform affordances, cultural norms, and algorithmic visibility. The linguistic patterns in this study reflect strategic, adaptive identity work embedded within broader systems of digital queer interaction.

3.1.6 Relating Themes to Filipino Gay Hookup Culture

The discussion extends beyond the identification of linguistic patterns to examine their significance within Filipino gay hook-up culture. The four themes—negotiated masculinity and discretion, transactional/pragmatic encounters, sexual capital and erotic competence, and desire for connection amid digital distance—emerge not as isolated linguistic features but as interconnected strategies of identity construction shaped by social stigma, platform design, and local cultural norms.

Their interpretation is grounded in three contextual forces: (1) the socio-cultural constraints facing Filipino gay men, including stigma, family expectations, and religious influence; (2) Grindr's affordances, which compress identity into brief textual and visual cues under conditions of anonymity and immediacy; and (3) the local logic of gay hookup culture, where masculinity, role identity, and sexual capital strongly structure desirability (Castañeda, 2015; Garcia, 2008). Within this setting, language becomes a primary tool for negotiating visibility, safety, and intimacy.

The frequency patterns (e.g., discreet, manly, NPNR, TOP/BTM/VERS, emojis such as 🍆 and 🍑) are not merely lexical preferences but indicators of self-presentation strategies. They

reflect how users simultaneously manage attraction and concealment, access and restriction, desire and protection. These choices demonstrate that Grindr bios function as compressed performances of identity shaped by both cultural expectations and platform constraints.

Collectively, the themes show that Filipino Grindr users operate within a dual logic of hookup culture: global app-based norms of speed, efficiency, and sexual signaling, and localized socio-cultural pressures shaped by *hiya*, *pakikisama*, and enduring moral conservatism. As a result, self-presentation becomes a balancing act between erotic visibility and social discretion. The first two themes reveal a protective and instrumental orientation toward identity. Masculinity and discretion function as reputational safeguards, allowing users to appear desirable while minimizing exposure. Transactional shorthand (e.g., NPNR, GH, NSA) operates as a filtering mechanism that regulates interaction and reduces social and emotional risk. These linguistic practices reflect both platform efficiency and culturally grounded caution in managing intimacy.

The latter two themes expose a tension between erotic display and emotional desire. Sexual capital is performed through explicit role labels, adjectives, and emojis that signal desirability and competence, while emotional expressions (e.g., LF Jowa, romantic at heart) introduce relational aspirations within a predominantly sexualized environment. This coexistence suggests that Grindr users do not simply engage in hookup culture but actively negotiate between erotic performance and affective longing. Across all themes, language emerges as a form of adaptive cultural practice. Users employ coded, abbreviated, and affective language to translate personal desire into socially and technologically legible forms. These strategies reflect not only individual agency but also structural constraints within Philippine society, where queer identity is simultaneously visible and regulated.

Ultimately, the findings position Grindr as a hybrid cultural space where Filipino gay men perform identity through continuous negotiation. The platform becomes a site where masculinity, desire, and emotion are linguistically constructed under conditions of visibility management. These performances illustrate a broader cultural reality: Filipino gay hookup culture is not purely transactional or purely emotional, but a dynamic interplay of both, mediated through language, technology, and social constraint.

4. Conclusion

This study examined how Filipino gay men in Angeles City, Pampanga linguistically construct self-presentation through the “About Me” sections of Grindr profiles. The findings demonstrate that these bios function as strategic performances of identity shaped by platform affordances, cultural expectations, and the social realities of queer digital interaction.

The language used in the profiles was characterized by brevity, coded expressions, and stylistic efficiency. Acronyms, slang, evaluative descriptors, and emojis served as compressed yet meaningful linguistic resources for signaling masculinity, discretion, desirability, and relational intent. Terms such as “discreet,” “manly,” and “clean,” alongside expressions like “NPNR” and “GH,” reflected how users negotiate visibility and caution within a socially sensitive environment. At the same time, affective phrases and relationship-oriented expressions revealed that Grindr is not solely a space for casual sexual encounters but also a platform where users articulate emotional intimacy, companionship, and belonging.

The study further shows that Grindr bios operate as forms of digital self-performance. Through selective word choice, tone, and symbolic cues, users strategically construct desirable online personas while navigating expectations surrounding masculinity, sexuality, and discretion. These linguistic performances reflect broader Filipino cultural dynamics in which globalized queer practices intersect with local values, stigma, and emotional norms. In this sense, Grindr functions not only as a hookup platform but also as a mediated space for identity negotiation and cultural expression.



Overall, the findings suggest that linguistic self-presentation on Grindr represents a hybridized form of queer digital identity shaped by both global hookup culture and localized Filipino sociocultural realities. By integrating corpus linguistics, thematic analysis, and digital dramaturgy, this study contributes to emerging scholarship on queer digital discourse in non-Western contexts and highlights the importance of language in understanding online identity construction.

The study also points toward several implications for future research and practice. Expanding the analysis to other regions in the Philippines or to platforms such as Tinder, Blued, and Planet Romeo may reveal broader variations in queer digital communication across cultural and technological environments. Future studies may likewise explore the role of code-switching, humour, religion, class, and body politics in shaping Filipino gay online identities. From a practical perspective, the findings emphasize that dating applications serve not only as sites of sexual interaction but also as spaces for emotional expression, community formation, and identity work. These insights may inform digital literacy initiatives, LGBTQ+ advocacy, and culturally sensitive discussions surrounding online intimacy and queer visibility in the Philippines.

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