

An Analysis of Jargon Used by Commentators in the League of Legends Tournament on the LoL Esports YouTube Channel

Tomridjo, A. R. S.
Universitas Pamulang
adib.tomridjo@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the jargon used by commentators during a League of Legends tournament broadcast on the official LoL Esports YouTube channel. It aims to identify the word-formation processes used in the jargon and to explain the meanings of the identified terms within their gameplay context. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study analyzes commentators' utterances from the First Stand Tournament broadcast on March 10, 2025. The data were collected through repeated observation and manual transcription of the commentary. The identified jargon was classified using Yule's (2010) theory of word formation, while its contextual meanings were interpreted with reference to established League of Legends sources. The analysis identified 31 jargon terms representing six word-formation processes: conversion, compounding, borrowing, clipping, acronym, and derivation. Conversion was the most frequent process, accounting for 12 terms, followed by compounding with seven terms and borrowing with six. Clipping occurred in three terms, acronyms in two, and derivation in one. These findings indicate that esports commentators frequently adapt existing lexical items and specialized expressions to communicate complex gameplay situations efficiently. The study highlights how word formation contributes to the development of specialized vocabulary in esports commentary and reflects the communicative practices of the League of Legends community.

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Jargon;
Sociolinguistics;
Word formation;
YouTube

Article History:

Received: 5 August 2026
Revised: 1 September 2026
Accepted: 3 September 2026
Published: 4 September 2026

How to Cite in APA Style:

Tomridjo, A. (2026). An Analysis of Jargon Used by Commentators in the League of Legends Tournament on the LoL Esports YouTube Channel. *Lexeme: Journal of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics*, 8(2), 531–538.
<https://doi.org/10.32493/ljal.v8i2.63359>

INTRODUCTION

Language plays an essential role in human communication by enabling individuals to exchange information, express ideas, and coordinate activities effectively. As communication develops within professional or social communities, specialized vocabulary often emerges to facilitate efficient interaction. This specialized vocabulary is commonly referred to as jargon and enables members of a community to communicate complex information accurately and rapidly. In many professional fields, including medicine, law, technology, and sports, jargon functions not only as a tool for efficient communication but also as a marker of group identity (Yule, 2010).

One of the rapidly growing communities that has developed its own specialized language is the esports community. The expansion of competitive online games has transformed esports into a global entertainment industry with large audiences of players and spectators. Within this environment, esports commentators are responsible for delivering fast, accurate, and engaging explanations of gameplay during live broadcasts. Because League of Legends is a multiplayer

online battle arena (MOBA) game characterized by fast-paced gameplay and complex strategic interactions, commentators frequently use specialized terminology to describe game mechanics, player roles, strategies, objectives, and tactical decisions. These expressions allow commentators to communicate efficiently within the limited time available during matches while maintaining the pace of the broadcast.

The increasing popularity of MOBA games has further encouraged the development and circulation of gaming jargon. MOBA games require continuous teamwork, rapid decision-making, and strategic coordination, making concise communication essential during gameplay. Among MOBA titles, League of Legends, developed by Riot Games, has become a prominent global esport. Robinson (2020) described League of Legends as the most played game in the world since 2012. Its international tournaments attract large audiences, while professional commentators continually use specialized terminology to explain complex gameplay situations. Consequently, esports broadcasts provide a valuable source of authentic linguistic data for investigating the formation and use of specialized vocabulary in digital communication.

Previous studies have investigated gaming jargon in several contexts. Pratama (2021) examined jargon used in the online game Point Blank and identified 41 terms while analyzing their meanings and communicative functions. Fauzi and Sitepu (2024) investigated jargon used by esports casters during Dota 2's The International tournament and identified 52 jargon items formed through several word-formation processes, with compounding as the most frequent category. Ulu Mubin (2022) explored jargon used by Indonesian graphic designers on Facebook and reported acronyms as the dominant form of specialized vocabulary in that professional community. Together, these studies show that specialized communities develop concise lexical resources to support efficient communication and shared group knowledge.

Although previous studies have examined gaming jargon, including caster language in Dota 2, research on professional League of Legends commentary remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on player communication, other game titles, or the identification of jargon rather than combining word-formation analysis with contextual interpretation in live League of Legends commentary. Professional commentators also have a communicative role that differs from that of players: they must explain game mechanics, provide strategic analysis, entertain audiences, and maintain the pace of a live broadcast. These characteristics make commentator discourse a useful context for examining how specialized terms are formed and interpreted in professional esports communication.

The present study addresses this gap by examining jargon used by commentators during a League of Legends tournament broadcast on the official LoL Esports YouTube channel. Rather than focusing solely on identifying jargon, the study analyzes the morphological processes through which the terms are formed by applying Yule's (2010) framework of word formation. The identified jargon is then interpreted according to its contextual meaning in League of Legends gameplay using established gaming references. Through this approach, the study provides an account of both the linguistic formation and the contextual interpretation of esports jargon.

This study contributes to morphology and sociolinguistics by illustrating how word-formation processes operate in contemporary digital discourse. It also provides practical insights into the linguistic characteristics of esports commentary that may be useful to language researchers, discourse analysts, translators, esports audiences, and future researchers interested in digital communication and gaming language. Accordingly, this study aims to identify the word-formation processes found in the jargon used by League of Legends commentators and to explain the meanings of those terms within their gameplay context.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sociolinguistics

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the emergence of gaming jargon reflects the close relationship between language and society. Chambers (2009) explains that language variation is

shaped by social groups and communicative contexts. Similarly, Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) emphasize that language use is influenced by social interaction and community practices. As a result, communities develop distinctive linguistic varieties according to their communicative needs. In esports, commentators, professional players, analysts, and experienced audiences share specialized vocabulary that facilitates communication while also reinforcing a sense of group identity.

Language Variation

Language variation refers to differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and usage across speakers and contexts. According to Chambers (2009), such variation is systematically related to factors such as geographical location, social background, and communicative setting. Speakers may therefore select different linguistic forms to express similar meanings depending on the community, audience, and situation. This perspective is relevant to esports because gaming communities develop recurring lexical choices that distinguish their communication from general language use.

Jargon

Yule (2010) defines jargon as “special technical vocabulary associated with a specific area of work or interest” (p. 259). Unlike slang, which is commonly associated with informal communication among particular social groups, jargon is primarily used within professional or specialized communities to achieve communicative precision (Yule, 2010). In this study, jargon is analyzed through word-formation processes discussed by Yule (2010), including coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, derivation, conversion, acronyms, and multiple processes. In esports commentary, expressions such as dive, roam, split push, peel, and CC allow commentators to describe complex gameplay situations concisely. Such terms may be readily understood by experienced League of Legends audiences but remain unfamiliar to outsiders. Research on specialized vocabulary also shows that heavy use of jargon can reduce accessibility for non-expert audiences (Rakedzon et al., 2017). Jargon therefore serves both as an efficient communicative resource and as a linguistic marker of specialized community knowledge.

MOBA

MOBA, or multiplayer online battle arena, is a team-based game genre in which players control individual characters and coordinate to achieve shared objectives. In League of Legends, two teams of five champions compete to destroy the opposing team's base (Riot Games, n.d.). MOBA gameplay combines strategic positioning, resource management, teamwork, and rapid decision-making. These characteristics encourage the use of concise terminology to describe roles, objectives, map areas, and tactical actions during play and commentary.

League of Legends

League of Legends was developed and published by Riot Games. It is a team-based strategy game in which two teams of five champions compete to destroy the enemy Nexus, the central structure in the opposing team's base (Riot Games, n.d.). Players select champions with different abilities and roles, earn gold and experience, purchase items, and coordinate with teammates to secure objectives and gain map control. The game also supports a large competitive ecosystem of regional leagues and international tournaments, making professional broadcasts a rich setting for specialized gaming language.

LoL Esports YouTube Channel

LoL Esports is the official YouTube channel for professional League of Legends esports coverage. The channel streams and archives tournament broadcasts and publishes related esports content, including highlights, analyses, interviews, trailers, and other promotional material (LoL

Esports, n.d.). Its broadcasts include major international competitions such as the Mid-Season Invitational, the World Championship, and the First Stand Tournament. Because these events are delivered in real time to a global audience, commentators rely on concise, specialized terminology to explain rapidly changing gameplay situations.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate jargon used by commentators during a League of Legends tournament. A qualitative approach was appropriate because the data consisted of non-numerical linguistic units in the form of words and utterances. Busetto et al. (2020) explain that qualitative research is suited to examining the nature of phenomena and how they are interpreted in context. Kim et al. (2017) further describe qualitative descriptive research as an approach that provides a straightforward account of a phenomenon. Accordingly, this design enabled the researcher to identify, classify, and interpret jargon used by esports commentators in an authentic broadcast context.

Data Source

The data consisted of commentators' utterances from the first match on Day 1 of the First Stand Tournament 2025, Team Liquid versus Karmin Corp, broadcast on the official LoL Esports YouTube channel on March 10, 2025 (LoL Esports, 2025). The selected match was commented by Drakos, Kobe, and Chronicler. To verify the contextual meanings of the jargon terms, the researcher also consulted the Mobalytics League of Legends glossary (Macabasco, 2022) and the League of Legends Wiki terminology page (League of Legends Wiki, n.d.).

Data Collection

The data were collected through several systematic procedures. First, the selected tournament video was watched repeatedly to develop a comprehensive understanding of the commentators' language. During these observations, specialized jargon used by the commentators was identified and recorded. The commentators' utterances were then transcribed manually, focusing on the spoken commentary while excluding background sounds, audience reactions, and players' voice communications. After transcription, the identified jargon terms were compiled in a data table and matched with their original utterances to preserve contextual meaning. Finally, the data were organized chronologically according to the video timestamps, and the transcript was reviewed for consistency and accuracy before analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Yule's (2010) framework of word formation. Each jargon term was classified according to the relevant word-formation process, including coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, conversion, acronym, and derivation. After classification, the meanings of the identified terms were interpreted using the Mobalytics glossary (Macabasco, 2022) and the League of Legends Wiki terminology page (League of Legends Wiki, n.d.). Each term was then examined in its original commentary context to explain the relationship between its word-formation process and its communicative function during the tournament broadcast. The results were summarized to address the study's aims concerning the types of word formation and the contextual meanings of jargon used by League of Legends commentators.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Table 1 presents the classification of the word-formation processes identified in the selected League of Legends tournament video using Yule's (2010) framework. The meanings of the jargon

terms were checked against established online sources, including the Mobalytics League of Legends glossary (Macabasco, 2022) and the League of Legends Wiki terminology page (League of Legends Wiki, n.d.), to support their interpretation in the gameplay context.

Table 1. Word-formation processes identified in the selected League of Legends tournament video

No.	Word-Formation Process	Frequency
1.	conversion	12
2.	compounding	7
3.	borrowing	6
4.	clipping	3
5.	acronym	2
6.	derivation	1
Total		31

Table 1 presents the distribution of word-formation processes identified in the selected League of Legends tournament video. A total of 31 jargon terms were classified into six word-formation categories: conversion, compounding, borrowing, clipping, acronym, and derivation. Among these categories, conversion was the most frequently identified process, accounting for 12 terms. This indicates that many jargon items used by the commentators were formed by shifting the grammatical function or specialized use of existing lexical items without changing their basic form.

Compounding was the second most frequent process, with seven occurrences, followed by borrowing with six occurrences. The relatively high frequency of compounding suggests that commentators often combine existing words to create expressions that refer to specific strategies, roles, or situations in League of Legends gameplay. Borrowing also contributed considerably to the dataset, showing that established lexical items can be adopted and used with specialized meanings within the gaming context. Together, conversion, compounding, and borrowing accounted for 25 of the 31 identified jargon terms.

The remaining word-formation processes occurred less frequently. Clipping was identified in three terms, while acronyms appeared in two terms. These shortened forms are particularly useful in esports commentary because they allow commentators to communicate information quickly during fast-paced gameplay. Derivation was the least frequent process, occurring only once in the dataset. Overall, the findings show that the jargon used by League of Legends commentators is predominantly formed through the adaptation and combination of existing lexical resources rather than through the creation of new words by affixation.

Discussion

The findings indicate that esports commentators employ several word-formation processes to communicate gameplay efficiently in a fast-paced competitive environment. Using Yule's (2010) framework, the analysis identified six processes: conversion, compounding, borrowing, clipping, acronym, and derivation. Conversion was the most frequent category, suggesting that commentators often use existing English lexical items in specialized gaming functions without overt changes to their form.

Several examples identified in this study illustrate this pattern. Terms such as *dive*, *carry*, *bait*, *burst*, *hook*, *roam*, *camping*, *peel*, *poke*, *jungle*, *cheese*, and *nerfs* function as specialized gaming jargon whose grammatical roles or contextual meanings differ from their conventional uses in general English. For example, *bait* is used as a verb meaning to deliberately lure an opponent into an unfavorable position, while *roam* refers to a player's movement across different areas of the map to support teammates or create strategic advantages. Likewise, *hook* refers to a champion ability that pulls an opponent toward the user. These adaptations demonstrate how existing English vocabulary develops specialized communicative functions within the League of

Legends community.

The second most frequent process was compounding. According to Yule (2010), compounding combines two independent lexical items to create a new word or expression. Expressions such as lane swap, split push, front line, laning phase, and control ward combine existing English words to express concepts specific to League of Legends. Although the individual elements remain recognizable, the resulting compounds refer to strategic concepts that are primarily understood within the gaming community.

Borrowing was also identified in the dataset. Terms such as skirmish, dragon, and Herald were classified in this category and are used with specialized meanings in League of Legends. Within the esports context, these items refer to specific gameplay mechanics, objectives, or entities rather than only to their general-language meanings. Their use illustrates how established lexical items can acquire domain-specific meanings within a gaming community.

Items classified as clipping included shortened forms such as bot, champ, and GA. These shortened expressions allow commentators to communicate rapidly while maintaining semantic clarity. Similarly, acronyms such as AD (Attack Damage) and CC (Crowd Control) compress frequently used technical terminology into shorter forms. Such forms support communicative efficiency during live broadcasts, where commentators must describe rapidly changing game situations within a limited amount of time.

Derivation appeared only once in the dataset, represented by the term lethality. According to Yule (2010), derivation creates new lexical items through the addition of prefixes or suffixes to existing words. Compared with the other categories identified in this study, derivation contributed relatively little to the observed esports jargon.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the identified jargon illustrates how language varies within a specialized speech community. Chambers (2009) emphasizes that language variation is associated with social groups and communicative contexts, while Yule (2010) describes jargon as specialized vocabulary shared within particular areas of work or interest. The findings are consistent with these perspectives because League of Legends commentators use a distinctive set of terms characterized by specialized meanings, communicative efficiency, and shared professional knowledge. The jargon therefore functions not only to simplify complex explanations but also to reflect linguistic conventions shared within the esports community.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the word-formation processes and meanings of jargon used by commentators during a selected League of Legends tournament broadcast on the official LoL Esports YouTube channel. Using Yule's (2010) framework, the study identified 31 jargon items representing six word-formation processes: conversion, compounding, borrowing, clipping, acronym, and derivation. Conversion was the most frequent category, whereas derivation was the least frequent.

The findings also show that the identified jargon helps commentators convey complex tactical information concisely while maintaining the pace of a live broadcast. At the same time, this specialized vocabulary reflects shared knowledge within the League of Legends community. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the results illustrate how language adapts to the communicative needs of a specialized social and professional context.

This study is limited to jargon collected from one selected League of Legends tournament broadcast and analyzed using Yule's (2010) framework of word formation. Future research could examine larger datasets across multiple tournaments, compare different esports titles, or apply additional linguistic perspectives such as discourse analysis, pragmatics, semantics, or corpus linguistics to develop a broader understanding of language variation in esports communication.

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