

Jargons and the formation of gamer's identity in VALORANT Champions Tour 2021

Rizki Perdana Sucipto and Tito Dimas Atmawijaya

Universitas Pamulang, Tangerang, Banten

Email correspondence: rizkiperdanasucipto@gmail.com

Article History: Accepted: August 10, 2025; Revised: September 11, 2025; Approved: October 10, 2025

Abstract

This study investigates the forms and meanings of jargons used by casters during the VALORANT Champions Tour (VCT) 2021 Korea Grand Finals, focusing on how these specialized terms function within the esports speech community. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research analyzed three YouTube videos of the final match to identify and classify 39 jargon terms based on Yule's (2020) theory of word formation. The findings revealed that the most dominant word formation process was compounding, accounting for 15 of the 39 terms, followed by borrowing, etymological adaptation, clipping, coinage, acronyms, and conversion. The meanings of these jargons were interpreted through semantic analysis and were supported by contextual usage and, where relevant, specialized gaming sources. The results demonstrate that jargon in the esports domain not only facilitates efficient communication among players, casters, and fans but also reinforces group identity and shared knowledge. This research highlights how language evolves in digital and competitive environments, emphasizing the creative and social functions of jargon in online gaming culture.

Keywords: Jargon; Speech community; VALORANT; Word formation

Introduction

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, enabling individuals to exchange information, express emotions, and build social relationships. It is through communication that humans develop, maintain, and negotiate meaning within their communities (Littlejohn, et al, 2017). Within this framework, a speech community refers to a group of individuals who share a common set of norms and expectations regarding language use. Within speech communities, language varieties naturally emerge. These include dialects, sociolects, registers, and jargons, each shaped by the social, cultural, and occupational backgrounds of their speakers. According to Holmes, et al (2017), these variations allow speakers to navigate different social contexts and express group membership. One of the most salient forms of language variety is jargon, specialized terminology associated with particular fields, professions, or interest groups. Jargon allows for efficient, precise communication among group

members and often serves as a marker of in-group identity (Yule, 2020).

Jargon refers to specialized vocabulary created and used within specific social or professional groups. "In social terms, jargon helps to create and maintain connections among those who see themselves as 'insiders' in some way and to exclude 'outsiders'" (Yule, 2020, p. 259). Jargon is typically meaningful only within its originating group, as it relies on shared context and experience. It often goes beyond standard dictionary definitions and may arise from puns, abbreviations, or culturally specific references. According to Yule (2020), common word formation processes that create jargon include compounding, borrowing, acronyms, clipping, and coinage. These forms are used to communicate complex concepts quickly and clearly within a particular field.

The phenomenon of jargon emerges naturally in environments where rapid, efficient, and precise communication is necessary such as in medicine, law, and especially digital spaces like online gaming. In these communities, members develop a shared

language to describe experiences, strategies, or tools unique to their context. For instance, in online games like VALORANT, jargon such as eco round, lurker, or smoke reflects specialized gameplay concepts that outsiders may not easily understand. Jargon not only enables quicker interactions but also serves as a marker of belonging, reinforcing group identity and excluding those who lack insider knowledge. As digital communities expand, jargon continues to evolve, mirroring the dynamic and participatory nature of online culture.

This study focuses on the use of jargon in the VCT 2021 Korea Grand Finals, a major esports event for the game VALORANT. The objective is to analyze the forms and meanings of the jargon used by the casters and how these reflect the communication practices of a specialized speech community within the broader realm of e-sports. This study contains the interest of teenagers around the world which is playing games, their enthusiasm for playing games is undeniable. The problem that arises in this study is the broader issue of low literacy ability in Indonesia, which has been a recurring concern in educational and cultural discourse. This condition reflects not only limited access to reading materials but also a lack of engaging content that resonates with modern digital audiences, particularly youth. Given the growing popularity of video games and e-sports in Indonesia, incorporating gaming-related content such as jargon used in VALORANT commentary into educational or readable formats may serve as a bridge to stimulate interest in reading. The writer hopes that this study can contribute to that effort by offering insights into gaming language in a way that is both academically informative and culturally relevant. Ultimately, the study aspires to encourage the development of accessible resources, such as glossaries, handbooks, or articles that help enrich public understanding of gaming jargon and improve literacy through familiar and engaging topics.

Methods

In this study, the writer used a descriptive qualitative approach, as the data processed was in the form of descriptive language rather than numerical values. This research was conducted by observing

specific terms identified as jargon within the VALORANT gaming community. the data obtained from three YouTube videos specifically from the VALORANT Champions Tour official account. These videos, uploaded on August 16, 2021, were selected for their rich content of caster utterances containing esports-specific jargon used in professional commentary.

After the data collection process was completed, the identified jargon terms were processed through several steps. First, the terms were identified from the caster utterances in the VALORANT Champions Tour Korea Grand Finals 2021 videos. Second, each jargon term was classified based on Halligan's (2004) theory, which categorizes jargon formation into five primary types: Abbreviation, Acronym, Compounding, Clipping, and Blending. Third, the writer conducted an analysis of the meanings using Yule's (2020) theory, supported by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (version 5.8.1, updated March 19, 2025) as a secondary reference. Lastly, the data were interpreted to explain both the Referential (denotative) and associative (connotative) meanings of each term in relation to its use within the VALORANT gaming context.

Findings and discussion

Table 1. Forms of jargons found in VCT KR Grand Finals 2021

No	Forms	Frequency
1	Abbreviation	0
2	Acronyms	1
3	Compounding	16
4	Clipping	2
5	Blending	0
Total		19

From the table above, it can be seen that there were 19 jargon terms identified from the VCT Korea Grand Finals 2021. Based on Halligan's (2004) theory, the table shows that the most dominant form of jargon found was compounding, with a total of 10 terms. This is followed by clipping, which contributed 3 terms, while abbreviation and acronym each resulted in 2 terms. Lastly, blending contributed 2 terms. Therefore, it can be concluded that

compounding is the most dominant form of jargon used in VCT Korea Grand Finals 2021. This indicates that combining two or more words into a single, specialized term is a preferred linguistic strategy among casters. These compound terms carry meanings that are specific to the VALORANT community and can only be fully understood by members familiar with the game's context.

Datum 1: “with their new coach locomotive uh they have prepped a lot of *strats* uh for five”

The term *strats* is a clipped form derived from the word *strategies*, referring to carefully planned methods used to achieve a particular objective. According to Halligan's (2004) theory of jargon formation, this term falls under clipping, as it shortens the original word while retaining its essential meaning. In the context of VALORANT, *strats* specifically refers to tactical plays and coordinated plans developed by teams to gain advantages over opponents during matches. These strategies involve precise positioning, use of agent abilities, and coordinated teamwork to control areas, execute attacks, or establish defenses.

Based on Yule's (2020) theory of meaning, the referential (denotative) meaning of *strats* aligns directly with its root word *strategies*, which, according to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2025), is defined as “a careful plan or method” or “the art of devising or employing plans toward a goal.” This definition matches the technical function of *strats* within the game. However, the term also carries an associative (connotative) meaning in VALORANT, representing not just deliberate planning but also rapid execution, adaptability under pressure, and the strategic mindset valued in competitive play. Within the gaming community, *strats* evokes the image of professional teamwork and agile decision-making essential in high-stakes situations.

Therefore the term *strats* illustrates how clipping serves to create efficient, community-specific jargon, while its layered meanings reflect both its formal definition and its cultural associations within the esports environment.

Datum 2: “shot calling it's normally you know like a *Killjoy* player or a Breach player”

The term *Killjoy* is a compound word formed by combining *kill* and *joy*. According to Halligan's (2004) theory of jargon formation, this term falls under compounding, where two independent words are joined to form a new term with a distinct meaning. In the context of VALORANT, *Killjoy* is the name of a specific agent known for her technological skills, utilizing devices like turrets and nanobot swarms to control areas and disrupt enemy movements. The creation of her name using compounding reflects the tendency in gaming communities to form efficient, memorable identifiers that capture the essence of in-game characters or mechanics.

Based on Yule's (2020) theory of meaning, the term carries referential (denotative) layer. Referentially, *Killjoy* traditionally means a person who ruins the enjoyment of others, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2025): “one who spoils the pleasure of others.” Here the term *Killjoy* demonstrates how compounding creates specialized identifiers in gaming communities, while its meaning operates on both technical and cultural levels. Although its usage as an agent's name is not supported by formal dictionaries or books of jargon, it is firmly established within the VALORANT community as a character's title, reflecting the organic evolution of language in digital gaming environments.

Datum 3: “like you were saying Reyna equals *IGL* equals fail usually”

The term *IGL* is an acronym for In-Game Leader. According to Halligan's (2004) theory of jargon formation, this term falls under the category of acronyms, where the initial letters of a phrase are combined to form a new, easily communicable term. In VALORANT, *IGL* refers to the player assigned the responsibility of leading their team during a match, overseeing strategies, coordinating tactics,

and making critical decisions based on real-time developments. This acronym facilitates fast, efficient communication within teams, reflecting the gaming community's tendency to simplify complex roles into concise terms suitable for high-pressure environments.

Following Yule's (2020) theory of meaning, *IGL* carries referential (denotative) and meaning. Referentially, *IGL* directly represents its expanded form, In-Game Leader. This literal meaning explains the player's official role as the strategic commander within the team. Within the gaming community, the term embodies not just a position but the traits expected of such a player quick thinking, decision-making, and tactical awareness in rapidly changing scenarios.

Although Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2025) does not define *IGL*, the individual component *leader* is described as "a person who directs a group or organization," aligning with the referential role of the *IGL* in VALORANT. The term's usage is specialized within competitive gaming communities, particularly in titles like VALORANT and CS:GO, and is not formally recognized in general dictionaries or official jargon books. This reflects how gaming jargon like *IGL* develops informally yet gains widespread acceptance through community usage, highlighting the organic evolution of language in digital sports contexts.

Datum 4: "but they have to take this uh slow *retake* the plan hasn't gone in"

The term *retake* is formed through the process of compounding, where two element *re-* (a prefix meaning "again") and *take* (meaning to seize or gain control) are combined to create a new term. According to Halligan (2004), compounding involves merging separate linguistic units into a single term with a distinct meaning, especially common in specialized communities like gaming. In the context of VALORANT, *retake* refers to a coordinated attempt by the defending team to reclaim control of a site after the attackers have planted the

spike. This term encapsulates a critical tactical concept central to gameplay strategies in first-person shooter games, where precise execution and teamwork are essential.

Using Yule's (2020) semantic analysis framework, *retake* carries referential (denotative) and meaning. Referentially, *retake* simply means *to take again*, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2025). This straightforward definition directly applies to its in-game usage, where players attempt to regain control of a previously lost objective. In VALORANT, a *retake* suggests teamwork, urgency, and tactical precision, evoking not just the action but the intensity and coordination required to execute it effectively.

While the term retains semantic transparency as noted by Harper (2025), its specialized application in VALORANT elevates its meaning beyond general English usage. Within the gaming community, *retake* serves as jargon that signifies a specific gameplay scenario, recognized and understood primarily by players and fans of tactical shooters. Its use exemplifies how common language elements are adapted into specialized vocabulary to meet the communicative needs of e-sports participants.

Datum 5: "catwalk pretty quickly Stax sends for the *trailblazer*"

The term *trailblazer* is formed through the process of compounding, where two independent words *trail* (meaning "a path or track") and *blazer* (meaning "someone who leads or pioneers") are combined to create a new term. According to Halligan (2004), compounding is a common method for forming jargon in specialized communities by merging distinct words into a concise expression that represents a specific concept. In VALORANT, Trailblazer refers to an ability used by the agent Skye, in which a controllable Tasmanian tiger scouts' areas and concusses enemies. The name *trailblazer* metaphorically represents this ability's function: clearing a path and revealing enemy positions, thus guiding the team forward in strategic gameplay.

From a semantic perspective using Yule's (2020) framework, *trailblazer* carries referential (denotative) meaning. Referentially, the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2025) defines *trailblazer* as "one that blazes a trail to guide others" or "a person who makes, does, or discovers something new and makes it acceptable or popular." This definition applies directly to its in-game role, as Skye's Trailblazer ability guides teammates by scouting and clearing the path.

Thus, in VALORANT's gameplay context, *trailblazer* functions as a specialized jargon term that encapsulates both the practical function of Skye's ability and its symbolic role in leading the team forward. While its denotative meaning matches general usage, its connotative significance is uniquely tied to the tactical strategies of the VALORANT community.

Conclusion

This study shows that jargons in VALORANT function as signs that carry meaning within a specific context. The meanings of the jargons used by casters were shaped by the context of competitive gameplay. Many of the terms carry both denotative meanings, which are their literal definitions, and connotative meanings, which reflect the specific roles or emotional values within the VALORANT community. The meanings of the jargons are deeply connected to the in-game environment, strategy, and player identity, which are understood and interpreted by those who share the same speech community. Thus, these meanings help reinforce a sense of belonging and specialized understanding among VALORANT players, fans, and casters.

References

Bartle, R. A. (2003). *Designing Virtual Worlds*. New Riders Publishing.
 Bloomfield, L. (1984). *Language*. University of Chicago Press.
 Cassell, L. (2021). The switch: Code-switching and its effects on African Americans in

America. *University of Wisconsin-Stout Journal of Student Research*, 19, 67-76.
 Chandler, D., & Munday, R. (2009). *A dictionary of media and communication*. Oxford University Press.
 Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
 Crystal, D. (2010). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
 Durkin, P. (2009). *The Oxford guide to etymology*. Oxford University Press.
 Eckert, P. 2000. Linguistic variation as social practice. *Malden, Massachusetts, USA: Blackwell*.
 Faydullah, M., Rozelin, D., & Mukhlisa, D. (2022). Military jargon in Point Blank video game: Semantic analysis. *Nazharat: Jurnal Kebudayaan*, 28(2), 155-158.
 Fowler, H. W. (1926). *A dictionary of modern English usage*. Clarendon Press.
 Furianto, & Simanjuntak, R. R. (2023). Gaming language as a language variation in digital humanities. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 388, 04010.
 Gayo, M. K. M. (2019). Slang words in game online Arena of Valor. *Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta*.
 Halligan, D. (2004). *Linguistic variation and professional communication: Understanding specialized language in modern communities*. Oxford University Press.
 Harper, D. (2025). *Online etymology dictionary*. <https://www.etymonline.com>
 Herson, S. F., Surya, S., & Rahayu, F. E. S. (2022). An analysis of jargons used by the commentators found in PlayerUnknown's Battleground Mobile game. *Journal of Cultural Sciences*, 6(4), 1592-1601.
 Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2017). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (5th ed.). Routledge.
 Hughes, A., Trudgill, P., & Watt, D. (2012). *English accents and dialects: An introduction to social and regional varieties of English in the British Isles* (5th ed.). Routledge.

- Hymes, D. (1972a). Models of the interaction of language and social life. In J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (eds.) *Directions in Sociolinguistics*: 35–71. *Blackwell*.
- Iskandar, F., Agustian, J. F., & Putri, N. Q. H. (2021). Analisis penggunaan jargon bahasakomunitas game online PUBG Mobile di Kota Samarinda. *Adjektiva: Educational Languages and Literature Studies*, 4(2), 59-66.
- Jones, R. H., Hafner, C. A., & Zemach, D. (2015). *Understanding digital literacies: A practical introduction*. Routledge.
- Labov, W. (1966). The social stratification of English in New York City. Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Littlejohn, S. W., Foss, K. A., & Oetzel, J. G. (2017). *Theories of Human Communication* (11th ed.). Waveland Press.
- Magria, V., Asridayani, & Sari, R. W. (2021). Word formation process of slang words used by gamers in the game online “Mobile Legend.” *Jurnal JILP (Jurnal Ilmiah Langue and Parole)*, 5(1), 38-39.
- Malkiel, Y. (1962). Etymology and general linguistics. *WORD*, 18(1-3), 198-219.
- McGregor, W. B. (2015). *Linguistics: An Introduction Answer Key*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Jargon*. In *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary* (Version 5.8.1). Retrieved March 19, 2025, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jargon>
- Mesthrie, R., Swann, J., Deumert, A., & Leap, W. L. (2019). *Introducing Sociolinguistics* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh University Press.
- Moleong, L. J. (2019). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Revisi ed.). PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Morgan, M. (2014). Speech Communities. In *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Society*. Oxford University Press.
- Ong, J., & Liaw, H. (2013). Language usage of jargon and slang in strategic studies. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 7(4), 661–666.
- Paul, C. A. (2018). *The toxic meritocracy of video games: Why gaming culture is the worst*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Sissman, L. E. (1972). *Innocent bystanding: Studies in the visual arts*. Little, Brown.
- Spencer, A., & Zwicky, A. M. (Eds.). (2001). *The handbook of morphology*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sugiyono. (2017). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Taylor, T. L. (2018). *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming*. Princeton University Press.
- Trudgill, P. (2000). *Sociolinguistics: An introduction to language and society* (4th ed.). Penguin Books.
- VALORANT Champions Tour. (2021, August 16). *VCT 2021: Korea Stage 3 Challengers Playoffs – Grand Final – FULL MATCH* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Csj41MbQV0s>
- VALORANT Champions Tour. (2021, August 16). *VCT 2021: Korea Stage 3 Challengers Playoffs – Grand Final – Map 2* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/nV0bxDnw7gU>
- VALORANT Champions Tour. (2021, August 16). *VCT 2021: Korea Stage 3 Challengers Playoffs – Grand Final – Map 3* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/CwxzejPR--o>
- Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2015). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (7th ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Yule, G. (2020). *The study of language* (8th ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.