

Language, Solidarity, and Identity: The Role of Jargon in the *League of Legends* Community

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Abstract

This study aims to identify and analyze the various forms and meanings of jargon used within the League of Legends community. The research employs Yule's (2017) theory of jargon and Gaikwad and Kuchekar's (2022) framework for word class classification, utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected from the official mic check video of the 2024 LEC finals, which captured direct communication between players and commentators throughout the matches. The findings reveal 51 instances of jargon, comprising 35 nouns, 14 verbs, 1 adjective, and 1 adverb. The analysis demonstrates that while nouns and verbs are the most prevalent, other word classes play a significant role in conveying more nuanced and contextually relevant meanings. In this community, jargon not only serves as a means of communication but also helps to reinforce solidarity and identity among players in a competitive and digital gaming environment.

Keywords: Jargon; League of Legends; Word Class.

Introduction

Online communities have become important spaces in today's socio-cultural development. They bring together individuals with similar interests, allowing them to interact through digital media. One notable community is the League of Legends (LoL) player community. This strategy game focuses on teamwork and quick, effective communication among players (Anggita, 2025). Developed by Riot Games and released in 2009, the game has grown into one of the largest eSports competitions worldwide, featuring official tournaments like the League of Legends EMEA Championship (LEC), which is the main focus of this study. In this community, player communication serves both to inform and to showcase unique language features through technical terms understood only by community members.

Language use within specific communities often leads to variations that reflect social, geographical, or cultural differences. Holmes and Wilson (as cited in Mukhzamilah, 2022) highlight that linguistic

variation can exist even among speakers of the same language, influenced by social background and communication conditions. Hayati (2021) states that social differences are the primary factor driving language variation, as individuals' social backgrounds shape their language choices in certain situations. A significant form of variation in communities like League of Legends is jargon. This specialized vocabulary is used exclusively by group members to speed up and clarify communication in specific contexts. In the LoL community, terms like gank, jungler, flash, and wave are common and vital to in-game communication.

These terms are a type of linguistic variation that helps simplify communication within specific communities or professions and signals group identity (Yule, 2017). Chaer and Agustina (as cited in Unsiyah and Yuliati, 2018) argue that jargon is marked by exclusivity and common understanding within a community, making it hard for outsiders to grasp. This perspective aligns with Gereda (2020), who describes jargon as a practical communication tool that naturally emerges within social groups, particularly in competitive environments like the

LEC.

The use of jargon in the League of Legends community, especially during professional competitions such as the LEC, greatly impacts how terms are formed and understood. In these tournaments, communication happens quickly and intensely among players and coaches, especially during key moments in matches. Players need to share strategies, warnings, and decisions in seconds, making jargon an effective way to express complex ideas clearly and quickly. Saifudin (2018) and Mansoer Pateda (as cited in Anindya, 2017) explain that context provides a framework for understanding references used in speech or interpreting messages. Thus, the competitive setting, which requires fast and accurate communication, plays a crucial role in understanding and using jargon in this community.

In addition to analyzing of jargon, the study also categorizes them into word classes. Gaikwad and Kuchekar's (2022) theory suggest that words can be sorted based on their grammatical roles, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Amrullah (2018) adds that classifying word types is important in syntax analysis, as each category has unique functions and grammar rules. In this context, words like "jungler" serve as nouns representing character roles, while "gank" acts as a verb describing the action of ambushing opponents. Such classification offers an overview of the key linguistic forms in professional communication within the LoL community.

The study analyzes the meaning of jargon based on its denotative meaning, which is the basic, literal, and objective sense without emotional or associative elements (Suwandi and Sarwiji in Yanti, 2024). Sinaga et al. (2021) emphasize that denotative meaning directly refers to reality or objects. In LoL, the denotative meaning of a term can change; for example, the word wave, which usually means a water wave, is used in the game to refer to a group of minions. On the other hand, connotative meaning—which involves added or emotional associations—often shows up in other communities and has been the focus of various prior studies (Mandey et al., 2021). Therefore, distinguishing between these two types of meaning is crucial for accurate analysis of competitive communication in LoL.

This study builds on previous research concerning jargon in different communities. Syafitri and Ikhsan (2019) examined political jargon on websites and observed a prevalence of denotative meanings. Pratama (2021) looked into jargon in the game Point Blank and found a strong inclination toward connotative meanings. Aria (2023) investigated jargon used by Superbike race commentators, discovering that phrases were the most common format. Mussu, Sanerita, and Kamagi (2022) noted that in Mobile Legends, jargon appeared as abbreviations and phrases, while Herson, Surya, and Rahayu (2022) studied jargon formation in PUBG Mobile using acronyms and derivations. Unlike these studies, the current research concentrates on the linguistic classification and literal meanings of jargon in the context of competitive communication in the League of Legends community.

This study aims to explain how jargon is used and interpreted in the League of Legends community. It focuses on identifying jargon forms based on word categories and describing their denotative meanings in the context of professional competition. This research is expected to contribute to the advancement of linguistic studies, particularly concerning language variation and the use of language in competitive digital communities.

Methods

This study used a descriptive qualitative method to analyze linguistic phenomena in competitive communication. According to Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Anggito & Setiawan, 2018), qualitative research relies on natural settings to interpret phenomena. This makes the method suitable for studying language that arises naturally within the League of Legends community. Qualitative research also focuses on understanding both the context and the phenomena being investigated (Sembiring et al., 2024).

The data for this research came from transcripts of the official mic check videos of the 2024 LEC matches that were uploaded on YouTube. From these recordings, 51 jargon items were identified as the research corpus. To confirm the classification of these terms as jargon, the Oxford Advanced

Learner's Dictionary, Tenth Edition (2020) served as the main reference for standard word meanings. Words or phrases with specialized meanings that differed from their dictionary definitions were categorized as jargon. This highlighted their exclusivity within the League of Legends community.

Data analysis occurred in two stages: classifying forms and interpreting meanings. Identifying jargon forms was based on the word-class theory by Gaikwad and Kuchekar (2022), which sorts words into categories like nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. The analysis of meaning used Yule's (2017) theory of jargon, which defines jargon as specialized terms used by a specific community to convey meaning clearly and exclusively. Combining these two theories helped explain both the linguistic forms and meanings of jargon within the League of Legends community in the context of professional competition.

Findings and discussion

Nouns

The first data shows a clash between Team BDS and SK Gaming at the SK Gaming's base. During the fight, Adam, a player from BDS, was nearly dead and had to retreat. However, his teammate Sheo informed him that he had a Locket, enabling Adam to continue fighting and potentially secure the game.

- (1) Adam : *"I'm 1 Hp ok I need to back off."*
(2) Sheo : *"I have **Locket**, I have **Locket**."*
(01:53-01:55)

The jargon in utterance (2) is Locket. The utterance appears in the video titled Full Tryhard! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 2. The denotative meaning of locket (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is "a piece of jewellery in the form of a small case that you wear on a chain around your neck and in which you can put a picture, piece of hair, etc." For example, "she wore a beautiful gold locket that held a picture of her family." In the League of

Legends community, however, Locket (noun) refers to an in-game item (Locket of the Iron Solari) that can be purchased to provide a protective shield to nearby teammates.

The second data shows a fight between Team BDS and SK Gaming in the top lane, which BDS won. As SK players retreated, Nuc from BDS considered teleporting back to base and then to the bottom lane, since BDS minions were already pushing into SK's base, giving his team a chance to win.

- (3) Nuc : *"I'll TP on **bot** I think, I'll base TP on **bot**."*
(4) Ice : *"I keep going, I keep going."*
(02:42-02:45)

The jargon in utterance (3) is bot. The utterance appears in the video titled Full Tryhard! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 2. The denotative meaning of bot (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is "a computer program that runs automated tasks over the internet." For example, "developers can program bots to provide anything from automated subscriptions to content such as weather and traffic updates." In the League of Legends community, however, bot (noun) is shorthand for bottom lane, one of the three main lanes on the game map.

The third data shows a clash between G2 Esports and GIANTX over the Rift Herald, located between the top and mid lanes. Yike from G2 told his team he would use his champion's ultimate ability, while BrokenBlade, who was in the bottom lane, asked for a ward to teleport. Since no ward was placed, his teammate Mikyx told him to remain in the bottom lane.

- (5) Yike : *"I will Ult, I will Ult, I will Ult, I will Ult. Its good Ult, Its good Ult."*
(6) BrokenBlade : *"I need a **ward**, I need a **ward**."*
(7) Caps : *"Yeah we can no Flash."*

- (8) Mikyx : *"I think in this case just keep staying bot."*
(9) BrokenBlade : *"Ok."*
(04:32-04:41)

The jargon in utterance (6) is ward. The utterance appears in the video titled Full Tryhard! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 2. The denotative meaning of ward (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is "a separate room or area in a hospital for people with the same type of medical condition." For example, "the doctor was doing her morning ward round." In League of Legends, ward (noun) refers to an in-game item that provides vision on the map and serves as a teleportation point.

The fourth data shows Hans Sama preparing to dive Supa under his turret. Before doing so, Hans Sama wanted to clear the wave of minions in the bottom lane, asking his teammates to stay behind the enemy turret to prevent Supa from escaping.

- (10) Hans Sama: *"I'll go for the wave can you stay there?"*
(02:43-02:44)

The jargon in utterance (10) is wave. The utterance appears in the video titled AD Nidalee Top?! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 1. The denotative meaning of wave (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is "a raised line of water that moves across the surface of the sea, ocean, etc." For example, "huge waves were breaking on the shore." In the League of Legends community, wave (noun) refers to a group of minions that periodically spawn and move along the lanes.

The fifth data illustrates the drafting phase between Fnatic and G2 Esports, where the casters Medic, Dagda, and Vedio discuss the champion selection strategies of both teams. Medic predicts that Fnatic might opt for champions such as Maokai or Sejuani as junglers, but he also notes that Brand could be a viable first-pick option given its dominance in the tournament.

- (11) Medic: *"Definitely a possibility here, obviously the Braum, Tristana, and Ash taken away by Fnatic things like the Ezreal immediately spring to mind. Maokai and Sejuani, two junglers we have seen dominate the meta through season finals, but alongside that, even something like the **Brand** is a possibility."*

(02:08:12-02:08:26)

The jargon in utterance (11) is brand. The utterance appears in the video titled 2024 LEC Season Finals - Grand Final - FNC vs G2. The denotative meaning of brand (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Tenth Edition 2020 is "a type of product, service, etc. made or offered by a particular company under a particular name." This meaning can be seen in the sentence "the company's core brand value is consistency in quality and service." In the League of Legends community, however, the jargon brand (noun) refers to the name of a champion that can be played in the game.

The sixth data capture a commentary by Vedio around the 11th minute of the match, where Fnatic focused heavily on Caps in the mid lane. According to Vedio, this allowed Humanoid, who was playing Smolder, to freely gather experience (XP) and gold in preparation to carry the late game. However, Fnatic's strategy also meant conceding all early objectives to G2, including grubs and the dragon. By the 14th minute, turret plates were also set to disappear, which further benefited G2 since they had already secured early buffs. Vedio points out that this early-game situation for Fnatic was dangerous and could potentially lead to their downfall.

- (12) Vedio: *"I mean Fnatic have been able to find a lot of pressure onto Caps and to try and get this Smolder accelerated, that's great, great plan. Problem is you're conceiving a lot of objectives, all six grubs are gone, the dragon is gone, **plates** going in the favor of G2 as well. It's a scary situation in terms of the early game for Fnatic."*

(02:25:06-02:25:25)

The jargon in utterance (12) is plates. The utterance appears in the video titled 2024 LEC Season Finals - Grand Final - FNC vs G2. The denotative meaning of plates (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Tenth Edition 2020 is "a flat, usually round, dish that you put food on." For example, "the set includes four dinner plates, four side plates and soup bowls." In the League of Legends community, however, the jargon plates (noun) refer to segments of a tower (turret) that can be destroyed during the first 14 minutes of the game, granting additional gold to the players.

Verb

The seventh data show a clash between G2 Esports and MAD Lions KOI (MDK) in the bottom lane. G2 won the fight, killing Alvaro and Elyoya, and then chased down Fresskow, leaving only Supa alive under his turret. Hans Sama asked his teammates to help him dive Supa.

(11) Hans Sama: "*I wanna **dive** smolder after, can you come?*"

(02:41-02:42)

The jargon in utterance (11) is dive. The utterance appears in the video titled AD Nidalee Top?! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 1. The denotative meaning of dive (verb) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is "to jump into water with your head and arms going in first." For example, "we dived into the river to cool off." In League of Legends, dive (verb) refers to a risky strategy of attacking an enemy under their turret, often aiming for a kill despite the danger.

The eighth data show the draft phase between G2 Esports and G2 Esports and G2 Esports (GX). Caps discussed a mistake he made in a previous match against MAD Lions KOI (MDK), while a referee commented on G2's strong performance with Annie. Caps agreed, noting that even his own team did not expect to pick Annie.

(12) Referee : "*Annie in that game was **cooking** though. I didn't expect that.*"

(13) Caps : "*hahaha.*"

(14) Referee : "*I did not expect the Annie pick.*"

(15) Caps : "*My team didn't expect it as well.*"

(03:22-03:27)

The jargon in utterance (12) is cooking. The utterance appears in the video titled Full Tryhard! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 2. The denotative meaning of cooking (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is "the process of preparing food by heating it." For example, "we always use olive oil for cooking." In League of Legends, however, cooking (verb) is slang used to describe a player performing exceptionally well or dominating the game.

The ninth data show Nisqy from SK Gaming attempting to recall to base while hiding in the mid-lane bush, but Labrov from BDS noticed and instructed Ice to use Jinx's ultimate ability (a long-range rocket) to stop him. The rocket successfully hit and killed Nisqy, earning praise from teammates.

(16) Nisqy : "*I think I wanna base TP.*"

(17) Labrov : "*Maybe you can **Ult** here Ice to stop his base.*"

(18) Ice : "*I did, I did, I did.*"

(19) Luon : "*Ah Jinx Ult.*"

(20) Labrov : "*HOHOHO.*"

(21) Nuc : "*NICE!!! Well played.*"

(02:23-02:30)

The jargon in utterance (17) is Ult. The utterance appears in the video titled Full Tryhard! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 2. The denotative meaning of ultimate (adjective) in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is "happening at the end of a long process." For example, "we will accept ultimate responsibility for whatever happens." In the League of Legends community, Ult (verb) refers to using a champion's strongest ability, often decisive in fights.

The tenth data show Hans Sama and his teammates preparing to dive Supa under the enemy turret. Hans Sama asked Mikyx, who was playing a durable champion, to tank the turret shots so that he and the

others could secure the kill.

(22) Hans Sama : “*Can you **tank**? Can you **tank**?*”

(23) Mikyx : “*Yeah I’ll do it.*”
(02:44-02:46)

The jargon in utterance (22) is tank. The utterance appears in the video titled AD Nidalee Top?! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 1. The denotative meaning of tank (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is “a large container for holding liquid or gas.” For example, “he uses an oxygen tank to breathe.” In League of Legends, however, tank (verb) means to absorb or withstand enemy damage, typically done by durable champions to protect their teammates.

The eleventh data describe a fight between G2 Esports and Team BDS around the Rift Herald objective located between the top and mid lanes. Four players from each team were engaged in battle, while BrokenBlade from G2 faced Adam from BDS in a one-on-one duel near the mid lane. BrokenBlade informed his teammates that Adam, who was playing Olaf, was attempting to join the main fight, but he made it clear that he would focus solely on marking Olaf to prevent him from assisting his teammates. Ultimately, G2 emerged victorious in this skirmish.

(24) BrokenBlade : “*Olaf is behind us, I’m gonna **mark** Olaf.*”

(25) Yike : “*I have Shield up.*”

(26) BrokenBlade : “*I’m marking Olaf guys.*”

(27) Caps : “*Yeah.*”

(01:26-01:30)

The jargon in utterance (24) is mark. The utterance appears in the video titled Frontdoor Frenzy! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 3. The denotative meaning of mark (verb) in the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary Tenth Edition 2020 is “to write or draw a symbol, line, etc. on something in order to give information about it.” For example, “the flood level is marked by a white line on the wall.” In the League of Legends community, however, the

jargon mark (verb) means to focus on, track, or lock down a specific enemy champion to prevent them from influencing the fight.

Adverb

The twelfth data show Team BDS pushing into SK Gaming’s base to destroy the Nexus. Poppy, a champion played by Isma from SK Gaming, had just respawned and rejoined the defense.

(28) Labrov: “*Care poppy, Poppy is **up**, Poppy is **up**.*”

(01:40-01:41)

The jargon in utterance (24) is up. The utterance appears in the video titled Full Tryhard! | Kia Mic Check | 2024 LEC Season Finals Week 2. The denotative meaning of up (adverb) in the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is “towards or in a higher position.” For example, “you look nice with your hair up.” In League of Legends, however, up (adverb) refers to a champion respawning after being dead.

Adjective

The thirteenth data show Fnatic cornered by G2 Esports, with all of Fnatic’s inhibitors destroyed. Fnatic tried to hold on under their Nexus turrets, but Jun’s attempt with Leona’s ultimate failed. Although G2 had the advantage, commentators noted that Fnatic still had some hope because G2’s minion waves had not yet reached the base.

(29) Medic: “*Jun flashes he misses everything, he tried and you can’t blame him for that but sometimes in these moments you have to come up **clutch**. Fanatic now without a solar flare, without flash, and they do still have a hope cuz the wave still a little while away double supers in every one of them though.*”

(03:01:59-03:02:15)

The jargon in utterance (25) is clutch. The utterance appears in the video titled 2024 LEC Season Finals - Grand Final - FNC vs G2. The denotative meaning of clutch (noun) in the Oxford Advanced Learner’s

Dictionary, 10th Edition, 2020 is “the pedal in a car or other vehicle that you press with your foot so that you can change gear.” For example, “put it into first gear and let the clutch out slowly.” In League of Legends, however, clutch (adjective) refers to a crucial and successful play made in a decisive moment, such as saving teammates at the last second or turning the tide of a losing game.

Conclusion

The results of this study reveal that the use of jargon within the League of Legends community is essential for facilitating faster, clearer, and more efficient communication in competitive contexts. The identified jargon was categorized into four word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, with nouns and verbs emerging as the most prevalent forms. In terms of meaning, these expressions were primarily denotative, directly referencing in-game objects or actions without additional layers of significance. This underscores that the primary function of jargon in this community prioritizes communicative efficiency over expressive nuance. The findings further indicate that jargon transcends mere linguistic variation; it serves as a marker of identity and solidarity within digital communities. The use of specialized terminology in League of Legends enhances social cohesion among players and differentiates this community from other gaming groups. Thus, the study contributes to the broader discourse on language variation, particularly within the rapidly expanding realm of digital communities. While this research offers valuable insights into the forms and meanings of jargon, there are still opportunities for further exploration. Future studies could investigate the connotative meanings that arise during informal player interactions or compare jargon usage in League of Legends with that in other online games. Furthermore, a closer examination of pragmatic aspects may provide insights into the communication strategies players employ to foster teamwork and collective success.

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